Conference Description: On Friday, March 6th, 2015, the University of Chicago Divinity School will host a day-long conference entitled The Psychology of Religion/The Religion of Psychology. We seek not only to address the contemporary disjunction between psychology and religion – which we understand as both the lack of conversation between psychologists and religious studies scholars and also the secular pretensions of the contemporary “psy-ences” – but also hope to avoid the narrow and reifying tendencies of much of the work that is being done at the intersection of psychology and religion. The hope is thus to break new ground in a somewhat barren land with presentations that address the contemporary disjunction between the two and/or articulate their relation in new and unexpected ways.

The conference will be keynoted by a roundtable discussion between:

Jeffrey Kripal, J. Newton Rayzor Chair in Philosophy and Religious Studies, Rice University
Jonathan Lear, John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor at the Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago
Tanya Marie Luhrmann, Watkins University Professor in the Department of Anthropology (and Psychology, by courtesy), Stanford University
Elaine Pagels, Harrington Spear Paine Foundation Professor of Religion, Princeton University

All are welcome to attend, and there is no registration process or fee. Please email Benjamin Y. Fong at bfong@uchicago.edu for more information.

Sponsored by the Divinity School, the Martin Marty Center, the Wisdom Research Project, and the Departments of Anthropology and Comparative Human Development. Organized by Benjamin Y. Fong and Simon Taylor, Harper-Schmidt Fellows at the University of Chicago.

Schedule

9:00-9:30am: COFFEE AND OPENING REMARKS

9:30-11:30am: NEW VIEWS ON PSYCHOANALYSIS AND RELIGION

Patrick Blanchfield, PhD Candidate in Comparative Literature, Emory University: “If You See Sigmund on the Road, Kill Him”

Daniel Burston, Associate Professor of Psychology, Duquesne University: “Psychoanalysis and Catholicism in Jacques Lacan and Karl Stern”

Pamela Cooper-White, Ben G. and Nancye Clapp Gautier Professor of Pastoral Theology, Care, and Counseling, Columbia Theological Seminary: “‘Dirty Old Gods’: Religion and Freud’s Wednesday Night Psychological Society from Habsburg Vienna to the Holocaust”
Joshua Dubler, Assistant Professor of Religion, University of Rochester: “Absolute Nonsense, or the Things We Do with Moses and Monotheism”

11:30am-1:00pm: DISJUNCTIONS BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

Kelly Bulkeley, Visiting Scholar, Graduate Theological Union: “Neuro-Nonsense: The perils, and promise, of cognitive science for the study of religion”

Ara Norenzayan, Professor of Psychology, University of British Columbia: “Is Psychology Finally Ready to Tackle Religion?”

Richard Walsh, Professor of Psychology, Wilfred Laurier University: “A Critical Historical and Philosophical Perspective on the Relationship between Scientific Psychology and Religion”

1:00-2:00pm: LUNCH

2:00-4:00pm: BOUNDARIES OF THE SELF

Abigail Kluchin, CIE Mellon Teaching Fellow, Ursinus College: “Traversing Affect: Religion, Psychoanalysis, and the Boundaries of the Subject”

M.G. Piety, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Drexel University: “The Problem of the Intermediary: On the Compatibility of Psychoanalytic Theory and Religion”

Kyle Roberts, Associate Professor of Public and Missional Theology, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities: “Consider the Birds: Kierkegaard, Becker, and Death Anxiety”

Christopher White, Associate Professor of Religion, Vassar College: “William James and Charles Hinton on the Self’s Subconscious Dimensions and Mystical Spaces”

4:00-4:30pm: COFFEE BREAK

4:30-7:00pm: KEYNOTE PANEL

Jeffrey Kripal, J. Newton Rayzor Chair in Philosophy and Religious Studies, Rice University: “The Eclipse of the Psyche in the Contemporary Study of Religion”

Jonathan Lear, John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor at the Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago: “A Critique of Freud’s Critique of Religious Belief”

Tanya Marie Luhrmann, Watkins University Professor in the Department of Anthropology (and Psychology, by courtesy), Stanford University: “Belief and Faith”

Elaine Pagels, Harrington Spear Paine Foundation Professor of Religion, Princeton University: “Making a Difference: How Promoting Exploration of Human Experience Became Heresy”

8:00pm: DINNER FOR CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS IN HYDE PARK