

Podcast Transcript

Version 1.1, 10 May 2018



From Static Categories to a River of Theories: “The Myth of Disenchantment” and Framing Religious Studies

Podcast with **Jason Ā Josephson-Storm** (14 May 2018).

Interviewed by **Daniel Gorman Jr.**

Transcribed by **Helen Bradstock**.

Audio and transcript available at:

<http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/from-static-categories-to-a-river-of-theories-the-myth-of-disenchantment-and-framing-religious-studies/>

Daniel Gorman (DG): *Good afternoon, Professor!*

Jason Josephson-Storm (JJS): Good afternoon, Dan.

DG: *So [Jason Josephson-Storm](#) is calling in today, from Williamstown, Massachusetts.*

JJS: *Indeed! The snowy part of the state, yes.*

DG: *And I'm sitting in my kitchen, and the snow hasn't reached me yet.*

JJS: *Oh, right.*

DG: *Today we will be talking about your new book, [The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity and the Birth of the Human Sciences](#), published last May, by the University of Chicago Press. But I think, before we get into that, we should tell our listeners where you're from, historiographically. Your first book was set across the Pacific: [The Invention of Religion in Japan](#).*

JJS: *Yes, indeed. My first book was my dissertation – a heavily revised dissertation – called *The Invention of Religion in Japan*. And it was basically about Japanese intellectuals encountering the category religion for the first time, in a set of trade treaties in the mid nineteenth century, and trying to figure out what the word religion meant. Because there wasn't necessarily an equivalent translation term for religion in Japanese. And they had no clear idea what – if anything, in Japan – was a religion, or counted as the category religion. And in that book I traced how the category religion was debated*

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and articulated in Japan, and how Japanese thinkers came to see that the term was embedded in a set of contrasts. On the one hand, with religion and science as putative opposites, and the other as religion and superstition, as another imposing term. And to figure out one, you had to figure out the other. At least that's what Japanese thinkers ended up deciding. And they ended up coining a completely new vocabulary of new terms, in Japanese. For example, like the term *shūkyō* for religion, or *kagaku* for science, that didn't exist before this encounter with European thought. So yes, that was my dissertation. I did both sides of the encounter. Mostly I was looking at Japanese sources – Japanese thinkers looking to the West and then, in some cases in that book, I flipped the encounter and looked at Europeans writing about Japan in the same period. And looked at their mismatch of conceptual ideas and terms.

DG: *If I remember correctly in The Invention of Religion in Japan, you talk about a few Japanese intellectuals who spend time studying in the United States?*

JJS: Yes, that's right, including thinkers like [Mori Arinori](#) who famously came to the United States – I think it was at Amherst College, actually – which is our arch-rival here, from Williams. But I look at a number of Japanese intellectuals who travelled in the United States and wrote about their experiences there, definitely. And they tried to figure out the central edifices of Western thought. And this is a group of Japanese whose writings in the West has been historically less studied, because they studied weird things that don't fit the story that Europeans like to tell about Europe. So they were considered to have got it wrong. But, actually, I think they had a lot of perceptive, interesting things to say. But that was the first book.

DG: *I want to dig into that, a little bit. You were mentioning the story that Western Europeans are telling about themselves. And that's an essential idea to The Myth of Disenchantment, your next book. What do you see as the story that they're telling about themselves?*

JJS: So, one of the things that the Europeans presented was an equation between their technological civilisation – in other words their guns and their boats and what-have-you – and their either cultural or intellectual traditions. And Europeans tended to tie them together and argue for the superiority and the fundamental connection between the two. So even though gunpowder was invented in China and the print press had its earlier formation, for example, in China (although we can't see direct transition there) Europeans presented European technology as proof that European civilisation was superior, and they claimed, often, that European civilisation was superior for two competing reasons: either because

