Introduction

What is the relationship between religion and emotion? I will try to clarify this question while addressing an interesting research report that validates the hypothesis that transcendent religion tends to be associated with positive moods and emotions whereas a literal approach to religion is more often associated with negative moods and emotions. Why do distinctions of a religious typology cohere with distinctions of emotional states? In this article, I will not be scrupulously pursuing the argumentation of Duriez and Hutsebaut, or seeking to answer questions they might have left open in their research report. Also, I will not theologically reflect on this particular research, in order to avoid the pitfall of a two-phased model of interdisciplinary exchange in which psychologists supply (empirical) data and theologians interpret these (normatively). Instead, I merely hope to offer some notes on the *status questionis* from which the article can be understood. I will start by questioning Wulff's conceptual framework of religious interpretation. Secondly, I will understand the relationship of emotion and religion as emotional interpretation of religion. Thirdly, I will describe this relationship as religious interpretation of emotion. Finally, I hope to outline some theoretical opportunities for interpreting the relationship between emotion and religion.

1. Interpreting Religion

To illuminate the relationship of religion and emotion it is first of all necessary to decide what kind of religion is envisaged. One possibility is to begin by formulating different types of religious understanding. Wulff (1991), for example, sees the variety of views on psychology of religion as consisting of two continua that, when set at right angles to each other, locate four different types of religious views. One continuum is that of transcendence: is it included or is it excluded? Do objects of religious interest participate in a divine reality or is participation limited to the secular realm of an immanent understanding of reality? The other continuum relates to the consistency of religious expression: are beliefs, images or rituals interpreted from a literal or from a symbolic frame of reference? Is religious faith understood as referring to unequivocal expressions or to metaphoric – equivocal – concepts? When represented graphically,
the two continua yield four quadrants, i.e. literal affirmation or orthodoxy (transcendent-literal), restorative interpretation or second naivété (transcendent-symbolic), literal disaffirmation or external critique (immanent-literal), and reductive interpretation or relativism (immanent-symbolic) (630-636). As Wulff acknowledges, the scheme has drawbacks and is meant for evaluative and heuristic use. Even then, or perhaps especially then, one can question the concepts implied in the two continua.

The opposition of transcendence and immanence, or of transcendence and the absence of transcendence, as a way of assessing religious views may not be as valid a procedure as it seems. Opposing religious verticalism and religious horizontalism underestimates the interplay and interdependence of the two views. The exclusion of transcendence may well prove to be not religious at all, whereas transcendence may well imply its worldly and even secular location and expression. By excluding the question of the relevance of religion for worldly contingencies, the distinction may hold, but when aiming for an inquiry into the relation of religion and emotion this seems an unlikely procedure. There are both anthropological (e.g. Geertzian) and theological (e.g. Tillichian) definitions of religion for which the tension between actual and envisaged realities is characteristic and that thus avoid conceptually tricky extrapolations of divine and secular realms.

The implicit question of how to conceive of the relation of religious and secular realms returns in the other distinction that Wulff makes. Establishing an opposition of literal and symbolic views by positing the first as based on affirmation processes and the second as based on interpretation processes is not valid. Of course affirmative epiphenomena such as religious fundamentalism and disaffirmative epiphenomena such as theoretical behaviourist views of religion also imply, and appeal to, interpretation processes. To fail to recognise this is to disregard the underlying semiotic antecedents of both literal and symbolic views, such as the (religious) sign implied, the (religious) reality represented (denotatum), the (religious) interpreter, the (religious) interpretation result (interpretant), and the (religious) interpretation rules (codes) (Peirce 1985). If there is a claim of developing Wulff's theorizing, one should take into consideration that the model is really a typology of religious interpretation that needs conceptual elaboration. Thus, there is a need to value both the complexity of the implied concepts of religion and interpretation, as well as the implied interdependence of these concepts.

These critical remarks concerning a typology of religious understanding and reasoning are not without consequences for an assessment of the relationship of religion and emotion, as I hope to demonstrate. This relationship can be approached from two different perspectives: it can be understood as emotional inter-