The Idea of the Holy

RUDOLF OTTO
1869–1937

The Idea of the Holy

Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen

Translated from the German with AI (Claude) and edited

FORAGE
forage.com

The Idea of the Holy · Rudolf Otto (1869–1937)

Translated from the German with AI (Claude) and edited. Reading edition, Forage, September 2026. forage.com/otto/idea-of-the-holy

German text: the 13th edition (Gotha and Stuttgart: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1925), with Otto's preface to the 11th edition (1923), transcribed from the OCR of the Internet Archive scan (archive.org/details/dasheiligeuberda00otto) and corrected by script (public domain). The later editions add passages and two appendices to the 1917 first edition; the lists of foreign words and of translated quotations in appendices III and IV, compiled by another hand, are left out. Otto's letter-spaced emphasis is shown in italics and was recovered from the scan automatically, so a few emphases may be missing or misplaced. English: translated from the German with AI (Claude), then edited for accuracy and consistency. Not reviewed by a human specialist. Free to reuse under CC BY-SA 4.0. The small numbers set in the text are chapter and paragraph ("4.3" is chapter 4, paragraph 3; "P" is the preface, "B1"–"B4" the appendices). Where the original uses a term now considered offensive, a neutral term is shown in brackets instead.

The original text is in the public domain. This translation is free to share and adapt under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0): creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0

Set in Source Serif 4.

CONTENTS

Introduction ix

Preface to the Eleventh Edition 1

Zur elften Auflage. 1

Chapter 1: Rational and Non-rational 3

Kapitel 1. Rational und Irrational. 3

Chapter 2: The Numinous 7

Kapitel 2. Das Numinose. 7

Chapter 3: The Elements of the Numinous: Creature-feeling 11

Kapitel 3. Die Momente des Numinosen: Das Kreatur-gefühl als Reflex des Numinosen im Selbstgefühl. 11

Schleiermacher's feeling of dependence 12

Chapter 4: Mysterium Tremendum 15

Kapitel 4. Mysterium tremendum. 15

The element of awefulness 16

The wrath of God 21

The element of overpoweringness 22

The element of urgency 26

Chapter 5: The Element of Mystery: The "Wholly Other" . . . 29

Kapitel 5. Das Moment des Mysterium: 4. Das 'Ganz andere'. . . 29

Paradox and antinomy 35

Chapter 6: Numinous Hymns 37

Kapitel 6. Numinose Hymnen. 37

Chapter 7: The Fascinans 41

Kapitel 7. 5. Das Fascinans. 41

The overabounding 48

Deinós and the monstrous 51

Chapter 8: Analogies 55
Kapitel 8. Entsprechungen. 55
The law of association of feelings 56
Schematization 59
Analogies from love and music 60

Chapter 9: The Holy as a Numinous Value 65
Kapitel 9. 6. Das sanctum als numinoser Wert: Die Sünde als numinoser Unwert. — Bedeckung, Sühne. 65
The august 67
Covering and atonement 69
What "non-rational" means 73

Chapter 10: Means of Expressing the Numinous 77
Kapitel 10. Ausdrucksmittel des Numinosen. 1. Direkte. 77
Indirect means of expression 79
The numinous in art 83

Chapter 11: The Numinous in the Old Testament 89
Kapitel 11. Das Numinose im Alten Testamente. 89
Job and the whirlwind 95

Chapter 12: The Numinous in the New Testament 101
Kapitel 12. Das Numinose im Neuen Testamente. 101
Paul and predestination 104

Chapter 13: The Numinous in Luther 113
Kapitel 13. Das Numinose bei Luther. 113
Luther's hidden God 116
Jakob Böhme and theosophy 127

Chapter 14: Developments 131
Kapitel 14. Entwicklungen. 131

Chapter 15: The Holy as an A Priori Category, Part One . . . 135
Kapitel 15. Das Heilige als Kategorie a priori. Erster Teil. 135

Chapter 16: Its Manifestation in History 141
Kapitel 16. Ihr geschichtliches Auftreten. 141

Magic, the dead and souls 142
The daemon and the uncanny 146
High gods among peoples without writing 153

Chapter 17: The Elements of the "Crude" 157
Kapitel 17. Die Momente des 'Rohen'. 157

Chapter 18: The Holy as an A Priori Category, Part Two . . . 161
Kapitel 18. Das Heilige als Kategorie a priori. Zweiter Teil. . . . 161
How the rational schematizes the numinous 165

Chapter 19: The Holy as It Appears: The Faculty of Divination 169
Kapitel 19. Das Heilige in der Erscheinung. 169
The faculty of divination 170
Goethe and the daemonic 176

Chapter 20: Divination in Early Christianity 181
Kapitel 20. Divination im Urchristentume. 181

Chapter 21: Divination in Christianity Today 187
Kapitel 21. Divination im heutigen Christentume. 187
Is Christianity the religion of Jesus? 189
The cross 197

Chapter 22: The Religious A Priori and History 199
Kapitel 22. Religiöses Apriori und Geschichte. 199
The prophet and the Son 201

Appendices 203
Beilagen. I. Numinose Dichtungen. 1. Aus Bhagavad-Gītā, Kap. 11. 203
Vondel's song of the angels 205
Melek Elyon 211
Shorter additions 215

INTRODUCTION

The Idea of the Holy (*Das Heilige*, 1917) is one of the most widely read books on religion of the twentieth century. Rudolf Otto, a Lutheran theologian at Marburg who had travelled through North Africa, India and East Asia, argued that religion cannot be reduced to morality, reason or social feeling. At its core is an experience of something "wholly other", for which he coined a new word: the numinous.

Otto describes this experience from the inside. It is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*: a mystery that makes us tremble with awe, sets us before an overwhelming majesty, and yet draws and enraptures us. He traces it through primitive dread of ghosts and demons, the hymns of Christian and Jewish worship, the Hebrew prophets and Job, the New Testament and Luther, Indian and Islamic mysticism, and art and music. The holy, he concludes, is a category the human mind brings with it a priori, gradually filled with rational and moral meaning.

The book was reprinted many times in Otto's lifetime and shaped the study of religion, theology and psychology, from Tillich and Eliade to C. S. Lewis and Jung. Otto asks his readers to recall a moment of deep religious feeling of their own, and says that anyone who cannot should read no further.

Preface to the Eleventh Edition

Zur elften Auflage
Otto on the book's editions and appendices, its English translation, and the call to write plain German.

ZUR ELFTEN AUFLAGE.

