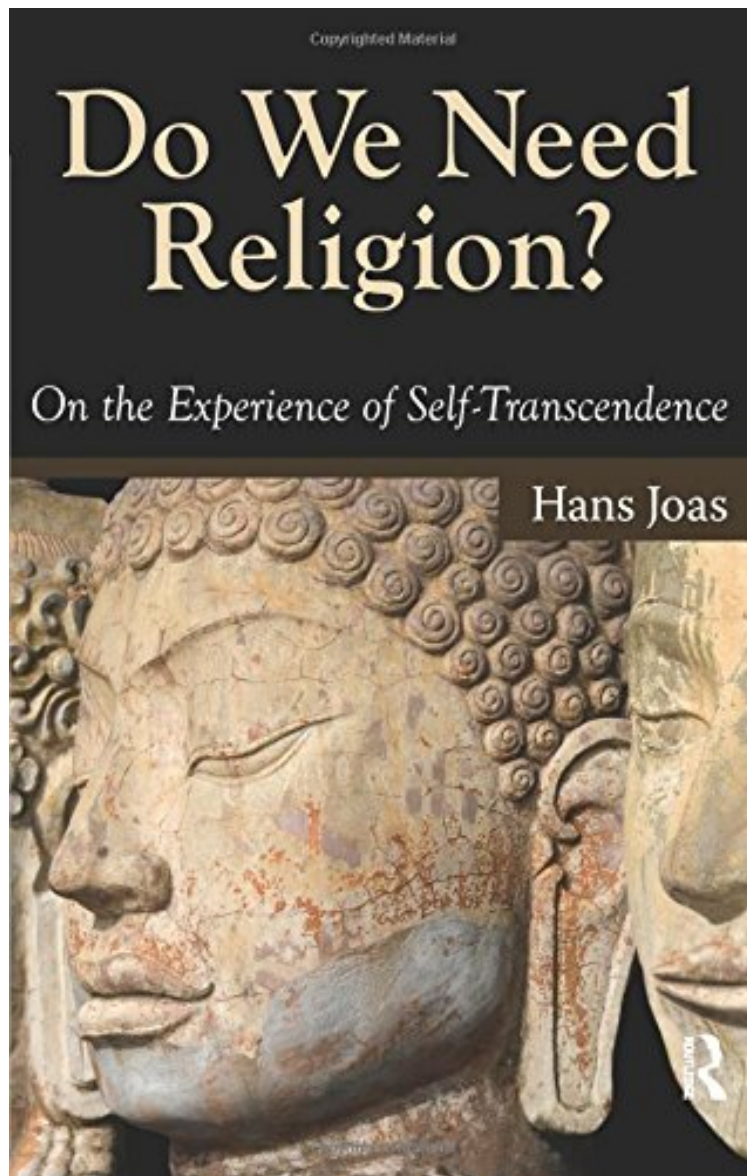


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## Do We Need Religion?: On the Experience of Self-transcendence (The Yale Cultural Sociology Series)

*Hans Joas*

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Religion?: On the Experience of Self-transcendence (The Yale Cultural Sociology Series):

The old assumption that modernization leads to secularization is outdated. Yet the certainty that religion is an anthropological universal that can only be suppressed by governments is also dead. Thus it is now a favorable moment for a new perspective on religion. This book takes human experiences of self-transcendence as its point of departure. Religious faith is seen as an attempt to articulate and interpret such experiences. Faith then is neither useful nor a symptom of weakness or misery, but an opening up of ways of experience. This book develops this basic idea, contrasts it with the thinking of some leading religious thinkers of our time, and relates it to the current debates about human rights and universal human dignity.

At a time when public discussion of religion seems polarized between religious fundamentalists and hard secularists, who in their own way are equally fundamentalist, it is refreshing to have a book that reminds us that religion is not a kind of primitive and false scientific theory, but a kind of experience, the experience of self-transcendence. Joas's reflections on religious experience and the ways it can be articulated are developed in dialogue with major contemporary thinkers such as Charles Taylor, Paul Ricoeur, and Jürgen Habermas. Open-minded and sensitive both to religious claims and to secular criticisms, Joas has made an enormous contribution to the serious discussion and understanding of religion. Robert Bellah, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of California Berkeley and coauthor of *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*. Joas offers a prescient collection of essays on the contemporary relevance of religion. [He] is a clear writer, and the appeal of the topics discussed should hold the interest of any reader interested in the phenomenon of religion. Joas's work deserves a large audience. Anglican Theological Journal

About the Author: Hans Joas is Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, where he belongs to the influential Committee on Social Thought. He is also director of the Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies in Erfurt, Germany. Among his recent English books are: *The Genesis of Values* (University of Chicago Press 2000) and *Social Theory* (with W. Knoebl, Cambridge University Press 2008).