Preface

This book evolved from six lectures I gave at Boston University in October and November, 2008. I used them to advance a thesis that has been appearing more frequently in my recent writing: that the emerging dialogue between science and religion can help revive both religious and Christian humanism. By *Christian humanism*, I have in mind various historic expressions of Christianity that were concerned with the spiritual goods of salvation and justification as well as the finite and inner-worldly goods of health, education, and sufficient wealth to sustain a decent life in this world. Furthermore, when Christian humanism is vital, it generally is in conversation with science and philosophy in an effort to further clarify the finite goods of human life. Christian humanism gains insights from science and philosophy about the rhythms of nature that Christian theology must necessarily assume when developing its ethics and social theory.

My central argument is that Christian humanism in particular, and religious humanism in general, can best be revived if the conversation between science and religion proceeds within what I call a "critical hermeneutic philosophy." I try to explain and illustrate what this point of view can contribute to both the science-religion discussion and the strengthening of religious and Christian humanism.

I distinguish Christian from religious humanism. Christian humanism takes as its point of departure the multifaceted strands of the Christian tradition. It tries to relate to science out of the depths of this complex tradition—a tradition that has dominated in the West, shaped many of its

institutions and much of its law, and placed a stamp on most of its academic disciplines. Because of the influence of Christianity on Western culture, it deserves to be much better understood than it currently is in much academic and cultural discourse. We should study this Christian heritage because it is in our bones—even the bones of the unbeliever—in ways we often do not understand. It comes down to this: we cannot understand ourselves unless we understand what historical forces have shaped us, and Christianity is certainly one of those central influences.

By *religious humanism*, I mean to suggest that many of the other great religious traditions of the world—for example, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam—also have their humanistic dimensions. They have, at times, had their dialogues with the science and philosophy available in their respective cultures. They too can cultivate, strengthen, and revive their historical moments of religious humanism. But even here, I recommend working within the resources of specific traditions to revive the various religious humanisms. I do not advocate trying to develop some general religious humanism that transcends specific traditions and offers some homogenized and nonhistorical spirituality that is unrecognizable from the perspective of any specific religious faith. I say, instead, that in conversation with the sciences—particularly the psychological and social sciences—we should revive the humanistic dimensions of our various grand religious traditions and then enter into an interfaith dialogue with a sharper grasp of our various world religious humanisms.

My colleague and lunch partner, William Schweiker, works more with the category of theological humanism in contrast to religious or Christian humanism, although he appreciates these labels as well. By *theological humanism*, he means a critical perspective on Christian theology that includes but goes beyond confession and thereby enters into a reflective dialogue with both nontheological disciplines and other faiths.[1] He believes that elements of this agenda can be found in other religions as well as Christianity and that this critical reflective attitude should be encouraged in both interfaith dialogue and the emerging field of comparative religious

ethics. I agree. When I use the term *religious humanism*, I mean to include the possibility of this critical reflective stance as central to the strategy of strengthening and revival that I am proposing.

Summaries of books are never fun to read. They tend to be too condensed and abstract. Because the meat is not in the advanced review of the argument, the bones themselves seem all the more dry. Nonetheless, the arguments of this small book are complex. The range of references covers several disciplines. It is an interdisciplinary study. Although the relation of science to religion is the overall topic, I make use of perspectives in the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of science, theology, moral philosophy, psychology, psychotherapy, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, sociology, economics, and law. So, a sketch of the content and argument might prove helpful, even if tedious to read the first time through. Furthermore, readers might profit from an occasional glance back to this summary as they go through the text—lending a little extra help to keep the argument straight.

The first chapter, "Science, Religion, and a Revived Religious Humanism," announces the central concern and basic methodology of this study. It advances the thesis, already announced above, that a possible consequence of the dialogue between science and religion is a revived religious humanism—a firmer grasp of the historical and phenomenological meanings of the great world religions correlated with the more accurate explanations of the rhythms of nature that natural science can provide. Although there are hints of interaction between Greek science and philosophy with the teachings of early Christianity, the first great expressions of religious humanism in the West emerged when Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scholars sat in the same libraries in Spain and Sicily, studying and translating the lost manuscripts of Aristotle in the ninth and tenth centuries to understand his ethics, epistemology, and psychobiology. This study established strands of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic humanism that are important models even for the needs of today.

Other religious traditions have their moments of religious humanism as well. Chapter 1 also argues that, in our day, the science-religion

dialogue—exemplified by interaction among psychology, spirituality, and psychotherapy—will best support such a revival if guided by the philosophical resources of critical hermeneutics (sometimes called hermeneutical realism) supplemented by William James's brand of phenomenology and pragmatism. In this chapter, I develop primarily the contributions of Paul Ricoeur to hermeneutic realism and his unique ability to find a place for the natural sciences within hermeneutic phenomenology in his formula of understanding-explanation-understanding—his useful epistemological summary for relating the humanities to science. James's contribution is developed in later chapters.