P.1 The first edition of this book appeared in 1917. At readers' request, the fourth edition was given a translation of the more important foreign-language technical terms in alphabetical order. This was followed by a translation of the foreign-language quotations in the text, in the order of the book's pages. My warm thanks to the person who prepared both. A number of "appendices" had also been added to the book, and these grew considerably in later editions. From the eleventh edition on, all but two of these appendices have been separated off. They appear as a book of their own under the title *Aufsätze, das Numinose betreffend* (Essays Concerning the Numinous), from the same publisher and at the same time as the main work itself.[1] The separation was made in order to keep the price of the main work as low as possible. It also allows buyers of earlier editions to acquire the added essays without having to buy the whole work a second time. The table of contents of the *Aufsätze* is on p. 229. The book has just been translated into English by J. Harvey, Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Birmingham (Oxford 1923).—Unknown readers sent me Eduard Engel's little book *Sprich Deutsch* (Speak German), with a corresponding admonition. I feel the seriousness of this admonition strongly, espe-

1 Otto's companion volume of essays, published in 1923.

cially at the present time, when it is more than ever a sacred duty to reflect on one's Germanness. I thank the sender, and I would be glad if I could write like Engel.[2] In the meantime I have tried to give the tree a good "shake," and all sorts of superfluous foreign words have already fallen off. But if boundless arbitrariness is not to result, we would need to form a voluntary *academia della crusca* of our own, at least for all scholarly technical terms. With the deepest knowledge of our language and with fine sensitivity, it would rediscover the language's formative powers, master them and set them to work anew. In place of bunglers' contrivances it would offer us sound, noble German, and in place of individuals' bright ideas it would offer what is generally valid. Such terms would then prevail not by compulsion or law, but because their genuineness, quality and usefulness recommended them.—Norwegian pastors wrote:[3]

P.2 "In deepest sympathy with Germany's great tragedy, we have an unspeakable feeling that God intends something momentous and newly creative through the great people of Luther. ... We wish God's blessing upon Germany ... in this time of grave distress and also of great hopes. May Christ be with it and lead it with him, through suffering and pain, along the right path of life, despite all its adversaries. We are all waiting for Germany."

P.3 This book has no claim to stand in so large a context. If it may count as a piece of serious German theological work, that will be reward enough. New in the eleventh edition are some discussions on p. 22, pp. 32–33, pp. 70–71, p. 151 n., and pp. 216–220.

P.4 *Marburg*, at the beginning of summer, 1923. R. O.

2 John W. Harvey's translation appeared as *The Idea of the Holy* (1923). Eduard Engel (1851–1938), literary historian who campaigned to purge German of foreign words; *Sprich Deutsch!* appeared in 1917.

3 The Accademia della Crusca, founded in Florence in 1583, guards the purity of the Italian language.

Chapter 1: Rational and Non-rational

Kapitel 1. Rational und Irrational
How the idea of God is usually defined in rational terms, and why those terms do not exhaust it.

KAPITEL 1. RATIONAL UND IRRATIONAL.

1.1 It is essential to every theistic idea of God, but pre-eminently and supremely to the Christian idea, that the deity be conceived and designated with sharp definiteness. This is done by predicates such as spirit, reason, will, purposive will, good will, omnipotence, unity of essence, consciousness and the like. The deity is thereby also thought of as corresponding to the personal and rational element that human beings perceive in themselves in a limited and hindered form. At the same time, all these predicates are thought of as "absolute" when applied to the divine, that is, as "perfect." Now all these predicates are clear and distinct *concepts*. They are accessible to thought and to analysis by thinking, and even to definition. If we choose to call an object that can be thought in this way rational, then the nature of the deity described in these predicates is to be called rational. A religion that recognizes and affirms it is to that extent a rational religion. Only through such a religion is "faith" possible as a conviction held in clear concepts, as opposed to mere "feeling." And of Christianity, at least, it is not true that "feeling is everything, the name mere sound and smoke." Here "name" amounts to "concept." Indeed, we regard it as a mark of a religion's high rank and superiority that it has "concepts," and knowledge of the supersensible in concepts, namely the knowledge of faith. These are the concepts just named, and others that carry them

further.[1] And the fact that Christianity has concepts, and has them with superior clarity, distinctness and completeness, is (not the only, not even the chief, but) a very essential mark of its superiority over other stages and forms of religion.

1.2 This must be stressed first, and firmly. But then we must warn against a misunderstanding that would lead to a faulty one-sidedness: the view that the rational predicates *exhaust* the nature of the deity, both those named and any similar ones that might be added. This misunderstanding may suggest itself from the idiom and conceptual world of devotional language, from the didactic treatment of the subject in preaching and teaching, and to a large extent even from our sacred scriptures. There the rational stands in the foreground; indeed, it often seems to be everything. But we should expect from the outset that the rational must stand in the foreground there. For all language, insofar as it consists of words, seeks above all to convey concepts. And the clearer and less ambiguous the concepts, the better the language. But even if the rational predicates usually stand *in* the foreground, they are so far from exhausting the idea of the deity that they are valid only of something non-rational and exist only in it. They are indeed essential predicates, but they are *synthetic* essential predicates. And they themselves are rightly understood only when they are understood in this way. That is, they must be attributed to an object as their bearer, an object that is not itself grasped along with them and cannot be grasped in them, but must be grasped in a different way of its own. For it must be graspable in some way: if it were not, nothing at all could be said about it.[2] Even mysticism does not really mean this when it calls it the *ἄρρητον* (the unutterable), for otherwise it could exist only in silence. Yet mysticism in particular has mostly been very eloquent.

1.3 Here we come for the first time upon the opposition between rationalism and deeper religion. This opposition and

1 Faust to Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust*, Part One.

2 Otto's "irrational" (*irrational*) means "not graspable by concepts," not "unreasonable"; it is rendered "non-rational" throughout.

its marks will occupy us often. But the first and most characteristic mark of rationalism, with which all the others are connected, lies here. The distinction often drawn, that rationalism is the denial of "miracle" and its opposite the *affirmation* of miracle, is plainly false, or at least very superficial. The current theory of miracle holds that miracle is an occasional breach in the natural chain of causes by a being who established that chain and must therefore be its master. That theory is itself as crudely "rational" as can be. Rationalists have often enough admitted the "possibility of miracle" in this sense, or even constructed it a priori themselves. And decided non-rationalists have often enough been indifferent to the "question of miracles." Rather, what separates rationalism from its opposite is a distinctive difference of quality in the mood and emotional content of piety itself. And this depends essentially on whether, in the idea of God, the rational outweighs the non-rational or excludes it entirely, or the reverse. The often-heard claim that orthodoxy itself was the mother of rationalism is indeed partly correct. But this is not simply because orthodoxy set out to teach and to form doctrine at all. The most vehement mystics did that too. It is because orthodoxy, in forming doctrine, found no means of doing any justice to the non-rational in its object and of keeping that element alive in religious experience. Instead, plainly misjudging it itself, orthodoxy rationalized the idea of God one-sidedly.