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European civilisation at that time was considered Christian, or they claimed that their civilisation was superior because it was more rational. But Japanese intellectuals encountering British culture were worried about: What is this Christianity? Is it uniform? And, particularly, they questioned the rationality of European thought. Versions of that were questions about the disenchantment narrative. So Europeans often claimed that their particular form of superiority came from the fact that they had disabused themselves of superstitions. But some Japanese thinkers noticed that . . . and this didn't make it into the first book or the second book, but I'm publishing it elsewhere as an article. A bunch of Japanese thinkers, instead of seeing a disenchanted West, saw a West full of spiritualists, full of people believing in the Occult, full of Pentecostal religious revivals, full of people who believe in charms and the efficacy of talismans. So, in that respect, the presentation of the West – particularly Europe or America – as radically “other”, in terms of its lack of superstitions, didn't make sense to them. They could see not only a disenchanted West but, in a way, a mystical West (5:00). And they saw a parallel, as they saw it, in European interest in things like x-rays and radioactivity. European science was populating the world with invisible forces and a number of European thinkers equated those . . . talked about spiritualism in terms of radioactivity or in terms of x-rays, or what have you. So one of the things that interested me early on was this interesting reading that Japanese thinkers produced about the West. The other things that they saw, or didn't see, that I found interesting in that project were distinctions between philosophy and religion that they found to be really problematic. And the idea of a secular state was a construct that was, in many respects, mythical, or what-have-you. So that's a lot about that book. Yes.

DG: *What you're suggesting is that with these Japanese intellectuals in the late 19th century – they're looking and saying . . . with their connection between science and religion, they're anticipating figures like [Alfred North Whitehead](#).*

JJS: You mean, who might see those two as having a different relationship?

DG: *Yes. So, for instance, Whitehead is a mathematician but he's talking about universal principals of the spirit. He's making those connections. [William James](#) is using social science but he's also interested in psychical phenomena. These individuals don't fit neatly into the philosophical box you're describing.*

JJS: Yes, exactly. And I think they didn't fit in a box from Japanese scholars, and they don't fit that opposition. A lot of European scholars have put that opposition today. One of the grand myths that –

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to sort-of pivot to the next book – that I'm interrogating in *The Myth of Disenchantment*, is this notion of a necessary conflict between religion and science – which turns out to be a pervasive myth articulated, basically, in the 19th century in Europe and America. And it presumes that religion and science are necessarily in conflict. And there are a lot of interesting things we could say about, for example, [Draper](#) who is the first to talk about the conflict model, which he himself already uses as a Protestant anti-Catholic argument. Or we could say something about the number of scientists themselves who have not seen these two things in conflict, or whatever. But what I was really interested in, is how the categories of religion and science got articulated spaces, as terrains – to borrow something [Peter Harrison](#) later talked about, he uses that language – but to think how religion and science were defined in opposition. And one of thing that I notice And I'm sorry, if I get excited I talk too fast! So I'll try and slow down a little bit. One of the things I noticed is that, conceptually, there was often a third term: not only were religion and science positioned in conflict, as part of this myth of a conflict model, but also often religion was seen as opposed to something – superstition – which was like the pseudo-religion, or the thing that looked like religion but is not religion, often described a superstition or magic. But similarly, science was also positioned in opposition to something called “pseudo-science”, which was also described as superstition or magic. So it seemed like the intellectual edifice that was being formulated in the 19th century was a triadic oppositional structure between, on the one hand, a conversation about the difference between religion and science, but also about religion and magic, or magic and science. And, in particular, areas that religion and science seemed to overlap were the most likely to be policed as illegitimate, as pseudo-science or as magic, or as . . . I'm thinking of things like psychical research, spiritualism, table-turning or what-have-you, that presented itself as a science, as a science of the dead . . .

DG: *It satisfies neither group. Something like spiritualism, it satisfies neither the pure modernist, the scientist, and it doesn't satisfy the Christians either.*

JJS: Yes, often. Although there are a range of scientists who love spiritualism and a range of Christians or Quakers, or what-have-you that, as we know, were into spiritualism. But you're right, that it didn't fit the clean definitional lines. But it became an object of attack from both sides. So one of the things that already motivated the transition between the two books was, I got interested in trying to figure out . . . if in Japan, in the 19th century, they were encountering these three categories as if they were already accomplished things: religion, science and magic or superstition. I was interested in how those three got formulated as three distinct categories in thought, and how much boundary work