In chapter 2, "Broadening Psychology, Refining Theology," I argue that the payoff of this strategy will be to both broaden the subject matter of psychology and refine assumptions about nature in religious traditions. Since I am a Christian practical theologian, I exemplify these claims chiefly with Christian materials and occasional references to folk and other axial religions. I hope that readers who are not Christians will follow me into this discussion, not because I hope to convert them but because I want to illustrate how science can help refine religious traditions rather than to attack or dismantle them.

In chapter 2, I offer two case studies of how Christian theology can be refined and how psychology can be broadened. I first do this by looking at the implications for the so-called Christian doctrine of the atonement as to how empathy works change in psychotherapy and how "radical empathy" works change in the healing rites of folk religions. Here I have in mind the debate in Christian theologies of the atonement among Christus victor models, penal substitutionary models, and moral influence models of the efficacy of Christ's death. Advances in the social neurosciences on radical empathy and simulation theory lead me to see the strengths of Christ's identification with the suffering of humankind in the Christus victor model.

The second illustration brings natural-science work on love and loneliness to the debate among the *eros*, *caritas*, and *agape* views of the nature of Christian love. I argue that new understandings of the role of

the affections in attachment theory and evolutionary psychology tilt the argument toward the caritas model. Science will do better if it works hard to understand (in the sense of *verstehen)* the complexity of religious traditions. This will help science comprehend that what it offers as critiques of religions are often actually refinements of traditions that have had ongoing conversations about competing interpretations. This attitude will help science—including the psychological sciences—develop new hypotheses about how cultures and religions shape experience. The chapter concludes by clarifying my own Christology as it has developed over the years and by defending the need to locate spirituality within the category of religion.

In chapter 3, "Change and Critique in Psychology, Therapy, and Spirituality," I contend that changing people in psychology, therapy, and spirituality is not enough. We should be able to critique these claims about change. Not all change is for the good in the long run, even if we are tempted to welcome a brief moment of relief or reorientation. In my earlier work, I joined with Robert Bellah, Christopher Lasch, and, later, Frank Richardson in being somewhat critical of the individualism promoted by much of psychotherapy. Some people make the same charge against our culture's new fascination with the category of spirituality. I confess in this chapter that I may have overstated the implicit individualism of the modern therapies. But I also defend my earlier interest in assessing the views of health and human fulfillment in the modern psychologies and psychotherapies.

Now, however, I bring into play the moral anthropology of Paul Ricoeur to help with this task. I set forth his distinction between ethics (striving to attain the goods of life) and morality (concern to resolve conflicts among goods). I compare his view with the distinctions between nonmoral and moral goods in moral philosopher William Frankena and between premoral and moral goods in the Catholic moral theologian Louis Janssens. I also show how Ricoeur locates this distinction between ethics and morality with reference to his theory of practice, narrative, the deontological critique, and wisdom in the concrete situation. I then locate the contributions and

limitations of views about the goals of change in some personality and therapeutic theories, evolutionary psychology, Jonathan Haidt's moral intuitionism, neuroscientist Donald Pfaff's explanation of the Golden Rule, and Lawrence Kohlberg's Kantian-oriented moral psychology. I show that many of the modern psychologies have much to offer to our attempts to define what Ricoeur calls ethics or Janssens calls the premoral good, but they have less to contribute to defining morality in its fuller sense. This has implications for assessing the goals of change proffered by these disciplines and practices.

In chapter 4, "Religion, Science, and the New Spirituality," I turn to the dialogue among these three elements. I carry this inquiry into a more detailed look at spirituality—more specifically, into what I take to be the way the science-religion dialogue is now shaping spirituality. I claim that, along with other modern trends, science is influencing spirituality to give more attention to relationships (attachments and family), work or vocation, and practical reason. Modern medicine is interested in the health values of spirituality. Modern psychology of religion is concerned with how spirituality influences relationships, marriage, sexuality, work, health, wealth, and citizenship. I review examples of the positive psychology movement that illustrate its tendency to evaluate spiritualities from these frameworks and sometimes make uninformed judgments about what some claim to be Buddhism's rejection of human relationships and Christianity's abstract and overly idealistic view of love. This may be another illustration of science failing to precede explanation (and its implicit critiques) with adequate understanding (*verstehen*) of the ongoing debates over interpretation within particular religious traditions.