1.4 This tendency to rationalize still prevails today, not only in theology but also in the study of religion generally, down to its most elementary branches. Our research into myth, the study of the religion of "early peoples," the attempts to construct the origins and first beginnings of religion, and so on, are all subject to it. Here one does not begin with the lofty rational concepts from which we started. But one sees in them and their gradual "development" the main problem, and constructs lesser ideas and concepts as their forerunners. Always, though, one has one's eye on concepts and ideas, and on "natural" ones at that: ones that also

occur in the general range of human thinking.[3] And with an energy and skill that might almost be called admirable, people close their eyes to what is wholly distinctive in religious experience, as it already stirs even in its most rudimentary expressions. Admirable, or at any rate astonishing: for if there is any field of human experience in which something proper to that field and found only there can be observed, it is the religious field. Truly, here the enemy's eye sees more sharply than that of many friends of the cause or of neutral theorists. On the opponent's side people know very well that all this "mystical nonsense" has nothing to do with "reason." At any rate, this is a salutary spur to notice that religion is not exhausted by its rational statements, and to set the relation of its elements in order so that religion becomes clear to itself.

3 Otto writes "die Primitiven" ("primitives"), the technical term of his period; it is rendered "early peoples" here.

Chapter 2: The Numinous

Kapitel 2. Das Numinose
Otto coins the word "numinous" for the holy minus its moral and rational side, a category that can only be evoked, not defined.

KAPITEL 2. DAS NUMINOSE.

2.1 We shall attempt this here with respect to the distinctive category of the holy. The holy is, first of all, a category of interpretation and valuation that occurs as such only in the religious sphere. It does reach over into other spheres, ethics for example, but it does not itself spring from anything else. It is complex, and as such it contains an element entirely of its own kind. This element eludes the rational in the sense assumed above. It is an *ἄρρητον*, an *ineffabile* (something inexpressible), insofar as it is completely inaccessible to *conceptual* grasp (as the "beautiful" is too, in a quite different field).

2.2 Now this assertion would be false from the outset if the holy were what it is taken to be in some usage: in philosophical usage, and usually also in theological usage. For we have grown used to employing "holy" in a sense that is thoroughly derivative and by no means its original one. We usually understand it as the absolute *moral* predicate, as meaning perfectly good. *Thus* Kant *calls* a will holy if it obeys the moral law without wavering, from the motive of duty. But that would simply be the perfect moral will. In the same way people speak of the holiness of duty or of the law when they mean nothing but their practical necessity, their universally valid binding force. But this usage is not strict. "Holy" does include all this, but even for our feeling it

contains a clear surplus, and it is this surplus we must single out. Indeed, the case is rather this. The word "holy," or at least its equivalents in Semitic languages, Latin, Greek and other ancient languages, first and chiefly designated only this surplus. It did not include the moral element at all, or not from the beginning, and never exclusively. Our linguistic sense today undoubtedly always includes the ethical under "holy." So in seeking out that distinctive special component, it will be useful to invent a special name, at least for the temporary use of our inquiry. This name will designate the holy minus its moral element, and, as we now add at once, minus its rational element altogether.

2.3 What we are speaking of, and what we shall try to indicate in some measure, that is, to bring home to feeling, lives in *all* religions as their innermost core. Without it they would not be religion at all. But it lives with exceptional force in the Semitic religions, and here above all in biblical religion. Here it also has a name of its own: *qadosh* (Hebrew), to which the Greek *hagios* and the Latin *sanctus*, and more exactly *sacer*, correspond. That these names in all three languages include the "good," the absolutely good, at the highest stage of the idea's development and maturity, is certain. And then we translate them as "holy." But this "holy" is only the gradual ethical schematization and filling-out of a distinctive original response of feeling, which can in itself be indifferent to the ethical and can be considered on its own. And at the beginnings of this element's development, all those expressions undoubtedly mean something quite other than the good. Today's interpreters, I think, generally concede this. It is rightly called a rationalistic reinterpretation when *qadosh* is simply rendered as "good."—What we need, then, is a name for this element in isolation. First, it must hold the element fast in its distinctiveness. Second, it must allow us to include and designate any subspecies or stages of its develop-

ment.[1] For this purpose I first coin the word "the numinous." (If one can form "ominous" from *omen*, one can form "numinous" from *numen*.) I speak of a distinctive numinous category of interpretation and valuation, and of a numinous state of mind that always arises where that category is applied. Since this state is completely *sui generis* (of its own kind), it is, like every original and fundamental datum, not definable in the strict sense, but can only be discussed. One can help the listener to understand it only by discussion: by trying to guide him to the point in his own mind where it must then stir, arise and become conscious in him.[2] One can support this procedure by pointing to what resembles it, or what is characteristically opposed to it, in other, already known and familiar areas of the mind. Then one adds: "Our X is not this, but it is related to this and opposed to that. Doesn't it now come to you of its own accord?" That is to say, our *X* cannot, strictly speaking, be taught; it can only be stimulated and awakened—like everything that comes "from the spirit."

1 Otto borrows "schematization" from Kant, for whom a schema links a pure concept to experience; here it means the numinous being filled with rational, ethical content.

2 "Numinous" is Otto's coinage from Latin *numen*, a divine power or presence.

Chapter 3: The Elements of the Numinous: Creature-feeling

Kapitel 3. Die Momente des Numinosen: Das Kreatur-gefühl als Reflex des Numinosen im Selbstgefühl
The feeling of being nothing before an overwhelming power, and why Schleiermacher's "feeling of dependence" misses it.

KAPITEL 3. DIE MOMENTE DES NUMINOSEN: DAS KREATUR-GEFÜHL ALS REFLEX DES NUMINOSEN IM SELBSTGEFÜHL.

3.1 We invite the reader to call to mind a moment of strong religious emotion, as purely religious as possible.

3.2 Anyone who cannot do this, or who has no such moments at all, is asked to read no further. Some people can recall the feelings of their puberty, bouts of indigestion, or even social feelings, but not distinctively religious feelings. It is difficult to do psychology of religion with such a person. He is excused if he tries for himself to get as far as he can with the explanatory principles he knows, and interprets "aesthetics" as sensuous pleasure and "religion" as a function of gregarious instincts and social valuation, or as something still more primitive. But the aesthetician, who experiences in himself what is special in aesthetic experience, will politely decline his theories, and the religious person all the more so.

3.3 We further ask the reader to examine and analyze such moments and states of the soul, of solemn devotion and of being *deeply moved*. In doing so, attend as closely as possible to what they do *not* have in common with similar states, say, of merely moral *elevation* at the sight of a good deed. Attend instead to the

contents of feeling that are specially their own. As Christians we undoubtedly come first upon feelings that we also know, in lesser strength, in other fields: feelings of gratitude, trust, love, confidence, humble submission and devotion. But this by no means exhausts the moment of devotion. All this does not yet yield the wholly distinctive features of the "solemn," does not yet yield the solemnity of that strange state of being moved which occurs in this way only here.

SCHLEIERMACHER'S FEELING OF DEPENDENCE

Otto credits Schleiermacher's discovery but says the feeling differs in kind, not degree, from ordinary dependence.