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was going on in policing them – and also the ways that boundary work collapsed. And then, the other kind-of insight that motivated this second project is that a lot of the conversation about this third term – magic or spiritualism – connected itself up to a notion of modernity as such. So one of the central myths, that I think is still shared in much of the social sciences, is the notion of some grand periodisation called modernity. And the idea is that at a certain point – everybody disagrees about when, but it may be the birth of the printing press, or industrialisation, or the Protestant Reformation, or what-have-you – there's a rupture, after which we enter a period called modernity, but often modernity is described in terms of something called disenchantment (10:00). And that disenchantment is usually defined as an end of belief in spirit, or an end of belief in magic. But the problem is that, if you look at it – and I have a chapter that looks at the sociological evidence – people didn't stop believing in spirits. Many Americans, arguably – depending upon how you define the categories – something like 75% of Americans hold onto some kind of paranormal or general belief in spirits, in ghosts, in angels, in demons, demons that possess people etc., psychical powers – all this stuff is really widespread – astrology, for example. So, you know, we might guess that the academy has more sceptics than other, but even then it's not necessarily clear. It's just there are different kinds of belief that people have. So it doesn't look like contemporary America is disenchanted, according to those logics – or contemporary Western Europe. And what's more, it turns out that the notion of modernity as itself disenchanted, was basically formulated in the 19th century. And this is a period where we hear about revival, about spiritualist séances, about the widespread birth of psychical research, and theosophy, and a whole bunch of other positions. So it turns out that – as I argue in this book, *The Myth of Disenchantment* – after looking at . . . I started looking at these founding figures of this narrative of modernity as disenchantment, who are often the founders of many of our disciplines: founders of Sociology, or Psychology, or Psychoanalysis, or Philosophy, or Religious Studies. And I looked through their diaries and their letters, and I was able to locate them in the exact milieu where magic was, itself, being practised or believed. They hung out with spiritualists, or they themselves called their own project theosophy, and talked to these theosophists. So it looked, in a way, that the myth of magic departure was part and parcel of conversations of occultists as well as scholars of religion. So [Helena Blavatsky](#), for example – the founder of the Theosophical Society – she described modernity in terms of the disenchantment, and said that the central feature of the West was that it had lost belief in magic – even as she wanted to return to India, and her hidden masters, to recoup the missing pieces! So it looked like the difference . . . normally disciplines like Sociology and Religious Studies describe themselves as disenchanting or secularising. But that becomes harder to countenance when you know that in the individual lives of a lot of these people – let's say [Sigmund Freud](#) – they find themselves having the

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beliefs that they are, themselves, describing as archaic! So, what it means is that there is a way in which this very notion of modernity as disenchanting turns out to be a myth. And that turns out to be one of the many things I try to argue in the book. Basically, not only isn't it true now, but it wasn't true then. And we can see, if we look at the lives – the private lives – of all these thinkers, that they had all these kind-of, let's say, heterodox, or complicated, or interesting, or enchanted beliefs themselves. So I think that's one of the big pay-offs.

DG: *Hang on! Sorry I want to get a word in, here!*

JJS: Yes, sorry!

DG: *So you mentioned that there's a flood narrative, to say that there's a triadic opposition of magic, Western Christianity and (science). If that's a flawed model, and everything's more fluid and, as you say, you have scientists like [Curie](#) and [Max Müller](#) who are going to séances, then what is the correct structure? Is there even a structure? Shall we get rid of this triad? Is it the tesseract, and multiple dimensions wrapping around itself, or what is it?*

JJS: So, I think we tend to think of this triad as necessary and universal. But I think we're wrong about that. What I'm not saying is that nobody believed in this triad but rather, in the process of constructing this triad, we carved out a much more complex, heterogeneous space and then made a bunch of arbitrary divisions around it. So one of the things I'm trying to do is challenge the presumption of that triad. I would agree that it needs to be unwoven, in a certain way. But that doesn't mean that we deny that we've had this history. So one of the things that I'm really interested in is how we study – just to take a step back to these higher categories. So, we spend a bunch of time sitting in the horizon of these categories. So, let's say, we spend much time thinking of religion as a universal, and then trying to define the features that religion has. What's the definition of religion, and how is it in all sides, and in all cultures? I don't think that . . . That project has failed. My book isn't the first to show this. Neither of my books is the first to show this. But there's a lot of evidence to suggest that the category of religion takes its primary relation to a particular period in Euro-American history and then is imposed, in a heavily negotiated and contested way, on the rest of the globe. But what I think we can do, as scholars, is then to not study the category as a universal thing, but study the category as it is articulated and the effects that it's had. So we can trace this category as a kind of unfolding process or, what I like to call a “higher order assemblage”, and look at how various things are recruited into it. It's like an unfolding process, like a stream. To take a metaphor, what I'm trying to do is, I'm kind-of . . . instead

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of a process physics – a process anthropology (15:00). And to look how these categories were historically conditioned and articulated within the implications of doing that. And that means that we have to look at ourselves as scholars within the categories themselves, and kind-of work them out. Anyway, this is stuff I'm working on for the next book. So I shouldn't monologue any more about it! But I'm working on a book called [Absolute Disruption: The Future of Theory after Postmodernism](#). And that's exactly about: how do we work with, and study, these higher order categories. And how do we sort-of function without returning to the older discredited modernism, or turning into the word-play of postmodernism. And what I argue for is a kind of pride in “humble science” is one of my phrases. And I kind-of come up with a new philosophy of social science for a post-Kuhnian way of looking at the world as these kind-of aggregated processes. But I should step back, and return to this before I get carried away.

