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Adem Sahin’s (2013) article, ‘Reflections on the Possibility of an Islamic Psychology’ provides a welcome opportunity for scholars across various disciplines to think carefully and dialogue about the interface and possible connections between world religions and psychological science. In this response I articulate some areas of agreement and a few questions. I also briefly review three existing approaches to integrate religion and psychology and then call for a united psychology of religion that represents the vast cultural and religious diversity of people around the world.

Areas of Agreement

Sahin raises several important and specific points that many conducting psychology of religion research, from any world religion perspective, would be wise to consider. For example, it is very important for scales intended to assess religious-spiritual dimensions to be sensitive to the cultural and religious

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To be as transparent as possible, I disclose my own conceptualization of psychology of religion at this time, worldview, and professional training. I conceptualize psychology of religion as the
diversity of the individuals studied (Sahin, p. 323). Measures that make explicit reference to names for a higher power or a specific sacred text may not be appropriate for a religiously diverse sample (or the validity of conclusions from such studies could be questioned). Worthington et al.’s (2003) religious commitment inventory is a good example of a scale that could be used with religiously heterogeneous samples.

I also concur with Sahin that psychological scientists should strive to be as objective as possible and acknowledge if their personal religious or secular worldview affects interpretations (Sahin, p. 326). As Sahin discusses the interface between psychology and religion, he makes the point that an Islamic psychology should “not derive its authority and validity from the Islamic Scriptures” but rather use methods of modern sciences, investigate the behaviors of the people living in Islamic cultural settings, and give priority to indigenous cultural features (Sahin, pp. 333-334). The same could be said about other world religion approaches to psychology.

Finally, Sahin (p. 328) summarizes Soroush (1995, pp. 15-17) as follows, “If the Muslims are to understand their religion well, they should come to terms with the sciences of their age.” This seems like a timeless observation. People from all world religions (or none) would be wise to come to terms with the sciences of their age. In the history of science there have been important observations that are good reasons for scientific revolution. Likewise, advances in science and technology will continue to have profound implications for cultural and religious understandings of what it means to be human.

scientific study of human thinking (cognition), feeling (emotion), and behaviors that involve the religion of individuals across situations and cultural contexts. As I seek to better understand the role of religion in everyday life, my preference is for rigorous quantitative research, but I acknowledge much can be gained from more in-depth qualitative approaches.

Given my editorial role with this journal, it is important that I confess I am a practicing Christian who respects where others are with regard to their own religious-spiritual formation at this time and place in their lives. When studying the variety of religious experiences, I attempt to be aware of and attend to my worldview and the perceptual and cognitive lenses through which various phenomena are viewed and interpreted. We may attempt to be neutral or unbiased, but context, place, perspective, cognitive schemata, and worldviews undoubtedly affect our perceptions and interpretations. My advanced degree is in Experimental (Social) Psychology. My academic lineage has been traced from my dissertation advisor at the University of Louisville (Michael Cunningham) to his advisor at the University of Minnesota (Paul Rosenblatt) and so on to Donald T. Campbell, Edward Tolman, Hugo Munsterberg, and Wilhelm Wundt—who established the first experimental psychology laboratory in 1879. I mention my academic background because it provides some context and perspective from which I experienced Sahin’s (2013) Reflections on the Possibility of an Islamic Psychology. The history of psychology and religion are also important to consider if we are to have a vibrant and informed psychology of religion.