Schleiermacher aptly singled out a very remarkable element of such experience: the feeling of "dependence." But two things are to be criticized in this important discovery of his. The feeling he actually means is not, in its particular character, a feeling of dependence in the "natural" sense of the word. That is, it is not the feeling that may also occur in other fields of life and experience as a sense of one's own inadequacy, powerlessness and determination by one's surroundings. It does correspond to such feelings, and so it can be designated by analogy with them and "discussed" through them. Through them one can point toward the thing itself, so that it may then become felt through itself. But the thing itself is at the same time *qualitatively* different from such analogous feelings.[1] Schleiermacher himself, indeed, distinguishes the feeling of religious dependence from all other feelings of dependence. But he does so only as the "absolute" feeling as distinct from merely relative ones. He distinguishes it only as the absolute from the relative, as the complete from everything that comes in degrees, but not by a distinctive quality. He overlooks the fact that calling it a feeling of dependence really gives only the nearest *analogy* to the thing itself.—Through such comparison and contrast, does the reader

1 Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), German Protestant theologian, whose *The Christian Faith* grounds religion in the "feeling of absolute dependence."

now find in himself what I mean to say but cannot express by anything else? I cannot, precisely because it is an original and fundamental datum, and so a datum of the soul that can be defined only by itself. Perhaps I can help with a well-known example, in which precisely the element we are speaking of stirred very vividly. When Abraham, in Genesis 18:27, ventures to speak with God about the fate of the people of Sodom, he says:

3.4 I have taken it upon myself to speak to you, I who am dust and ashes.

3.5 This is a "feeling of dependence" that confesses itself, and yet it is far more than, and at the same time something other than, feelings of dependence. I look for a name for the thing and call it creature-feeling: the feeling of the creature that sinks and vanishes into its own nothingness before that which is above all creatures.

3.6 It is easy to see that this expression, too, gives anything but a *conceptual* explanation of the thing. What matters here is not merely what the new name alone can express: the element of sinking into one's own nothingness before something absolutely overpowering in general. It is sinking before *such* an overpowering something. And this "such," this character, is precisely what cannot be said. It can be indicated only through the distinctive tone and content of the response of feeling itself, which one must experience in oneself.

3.7 The other flaw[2] in Schleiermacher's definition is that he discovers only a category of religious *self-valuation* (namely, self-depreciation) and tries to define the actual content of religious feeling through it. According to him, religious feeling would be, directly and primarily, a feeling of self: a feeling of a particular determination of myself, namely my dependence. Only by an inference, by adding in thought a cause outside myself, would one arrive at the divine itself, according to Schleiermacher. But this runs completely counter to the psychological facts. The "creature-feeling" is rather itself only a subjective accompany-

2 OTTO'S NOTE. A third will be discussed later.

ing element and effect. It is, as it were, the shadow of another element of feeling, which undoubtedly relates first and directly to an object outside myself.[3] And that object is precisely the numinous. Only where the *numen* is experienced as *praesens* (present), as in Abraham's case, or where something of numinous character is felt, or where the mind turns toward it of its own accord—that is, only as a result of applying the category of the numinous—can creature-feeling arise in the mind as its accompanying feeling.

3.8 But what is this numinous itself, felt objectively as outside me, and what is it like?

3 OTTO'S NOTE. This is so clear a fact of experience that it must force itself on psychologists first of all when they analyze religious experience. In his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (German translation by Wobbermin, p. 46), William James, touching on the origin of the Greek ideas of the gods, says almost naively: "We need not go into the question of the origin of the Greek gods here. But the whole series of our examples leads us to a conclusion something like this: it is as if there lived in human consciousness a sensation of *something real*, a feeling of something actually present, an idea of something *objectively* existing, which is deeper and more general than any of the individual and particular sensations by which, in the view of present-day psychology, *reality* is attested." His empiricist and pragmatist standpoint bars him from recognizing cognitive predispositions and foundations of ideas in the mind itself. So he must then resort to somewhat strange and mysterious hypotheses to explain this fact. But he grasps the fact itself clearly, and he is realist enough not to explain it away.—Such a "*feeling of reality*" is the first and immediate datum: the feeling of an *objectively* given numinous. The "feeling of dependence" is then only a subsequent effect of it, namely a depreciation of the *subject* with respect to itself. The feeling of an "absolute dependence" of mine presupposes a feeling of an "absolute unapproachability" of His.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. William James (1842–1910), American psychologist and philosopher; Otto cites *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) in German translation.

Chapter 4: Mysterium Tremendum

Kapitel 4. Mysterium tremendum
Awe and religious dread, the overpowering majesty of the numen, and its urgent, energetic force.

KAPITEL 4. MYSTERIUM TREMENDUM.

4.1 It can be indicated, we said, only through the particular response of feeling it evokes in the mind. "It is such that it grips and moves a human mind with this or that state of feeling." We must try to suggest this "this or that" state of feeling by making it resonate, once again through correspondences with related feelings and contrasts to them, and through symbolic expressions.

4.2 Let us consider the lowest and deepest element in every strong stirring of religious feeling, insofar as it is more than faith in salvation, trust or love. It is what can at times, quite apart from these companions, stir and fill our own minds with an almost bewildering force. Let us follow it in others around us, by sympathy and imaginative empathy: in strong outbursts of piety and the moods they express, in the solemnity and atmosphere of rites and cults, in what hovers and weaves about religious monuments, buildings, temples and churches. Then only one expression for it can suggest itself to us: the *mysterium tremendum*. The feeling of *it* can sweep through the mind like a gentle tide, in the form of a hovering, tranquil mood of rapt devotion.[1] It may then pass over into a steadily flowing attune-

1 Latin, roughly "the mystery that makes one tremble"; Otto unfolds both words in the sections that follow.

ment of the soul that lasts a long time and trembles on, until at last it dies away and leaves the soul once more in the profane. It can also burst suddenly out of the soul in jolts and convulsions. It can lead to strange excitements, to intoxication, rapture and ecstasy. It has its wild and daemonic forms. It can sink down to an almost ghostly horror and shuddering. It has its crude and barbarous preliminary stages and expressions, and it has its development into the refined, the purified and the transfigured. It can become the still, humble trembling and falling silent of the creature before—yes, before what? Before that which, in unsayable mystery, is above all creatures.

4.3 Here again it is immediately obvious that our attempt at a definition by means of a concept is once more purely negative. *Conceptually*, *mysterium* names nothing more than the hidden: what is not manifest, not grasped and understood, not everyday, not familiar. It says nothing more about what this is like. But what is *meant* by it is something absolutely positive. Its positive content is experienced purely in feelings. And we can indeed make these feelings clearer to ourselves by discussing them, while at the same time making them resonate.

THE ELEMENT OF AWEFULNESS

The tremendum is a fear that is more than fear: awe, dread and the shudder before the uncanny.