DG: *There is a little bit to unpack there. Let's begin with this idea of . . . I think one of the things we're dancing around in this conversation is there is a difference between studying something, and there is a difference between practising it. So you mentioned, for instance, three are people in the 19th Century who believe in the triumvirate of magic, spiritualism and science – no excuse me I got the triumvirate wrong, the triumvirate is Christianity, Spiritualism and science: OK, take a step back to the present. . .*

JJS: Or religion, science and magic, or whatever. Yes.

DG: *So then, as a scholar looking back, you're seeing the flowing river where it's all intertwined and there is no simple static thing. So then let's go to another level, ok? You've got the people in the past with the triad; you've got the people today, studying, saying, “No. I see a stream in which these people were functioning.” So what's the next step? Where do we go if we're saying that our narrative of modernity and postmodernity is flawed? What's the next step for building a framework to understand this stuff? Because we still have to live with it in the present day.*

JJS: So what I'm saying is, to locate ourselves within the horizon of temporality. So I mean, in that respect, one of the things that we have to do is recognise the limitedness of our own conceptual categories. I mean, now we're really onto my third book stuff - so this is fun! But one of the things that we do is we have to recognise . . . I should take a step back, and talk about the history of modernism and postmodernism, and then tell you . . . So, one of the things that many academic disciplines were predicated on was the notion of concepts. That was essentially Aristotelian in its basic function. This is a notion of concepts as having necessary and sufficient conditions for membership. And what's more,

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we thought that our concepts mapped on the world – that they cut up what the Greeks had called the “joints of nature” – in other words, looked at where nature divided things up. So that made natural kinds of distinctions. This is often called “natural kinds”. And we thought that if you could find necessary and sufficient conditions for membership in a given category, that you could identify its essence. And if you could say something about its essence you could begin to discover and develop, let's say, robust or scientific knowledge about a subject. In the hard sciences we've already begun to challenge that notion of essences. And I think a lot of philosophy of science has already moved past the way that those conceptions or categories are articulated. But in the humanities we also had a crisis around this, because we discovered that many of our concepts no longer worked. The capacity to produce necessary and sufficient conditions for the category of religion turns out to have been a flawed process, etc. So the question then becomes Instead of thinking about nature as jointed, in the old fashioned way, we have to think of it in the way of a disjointed nature. And this is at least true. Even if you think that there is a distinction between natural kinds and human kinds, in which nature itself has joints, it's pretty clear that human concepts don't have the kinds of joints that we would like to project upon them. The joints that we have are historically contingent. So part of what we end up doing in studying is locating ourselves within our study – so this is a kind of reflexivity – and then focussing on how these conceptual categories were themselves constructed. But I'm aware that we're getting away from . . .

DG: *Yes. I feel like we're moving beyond The Myth of Disenchantment to what comes after. We realised that the myth of disenchantment is flawed. And we're also running out of time. So, we sketched out the theoretical terrain. But what struck me with this book is that, as much as we talk about the critical theory and the flawed basis of modernity, you're showing an incredible range of material in, let's see: German, French, English – you're doing comparative linguistic work here, also.*

SSJ: Yes.

DG: *What is your . . . I mean, it almost sounds like a [Larry King softball question](#), but I'm curious! What is your language training, to be able to do a book like this? Because it's almost like you were doing the work of four books in one. You're talking about German intellectual history, you talk about the Renaissance, you talk about Occultism, and Britain and America in the '50s.*

JJS: Yes, so I grew up bilingual with French and English, and I went to a French and English Educational school until I went to High School. And having basically tested out of High School

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French, I started Japanese in High School (20:00). And my mother was born in Germany. So I grew up also with sharing a lot of German. So I had, basically, those four – German is my weakest of those languages. I also spent some time in Barcelona, studying Spanish. And then I lived in France for a couple for years, and I lived in Japan and I lived in Germany. And when I was in Japan I studied Classical Chinese. So, basically, I have English, French, Spanish, German, Japanese and Classical Chinese. And then from Romance languages and Germanic languages you can get to other Romance and Germanic languages easily. And then, when I was here a few years ago at Williams, I did tutoring- I took and received tutoring from a classicist here, in Latin. So I was working on building my Latin. At the moment I've just started – I love languages – I've just started Biblical Hebrew. So in fact, what I'm going to go to in thirty minutes is my Hebrew lesson. But I just love languages! I mean, I just love them. I read in languages more than I speak with languages. I talk quickly and I like to be grammatical, and then I get tongue-tied if I try to speak. I speak all my languages better drunk, for example! But I love puzzling things out philologically. So that's the kind of stuff that was in the background of this book. Yes.