I then discuss the double entendres of the language of finite goods and transcendent realities that float through much contemporary therapeutic and spiritual language. I contend that natural scientists should both notice this double language and grasp why humans tend to talk at two levels of meaning (mundane and transcendent) at the same time, especially about healing. Rather than prematurely rejecting this language as an aberration,

science should try instead to understand what these levels of meaning do for each other. I end with a brief review of how Ignatius Loyola informed the values of family (relationships), work (career and vocation), and practical reason with his view of the moral implications of Christian ethics and narrative. Ignatius may give us a clue as to what the more transcendent aspects of some spiritualities can contribute to the new interest in family, work, and practical reason in recent developments in spirituality.

In chapter 5, "Mental Health and Spirituality: Their Institutional Embodiments," I turn to neglected institutional considerations of the science-religion dialogue. I hold that it is essential to the revival of a viable religious humanism to consider the institutional embodiments of religious experience and sensibility—a theme that began to emerge in chapter 2. In addition, I argue that the institutional embodiments of religious experience need orchestration with other institutions, including the mental health institutions. I give special attention to the mental health institution of psychiatry in this chapter. Philosopher Kwame Appiah, in his response to the moral intuitionism of Joshua Green and Jonathan Haidt, points out that if our moral thinking is shaped first by primitive intuitions—such as in-group/out-group, respect for hierarchy, and purity and disgust—with only moderate influence from our higher deliberative capacities, this may argue only for the importance of the ongoing and slow moral reflective processes of institutions in modern societies.

This insight into the importance of institutions leads me to call for a public philosophy for psychiatry in its relation to the other institutions of society, including religious institutions. I quote evidence that psychiatry has relinquished its earlier concern, evident between 1940 and 1970, with mental health and psychotherapy and in recent decades has narrowed its interests to mental states that can be addressed with psychopharmacology. I summarize social science evidence indicating that psychiatry has inadequately studied religion and its contributions to human well-being. There is further evidence that psychiatry and American religious institutions are somewhat alienated from each other and that this distrust

partially explains the rise among religious bodies of alternative mental health systems, sometimes of an explicitly religious kind. I examine how Ricoeur's dialectic between understanding-explanation-understanding supplemented by William James's wedding of his brand of phenomenology with the consequentialism of his pragmatism can together be resources for a public philosophy of psychiatry in relation to religious institutions. Such an orchestration of mental health institutions and religious institutions may be essential for reviving religious and, more specifically, Christian humanism.

Finally, in chapter 6, "Institutional Ethics and Families: Therapy, Law, and Religion," I carry further the institutional aspects of the dialogue between science and religion as exemplified by the contemporary interaction among psychology, psychotherapy, and spirituality. In the course of these lectures, the institutional aspects of the science-religion dialogue have become increasingly salient. I raise this issue again by discussing the unavoidable encounters among marriage and family therapy, law, and various religious traditions.

I summarize in that final chapter published empirical evidence showing that several subdisciplines of marriage and family therapy, while not completely agreeing about ethical issues they face in their work, have amazing areas of consensus. In fact, there may be implicit in their shared moral sensibilities the nucleus of a public philosophy for this specialty of the mental health field. The various family and marriage counselors surveyed—psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, pastoral counselors, marriage and family therapists—are surprisingly traditional in their views of marriage, family, and what is good for children. They are not individualistic, or at least not as much so, as is often thought. Rather, they hold what our survey report called an ethic of *relationality.* This flies in the face of widespread charges about the implicit individualistic ethic of the modern therapies; this complaint does not seem to apply to marriage and family therapists.

But an ethic of relationality does not solve everything and can itself have surprising, and possibly negative, implications if taken in certain directions. I summarize my recent work in family-law theory and show how the therapeutic emphasis on family relationality and process is used by law, along with other justifications, to argue for either the delegalization of marriage or the functional equivalence of cohabitation and legal marriage. This, in many ways, puts the results of our national survey of the ethics of family and marriage counselors at odds with the dominant direction of U.S. family-law theory today. I conclude with an appreciative review of the legal theories of Margaret Brinig, who synthesizes a phenomenology of Western religious covenant theory, evolutionary psychology, and the new institutional economics to build a fresh justification for maintaining the "signaling" and "channeling" functions of legal marriage. This is supported by her highly respected empirical research with University of Virginia sociologist Steven Nock on the importance of legal institutions in guiding personal and public behavior. I contend that marriage and family therapists, in their own efforts to orchestrate their work with other institutions, need to confront the tensions on the borderline between law, psychology, and religion. Such a dialogue is also important for a revived religious humanism.

I conclude with a summary of the argument and a forecast for the future of the science-religion dialogue. I contend that the dialogue among psychology, psychotherapy, and spirituality is crucial to combat both the new fundamentalists of our day and the new atheists who advance allegedly scientific justifications for their positions. A third alternative to these two contending cultural movements is a revived religious humanism in general and a revived Christian humanism in particular. I end by saying more about the importance of spirituality to be embodied within ongoing religious institutions and traditions and not just a free-standing, individualistic source of comfort and well-being.