4.4 What the thing positively is like is indicated first by the adjective *tremendum*. *Tremor* in itself is simply fear, a well-known "natural" feeling. It serves us here as the nearest, but still only analogical, designation for a wholly distinctive response of feeling. This response does resemble fear, and so it can be suggested by analogy with fear, but it is itself something quite other than being afraid. Some languages have expressions for it that designate, partly exclusively and partly chiefly, the "fear" that is more than fear. One example is *hiqdish*, "to hallow," in Hebrew. To "hallow a thing in one's heart" means to single it out by feelings of a peculiar awe, not to be confused with other kinds of awe. It

means to value it by the category of the numinous.[2] The Old Testament is rich in parallel expressions for this feeling. Particularly remarkable here is the *'emat Yahweh*, the "terror of God," which Yahweh can pour forth, and indeed send out like a daemon. It seizes a person and paralyzes the limbs, and it is closely akin to the *deima panikon* (panic terror) of the Greeks. Compare Exodus 23:27:

4.5 I will send a terror of God before you and throw into confusion all the peoples among whom you come. Or Job 9:34; 13:21. This is a terror full of inward dread, such as nothing created can instill, not even what is most threatening and overpowering. It has something of the "ghostly" about it.—Greek here has its *sebastos*. The early Christians sensed clearly that the title *sebastos* befitted no creature, not even the emperor, and that it was a numinous designation. To call a human being *sebastos* was to value him by the category of the numinous, and so to commit idolatry. English has its "awe," which in its deeper and most proper sense points roughly to our subject. Compare also: "he stood aghast."[3] In German, our "heiligen" (to hallow) is only modeled on the usage of Scripture. German has no native expression of its own for the higher, more mature form of what is meant here. It does, however, have expressions for the cruder and lower preliminary stages and substages of this feeling: our "Grausen" (horror), and also our "Schauer" (shudder) and "schauervoll" (full of shuddering). And "Erschauern," as in "Erschauern in Andacht" (shuddering in devotion), also evokes the higher form fairly purely. A coarser, popular expression for the lower forms is "Gruseln" and "Gräsen" (the creeps). In these words, and really also in "gräßlich" (ghastly), the numinous element is very definitely meant and designated. —In my discussion of Wundt's animism some years ago, I proposed the name "awe" (*die Scheu*) for this. The special element, the numinous, then admittedly lies only in the quotation marks. Or else "religious awe." Its preliminary stage is "daemonic dread" (= panic

2 *Tremendum*: Latin, "that which is to be trembled at"; roughly "awefulness."
3 *Sebastos*, "to be revered," was the Greek equivalent of the imperial title Augustus.

terror), with its apocryphal offshoot, "ghostly dread." And it has its first stirring in the feeling for the "uncanny." All development in the history of religion has proceeded from this feeling and from its first breakthrough in the minds of primeval humanity. In it are rooted "daemons" as well as "gods," and whatever else "mythological apperception" or "imagination" has produced by way of objectifications of it.[4] Unless this feeling is recognized as the first basic factor and basic impulse of the whole course of the history of religion, qualitatively distinctive and not derivable from anything else, all animistic, magical and folk-psychological explanations of the origin of religion are on the wrong track from the start and miss the real problem.[5]

4.6 When Luther says that the natural man cannot fear God, this is not only perfectly correct, even from a psychological point of view. We must also add that the natural man cannot even feel *dread* in the proper sense of the word. For dread is not natural, ordinary fear. It is already a first stirring and scenting of the mysterious, even if in the still crude form of the "uncanny." It is a first valuing according to a category that does not lie in the ordinary, natural sphere of everything else and does not refer to anything natural. And it is possible only for someone in whom a distinctive predisposition of the mind has awoken, one definitely different from the "natural" ones. At first this predisposition expresses itself only fitfully and crudely

4 Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), German psychologist, whose *Völkerpsychologie* (Folk Psychology) explained religion largely through animism.

5 OTTO'S NOTE. See my essay "Myth and Religion in Wundt's Folk Psychology" in *Theologische Rundschau* 1910, no. 1 ff., now reprinted in the *Aufsätze*, and the one in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 1910, no. 38. In more recent studies, especially by Marett and Söderblom, I find a gratifying confirmation of the claims I made there. True, neither of them yet notices, with the full sharpness needed, the wholly distinctive character of "awe," which stands in qualitative difference from all "natural" feelings. But Marett in particular comes within a hair's breadth of it. Compare his studies, rightly called groundbreaking, in R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, London 1909. And N. Söderblom, *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens* (The Growth of Belief in God), Leipzig 1915. And on the latter, my review in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, January 1915.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. R. R. Marett (1866–1943), British anthropologist; Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931), Swedish historian of religion and archbishop of Uppsala.

enough. But even so, it already points to a wholly distinctive, new function of experience and valuation in the human spirit.

4.7 Let us dwell a moment longer on the first, rudimentary and crude expressions of this numinous awe. In the form of "daemonic dread," as a naive, crude and first stirring, it is the truly distinctive mark of the so-called "religion of early peoples." This dread and the creations of imagination it produces are later overcome and driven out by the higher stages and forms of development of that very mysterious impulse which first stirs, still crudely, in them: the numinous feeling. But even where this feeling has long since reached its higher and purer expression, its primal stirrings can break out of the soul again and again quite naively and be experienced anew. This shows itself in the power and attraction that the "horror" of "spook" and "ghost" stories still exerts, even at high levels of general cultivation of the mind. It is remarkable that this peculiar awe of the "uncanny" also produces a wholly peculiar *physical* reaction, never found in this way with natural fear and fright: "An icy chill ran through his limbs," "gooseflesh crept down my back."[6] Gooseflesh is something "supernatural." And anyone capable of sharper psychological analysis must see that such "awe" differs from natural fear by no means only in degree and intensity. It can be so strong that it pierces to the marrow, that the hair stands on end and the limbs shake. But it can also appear as a quite faint stirring, a barely noticed and fleeting mood of the mind. It has its own gradations of intensity within itself, but it is not itself an intensification of anything else. *No* natural fear passes over into it by mere intensification. I can be full of fear, anxiety and terror beyond measure without even a trace of the feeling of the "uncanny" in it.—We would see more clearly here if psychology in general tried more resolutely to examine "feelings" for their qualitative differences and to sort them accordingly. We are still hampered here by the far too crude division into "pleasure" and "displeasure" in general. Even "pleasures" by no means differ only as degrees of intensity. They can be

6 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare the English: "his flesh crept."

sharply separated by differences in kind. It is a different condition in kind whether the soul is in sensual pleasure, in enjoyment, in joy, in aesthetic delight, in ethical elevation, or finally in the religious bliss of the experience of devotion. Such states do have correspondences and similarities with one another, and so they can be brought under a common class-concept that sets them off, as a class, from other classes of mental activity. But this class-concept does not make the different kinds mere differences of degree of the same thing. Indeed, it does not even serve to make clear the "essence" of each individual kind included under it.