DG: *You also mentioned, in our conversation, the idea that there are moments in history – as you see it – sort-of these explosive junctures, that upset our models for understanding the world. You know, you can look at Japan: the arrival of the Westerners unsettles their way of not seeing a division between spirituality and nature. For Westerners: the atomic bomb, the discovery of the germ, the DNA – these sort of explosive moments. And I find it interesting that you started writing The Myth of Disenchantment after an explosive moment: the Fukushima disaster. So we're talking about reflexivity, so I'm trying to situate you, Josephson-Storm, in the fields that you're talking about. Where are you in the stream?*

JJS: Oh well, that's a big question! Do you want to know why I came to this particular project, when? Or do you want to hear about how I shifted from Japan to the Western European thing? Or I could go in so many different directions. That's a good one.

DG: *Well, let's focus . . . Since we're talking about historical moments that upset the stream, that upset the models, for you I want to talk about the Fukushima thing. And how does that effect the way you conceive of religion?*

JJS: I mean for me, as I mentioned at the beginning of this book, after I'd finished *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, before it had come to press, I was starting research on another project that was

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going to be called “Ghosts and Resurrections in Contemporary Japan”. And it was about the history of the notion of spirits, and about contemporary belief in talismans. And I was already making the argument that 19th and 20th century Japan wasn't disenchanted. But then the incident You know, I'd already done a lot of research towards that project. And one of the things that tipped me the other way, just by chance of timing, was in Kyoto – I was on an early tenure sabbatical doing research. And I was actually at a tattoo parlour getting some tattoo work done, when the Fukushima incident happened. It was actually- the earthquake off at Tohoku. We didn't know it was Fukushima, yet. And earthquakes aren't uncommon in Japan. They're pretty common. And we didn't, right away, know how huge the effects were going to be. So, a lot of people in the tattoo parlour would just stop what we were doing, and we were just watching the television screens. And I remember seeing the images of the tsunami, but not yet being aware of how tragic and disastrous it was going to be in terms of loss of human life. And one of the guys in the tattoo parlour was asking me about my research, and I started talking about, you know, asking people about their belief in talismans and ghosts and spirits and talking about that kind of thing. And there was one other non-Japanese person there. And when we were having this conversation this guy, who I think probably was from either Norway or Sweden or something like that, was like: “Oh, of course Japanese people believe in all these magical things. But that's because Japan is a kind-of like mystical Asia, where people still believe in magic. But in the West people don't believe in anything like that.” And I thought, the binary that was drawn – it was flawed. And, in particular – in part, we could say, autobiographically – it's because my grandmother was a famous anthropologist, [Felicita Goodman](#), who herself went kind of . . . the term people used to describe her was “went native”. On a reservation in New Mexico, she started believing in the existence of spirits. And I remember, from growing up, her offering cornmeal to the ghosts when the sunrise came up, to the spirits and the ancestors and what have you – the spirits of the land (25:00). And I knew that a lot of people came from all over the world to attend these sessions that she gave on the reservation. So some of those famous sociologist, anthropologists and artists from Germany, from Mexico, from the Unites States. And so I was always . . . I felt a bit of an outsider to that community. But I greatly admired my grandmother who was one of my intellectual heroes, and one of the reasons I study religion. And so I knew, at least, she was strange – but she wasn't *that* strange. And so this reinforced my sense that this binary between an enchanted Asia and disenchanted West, was itself a kind of mythical distinction. So that's one of the things that gave birth to this project: to kind of look at Europe with the eyes of an outsider anthropologist – or look at Europe and America from this semi-outsider vantage point. And there's where I think I saw a lot of things that I didn't expect, perhaps. But

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clearly there was disaster. I was planning to go to Tokyo and it looked like Tokyo was You couldn't get food, they were having to ship stuff into the city. I was looking online at radiation levels that were spiking, and I just thought it was probably . . . I wasn't going to be able to get the kind of research that I was going to get done, done in Tokyo. So I went to Germany, where I was intending to go at some point after that, anyway. So the disaster, in a way, uprooted me. And I made sure that my Japanese friends were safe, and I tried to keep tabs on things. But I knew, you know like it wasn't going to be conducive to You know – an American, rooting around in the archives, wasn't going to be conducive to what was happening in Fukushima and Tokyo in that particular moment. So I went to Germany and then went through the German archives, basically. I was trying to beef up my German, so I started reading a lot of stuff in German then.