4.8 At its higher stages the feeling of the numinous is far different from mere daemonic dread. But even there it does not deny its origin and kinship. Even where belief in daemons has long since risen to belief in gods, the "gods," as *numina*, always retain for feeling something "ghostly" about them. This is the peculiar character of the "uncanny and fearful," which actually helps to make up their "sublimity," or is schematized by it. And this element does not disappear even at the highest stage, the stage of pure belief in God; by its very nature it may not disappear here. It is only tempered and ennobled. "Dread" returns here in the infinitely ennobled form of that innermost trembling and falling silent of the soul, down to its very last roots. In Christian worship, too, it grips the mind with full force at the words "Holy, holy, holy." It breaks out in Tersteegen's hymn:[7]

4.9 God is present. Let all within us be silent And bow most inwardly before him.

4.10 It has lost its bewildering quality, but not its unsayable power to hold one spellbound. It remains a mystical shuddering. As an accompanying reflex in the feeling of self, it releases the creature-feeling described above: the feeling of one's own nothingness, of sinking before the shudder-inspiring thing itself as experienced.

7 Gerhard Tersteegen (1697–1769), German Reformed mystic and hymn writer; the hymn is "Gott ist gegenwärtig" (1729).

THE WRATH OF GOD

The biblical wrath of Yahweh is the tremendum itself, expressed through a natural analogy.

4.11 When the element of feeling that is numinous *tremor* is referred to the numinous object, a "property" of the *numen* results. It plays an important part in our sacred texts, and its enigmatic and incomprehensible character has caused interpreters and teachers of doctrine many difficulties. This is the *orgē* (wrath), the wrath of Yahweh, which returns in the New Testament as *orgē theou*, the wrath of God. Further on we shall have to examine the passages in the Old Testament where the kinship of this "wrath" with the daemonic and ghostly, of which we have just spoken, can still be clearly felt. It has a clear counterpart in the idea, found in many religions, of the mysterious *ira deorum* (wrath of the gods). The strangeness of the "wrath of Yahweh" has always been noticed. Now, first of all, it is palpable in many passages of the Old Testament that this "wrath" originally has nothing to do with moral qualities. It "is kindled" and shows itself enigmatically, "like a hidden force of nature," as people say, like stored-up electricity that discharges itself on whoever comes too near it. It is "incalculable" and "arbitrary." To someone who is used to thinking of the deity only by its rational predicates, it must seem like caprice and arbitrary passion. The pious of the Old Covenant would certainly have rejected this view emphatically. For to them the wrath appears not at all as a diminution of holiness, but as a natural expression and an element of "holiness" itself, and one that cannot possibly be removed. And quite rightly. For this *ira* is nothing other than the "*tremendum*" itself, only apprehended and expressed through a naive analogy from the natural sphere, namely from human emotional life. It is a most vivid and apt analogy, which as such always retains its value and is still quite unavoidable for us too in expressing religious feeling. There is no doubt at all that

Christianity, too, must teach "the wrath of God," despite Schleiermacher and Ritschl.[89]

4.12 Here again it is immediately clear that with this word we are dealing not with a real, intellectual "concept," but only with something resembling a concept. It is an ideogram, a pure interpretive sign, of a distinctive element of feeling in religious experience. But this element has a strangely repelling character that fills one with awe. It thoroughly disturbs the circles of those who will acknowledge in the divine only goodness, gentleness, love, trustworthiness and, in general, only elements that turn toward the world. People like to call this *ira* "natural," wrongly; in truth it is thoroughly un-natural, namely numinous. Its rationalization consists in filling it out with the rational and ethical elements of divine justice, in retribution and punishment for moral wrongdoing. But note that in the biblical idea of divine justice, what fills it out always remains fused with the original. The non-rational always flickers and gleams perceptibly in the "wrath of God," and gives it a terror that the "natural" man is unable to feel.

4.13 Beside the "wrath" or "fury" of Yahweh stands, as a related expression, the "zeal of Yahweh." And the state of "zeal for Yahweh" is also a numinous state, which passes on features of the *tremendum* to the one who dwells in it. (Compare the vivid expression in Psalm 69:10: Zeal for your house has *devoured* me.)

THE ELEMENT OF OVERPOWERINGNESS

Majestas, absolute overwhelming power, and the creature-feeling that answers it, pushed to its limit in mysticism.

4.14 What we have developed so far about the *tremendum* can be summed up in the ideogram "absolute unapproachability." One

8 OTTO'S NOTE. If one wanders through the Indian pantheon, there seem to be gods here made entirely of such *ira*. Even India's high gods of grace very often have, besides their gracious form, their "wrath" form, *krodha-murti*; conversely, the wrathful gods also have their gracious form.

9 Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889), influential liberal Protestant theologian who rejected the idea of divine wrath.

feels at once that another element must be added to exhaust it fully: the element of "might," "power," "overwhelming power," "absolute overwhelming power." For this we shall choose the name *majestas*. All the more so because even in "majesty," for our own linguistic sense too, a faint, last trace of the numinous still trembles on. The element of the *tremendum* can then be rendered more fully as *tremenda majestas* (aweful majesty). The element of *majestas* can remain vividly alive even where the first element, that of unapproachability, recedes and fades, as can happen, for example, in mysticism. It is especially to this element of absolute overpoweringness, this *majestas*, that the "creature-feeling" relates as its shadow and subjective reflex. In contrast to the overpoweringness that is felt objectively, it becomes clear as a feeling of one's own sinking, of being annihilated, of being dust, ashes and *nothing*. It is, so to speak, the numinous raw material for the feeling of religious "humility."

4.15 Here again we must come back to Schleiermacher's expression of the matter as a feeling of dependence. We already objected above that he makes his starting point what is itself only reflex and effect, and that he tries to reach the objective only by an inference from the shadow it casts into the feeling of self. But here we must challenge something else as well. By "feeling oneself dependent" Schleiermacher means "feeling oneself conditioned." He therefore quite consistently develops this element of "dependence" in his sections on "creation and preservation." The counterpart of "dependence" on the side of the deity would be *causality*, namely *universal causality*, or better, the conditioning of all things. But this element is not the first and most immediate thing we find when we recall the "devout feeling" at the moment of devotion. Nor is this element itself something numinous; it is only the "schema" of the numinous. It is not a non-rational element but belongs wholly to the *rational* side of the idea of God. It can be developed sharply in concepts, and it springs from a quite different source. But the "dependence" expressed in Abraham's words is not that of having been created; it is that of being a creature. It is powerlessness before

overwhelming power, one's own nothingness. And the *majestas* and the "being dust and ashes" spoken of here lead, as soon as speculation takes hold of them, to a quite different series of ideas from the ideas of creation and preservation. On the one hand, this series leads to the *annihilatio* (annihilation) of the self; on the other, to the sole and total reality of the transcendent, both characteristic of *mysticism*. In almost all forms of mysticism, however different their content, we meet one very general main feature: the depreciation of the "self," which clearly echoes Abraham's self-depreciation. The self and the I are valued as not fully real or essential, or even as wholly null. And this depreciation then becomes the *demand* to carry it out in practice, against the supposedly false delusion of selfhood, and so to *annihilare* (annihilate) the self. And on the other hand it leads to valuing the transcendent object of the relation as absolutely superior through fullness of being, so that before it the self becomes aware of itself in its very nothingness: "I nothing, You everything!" There is no talk here of a causal relation. The starting point of speculation here is not a feeling of absolute dependence (of myself as caused[10]), but a feeling of absolute superiority (of Him as overpowering). Where this speculation proceeds in ontological terms (often merely borrowed from "science"[11]), it then transforms the fullness of "power" of the *tremendum* into fullness of "being." Compare, for instance, the following saying of a Christian mystic: "A person sinks and melts away into his own nothing and his littleness. The more clearly and nakedly the greatness of God shines upon him, the more plainly he recognizes his littleness."[12]

4.16 Then the Lord, the Most High, unveiled his mysteries to me and revealed all his glory in me. And then, as I beheld him (no longer with my own eyes, but) with his, I saw that my light,

10 OTTO'S NOTE. That would lead precisely to the reality of the self!

11 OTTO'S NOTE. C. *Greith*, Die deutsche Mystik im Predigerorden, p. 144.

12 OTTO'S NOTE. This is why, for religious feeling, this expression is always half a blasphemy when it is applied to human beings. 2 Cf. Eckhart.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1328), German Dominican theologian and mystic.

compared with his, was nothing but darkness and gloom. In the same way my greatness and my splendor were nothing before his. And when I examined with the eye of truthfulness the works of piety and devotion I had done in his service, I recognized that they had all come from him himself, and not from me. Or consider Meister Eckhart's discussions of poverty and humility. As a person becomes poor and humble, God becomes all in all; he becomes being and that which is, absolutely. From *majestas* and from humility his "mystical" concept of God grows. That is, it grows not from Plotinism and pantheism but from the experience of Abraham. Mysticism, no matter how it arises historically (a historical, genetic derivation is not an interpretation of its essence), is in its essence, everywhere, the utmost straining and overstraining of the non-rational elements in religion. When it is understood as such, it becomes understandable[13]. Different elements of the non-rational may be emphasized to different degrees, and others may recede behind the emphasized ones. The character of the mysticism varies accordingly. But what has been analyzed here is an element that recurs frequently in mysticism. It is nothing other than the "creature-feeling" strained to the utmost and beyond. By this expression I do not mean "the feeling of having been created" but "the feeling of creatureliness": that is, the feeling of the lowliness of everything that is creature, over against the *majestas* of that which is above all creatures.[14]

4.17 [Identification with the transcendent, carried through to different degrees, is essential to all mysticism. This identification also has a particular source of its own, which is not considered here. It springs from elements that would have to be treated separately. But identification alone is not yet mysticism.

13 OTTO'S NOTE. On this, cf. *Delekat*, Was ist Mystik? [What Is Mysticism?], in Zeitschrift für Theol. u. Kirche, 1921, p. 274.

14 OTTO'S NOTE. Tezkereh-i-Evliā (Tadhkiratu 'l avliya: Memoirs of the Friends of God; Acta sanctorum), translated by de Courteille, Paris 1889, p. 132.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Farid al-Din Attar's lives of the Sufi saints (c. 1200), in Pavet de Courteille's French translation; the passage quoted is a saying of the early Sufi Bayazid Bistami.

Mysticism is identification with the Something that is absolutely *superior* in power and reality and at the same time wholly non-rational. And it is this element of the matter that we find here. Récéjac noticed this in his *Essai sur les fondements de la connaissance mystique* [Essay on the Foundations of Mystical Knowledge] (Paris 1897). He writes on page 90:[15]

4.18 Mysticism begins ... with the feeling of a *domination* that is universal and *invincible*, and later becomes a desire for union with what dominates it in this way.

4.19 Very vivid examples of this from present-day religious experience can be found in W. James, p. 53:

4.20 The perfect stillness of the night thrilled with a solemn silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more strongly felt because it was not seen. I could no more doubt God's presence than my own. Indeed, I felt myself, if that is possible, to be the *less real* of the two of us,

4.21 This example is especially instructive for the relation to the "feelings of identification" in mysticism, because the experience it recounts was itself on the point of passing over into them. Shortly before, we read:

4.22 I was alone with him ... I did not seek him, but I felt the perfect *union* of my spirit with his.

4.23 Compare also the experience on page 56:

4.24 I had the feeling that I had lost my own self ...]

THE ELEMENT OF URGENCY

The numinous as living energy and will, from Luther's omnipotent God to the consuming love of the mystics.

4.25 Finally, the elements of the *tremendum* and the *majestas* also include within them a third element, which I would like to call the energy, or urgency, of the numinous. It is felt especially vividly in the *orgē*, and everywhere it draws to itself the symbolic expressions of vitality, passion, emotional nature, will,

15 Édouard Récéjac (1853–1914), French philosopher of religion.

force, movement[16], excitement, activity and impetus. These features of it recur essentially from the stages of the daemonic right up to the idea of the "living" God. They form the element that, everywhere, has most often and most strongly provoked opposition to the "philosophical" God of merely rational speculation and definition. Wherever this element was brought into the field, the "philosophers" always condemned it as "anthropomorphism."[17] They were right, insofar as its defenders themselves mostly failed to recognize the merely analogical character of their terms, which they had borrowed from the realm of human feeling. They were wrong, insofar as, despite this error, a genuine element of the *theion* (= *numen*), namely a non-rational one, was rightly felt, and religion itself was defended against its rationalization. For wherever people fought for the "living" God and for voluntarism, the defenders of the non-rational were fighting the rationalists, as Luther fought Erasmus. And Luther's *omnipotentia dei* [omnipotence of God] in his *De servo arbitrio* [On the Bondage of the Will] is nothing other than the union of *majestas*, as absolute superiority, with this "energy" as that which is restlessly and relentlessly urging, active, compelling and alive. This urgency is also very strongly alive in mysticism, at least in "voluntaristic" mysticism, the mysticism of love.[18] It recurs drastically in the consuming fire of love and in love's onrushing. The mystic can hardly bear that onrushing force. It crushes him, and he begs it to abate lest he himself perish. And in this onrushing, this "love" still has a palpable kinship with the consuming, scorching *orgē* itself: it is the same energy, only turned in another direction. "Love," says a mystic, "is nothing other than quenched wrath."—This "urgency" recurs even in Fichte's speculation about the Absolute as the gigantic, never-

16 OTTO'S NOTE. The *mobilitas dei* [mobility of God] in Lactantius.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Lactantius (c. AD 250–325), Latin Christian writer and apologist.