DG: *We've gone around the world I think, three times at this point. I think the fact is that the stuff we're talking about – we could go on about this for hours. But our listeners only have about half an hour. So, to wrap up: I think what I see as the contribution of your book, is that it's identifying . . . instead of this singular, "us versus them", science or Christian scientists (that's two separate words, that's Christian scientists not Christian Scientists, the religion) versus the spiritualist, by showing the fact that it's more complicated. I saw a couple of different strands in your book. And I want you to critique me if you think I've got the wrong strands. You've got Christians who are scientist and spiritualist. You have scientists who are spiritualists. You have spiritualists who aren't scientists but reject Christianity. So my point is: every single part of the triad, you could flip that a couple of different ways. And so, suddenly, you've got six or seven – I don't know. . . . How many strands would you see, in the book, of how many different boxes people can fall into?*

JJS: Yes, I didn't organise it that way, but I did organise it around the birth of these different disciplines. So, I mean I think you're right, even looking at the birth of these different disciplines, what I was interested in is the different ways that people navigated those categories. And you're right, there are like a plurality. You could be pro-science, pro-magic; anti -science, anti-magic; pro-Christianity, pro-magic: anti Christianity, pro-magic. All of the possible options, and a much more pluralistic way than you would get if you bought the story that suggested that the central feature of modernity is that people no longer believed in spirits or magic.

DG: *But what you're talking about is also a more interesting story.*

Citation Info: Josephson-Storm, Jason Ā, and Daniel Gorman Jr. 2018. "From Static Categories to a River of Theories: 'The Myth of Disenchantment' and Framing Religious Studies", *The Religious Studies Project (Podcast Transcript)*. 14 May 2018. Transcribed by Helen Bradstock. Version 1.1, 10 May 2018. Available at: <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/from-static-categories-to-a-river-of-theories-the-myth-of-disenchantment-and-framing-religious-studies/>

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JJS: Yes. Thank you. Yes, I hope I highlight some interesting complexities and interesting figures. And I found a lot of stuff. I was surprised, you know, the amount of stuff that I found that was in diaries, or letters, or things that were lesser known works of a range of figures that really doesn't fit our received impression of these people. But then, I look not just at the founders of academic disciplines but – for the sake of your readers – I look at a number of famous magicians and occultists and show how *they* were in dialogue with the academic world, more than people often supposed. So [Aleister Crowley](#) and Helena Blavatsky, for example, are two key examples. And then I do five hundred years of history. So, you know, basically it's [Francis Bacon](#), to the [Vienna Positivists](#). So maybe not quite 500 years, but more like 400 years of history. It was a lot of stuff. It was a lot of fun. I had to leave out a lot.

DG: *Yes. And I've seen some of those articles you published the one called, what's it? "[God's Shadow](#)" – the one about the founders of the study of religion who were also obsessed with ghosts.*

JJS: Yes, totally. Indeed. So the book . . . there are lot of pieces that I had to cut out. Some of it has appeared in articles, and I have a bunch more of book chapters that will look at different pieces. But I'm trying to move off of that. But I just had so much and I had to cut it down for publishing purposes. So it's a little bit tight in terms of the prose. But there's a lot of evidence there, yes (30:00).

DG: *So thank you, Dr Josephson-Storm. It's been a very lively conversation!*

JJS: Good to speak to you, too.

DG: *And having gone from the triad, which is flawed, to the stream, which is interesting, I am interested to see what your theoretical book will say next. Because once you explode the streams – and living in an age of fake news where anything goes, I'm very interested in where the study of religion, and how we understand it, goes next.*

JJS: Thank you. Yes, that's what I'm working on, yes.

DG: *If you come up with a good answer, let me know!*

JJS: Yes, you'll have to read the book, or interview me when the next one comes out. It's under contract and I'm claiming I'm going to have it to the press by the end of 2019. So I have to come up with an answer by then, anyway! We'll hope it's a good one!

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DG: *Go test it on your undergrads!*

JJS: Yes, totally.

DG: *Thank you very much.*

JJS: Good to speak to you. Thank you.

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