17 Otto's *das Energische*, "the energetic," rendered here as "urgency": the numinous felt as living, driving force.

18 Luther's *De servo arbitrio* (1525) was his reply to Erasmus on the freedom of the will.

resting urge to act, and in Schopenhauer's daemonic "will." In both it recurs with the same error that myth already commits. "Natural" predicates, which may be used only as ideograms for an *ineffabile* [something unutterable], are transferred literally to the non-rational, and symbols that express feeling are taken for adequate concepts and for the foundations of "scientific" knowledge.—As we shall see further on, this element of numinous urgency was experienced and emphasized in a quite peculiar way by Goethe, in his strange descriptions of what he calls the "daemonic,"[19]

4.26 In Greek, the attitude of heart and worship toward the divine is generally called *eusebeia* [piety]. Alongside it there is *eulabeia* [reverent caution]. Its difference from *eusebeia* can be stated precisely: it is *eusebeia* as related chiefly to the three elements of the numinous developed so far.

19 Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), German philosophers; for Schopenhauer the inner nature of the world is blind will.

Chapter 5: The Element of Mystery: The "Wholly Other"

Kapitel 5. Das Moment des Mysterium: 4. Das 'Ganz andere'
Stupor before what lies wholly outside ordinary experience; the paradoxes and antinomies of mysticism.

KAPITEL 5. DAS MOMENT DES MYSTERIUM: 4. DAS 'GANZ ANDERE'.

5.1 A God comprehended
is no God.
Tersteegen

5.2 We called the numinous object *mysterium tremendum*. We turned first to defining the subsidiary concept, the *tremendum*, which is itself only analogical, because it is easier to analyze than the main concept, *mysterium*. We must now try to come *closer* to this one too by interpretation. For the element of the *tremendum* is by no means a mere explication of *mysterium*; it is a synthetic predicate of it. True, the emotional reactions that answer to the one readily flow over of their own accord into those that answer to the other. Indeed, in our feeling for language the concept of "mystery" is usually so firmly bound up with its synthetic predicate, the *tremendum*, that one can hardly name the one element without the other at once resonating with it. "Mystery" *easily* becomes, of itself, "a mystery that makes one shudder." But this need by no means always be so. The elements of the *tremendum* and of the *mysteriosum* are in themselves distinctly different. In the experience of feeling, the element of the mysterious in the numinous may outweigh that of the *tremen-*

dum. It may even come so strongly to the fore that the other almost fades away beside it. That, again, could easily be made clear from certain forms of mysticism. At times the one may even take hold of the mind entirely on its own, without the other entering in as well.—The *mysterium* minus the element of the *tremendum* we can designate more precisely as the *mirum* or the *mirabile* [the wonderful]. This *mirum* is not in itself yet an *admirandum* [something to be admired]. It becomes one only through the elements of the *fascinans* and the *augustum*, to be named later. What corresponds to it is not yet "admiring" but only "wondering." And this is wondering in the true sense. It is first of all a state of mind lying purely within the domain of the numinous, and only in a faded and generalized form, carried over into other domains, does it become astonishment in general. (Compare what is said below about *tāmah* and *āścarya*.)

5.3 If we look for an expression for the reaction of mind peculiar to the *mysterium* or *mirum*, here too we find at first only a name that itself refers wholly to a "natural" state of mind and therefore, again, has only analogical meaning. That name is, say, *stupor*. *Stupor* is clearly different from *tremor*. It means blank astonishment, being "struck completely dumb," absolute *bafflement*[1]. After all, *mysterium*[1], taken in its general (and faded) sense, at first means only "secret," in the sense of the strange, the not-understood and the unexplained. To that extent *mysterium* itself is, for what we *mean*, only an analogical concept from the realm of the natural. It offers itself as a designation precisely because of a certain analogy, without really exhausting the matter. But the thing itself, the *religiously* mysterious, the genuine *mirum*, is (to put it perhaps most aptly) the "wholly other": the *thateron* [Greek: the other], the *anyad* [Sanskrit: other], the *alienum* [Latin: the alien], the strange and estranging.

1 OTTO'S NOTE. *Mysterium*, *mystes* and *mysticism* probably derive from a root still preserved in Sanskrit as *muṣ*. *Muṣ* means to act in a hidden, concealed, secret way, and it can therefore take on the sense of cheating and stealing. This root is probably also contained in our German *muscheln*: to do something inconspicuously that is not meant to be noticed (in card games, say), or to speak indistinctly. Compare also *munkeln* [to whisper rumors] and *mogeln* [to cheat].

It falls utterly outside the sphere of the customary, the understood and the familiar, and therefore of the "homely." It sets itself in opposition to that sphere, and therefore fills the mind with blank astonishment.[2]

5.4 This is so again even at the lowest stage, the first crude stirring of numinous feeling in the religion of early peoples. What is distinctive at this stage is not that one is dealing with "souls," with curious entities that happen to be invisible, as animism holds. Rather, *ideas* of souls and similar concepts are all merely subsequent "rationalizations." They attempt, after all, to interpret the riddle of the *mirum* somehow, and they then always have an immediate damping, weakening effect on the experience itself. What springs from them is not religion but the rationalization of religion. That rationalization then often ends up *in* such coarse theory, with such plausible interpretations, that the mystery is actually driven out[3]. Thoroughly systematized myth, like fully worked-out scholasticism, is a rolling-out of the basic religious process that at the same time rolls it flat and finally drives it out. What is distinctive here, rather, even at the lowest stage, is again only *one* peculiar element of feeling: precisely the *stupor* before something "wholly other." One may then call such an "other" a spirit, a daemon, a *deva*, or not name it at all. To interpret it and hold on to it, one may produce new cre-

2 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare also *obstupefacere* [to strike dumb with amazement]. More exact still are the Greek *thambos* and *thambeisthai*. The sound *thamb* depicts the state of mind of this blank astonishment exceedingly well. And the passage Mark 10:32 marks the difference between the elements of the *stupendum* and the *tremendum* very finely. On the other hand, what was said on p. 26 about the easy and quick mingling of the two elements applies to *thambos* in particular, and then *thambos* is actually a classic term for the noble shudder of the numinous in general. So in Mark 16:5.—Luther then translates quite rightly: "And they were aghast."—The pictorial quality of the root *thamb* recurs in the Hebrew *tāmah*. This too means "to be dismayed"; this too passes over into "to be aghast"; and this too fades into mere "to wonder." —Exactly the same shift of meaning is found in the Sanskrit word *āścarya*, which we shall discuss later.—A word as pictorial as *thamb*, with a similar sense, is our German *baff* (to be flabbergasted), or the Dutch *verbazen*. Both mean complete *stupor*.

3 OTTO'S NOTE. A soul that has been "comprehended" no longer fills anyone with dread, as spiritualism proves. But then it ceases to be of any relevance for the study of religion.

ations of fantasy. Or one may give it, as a substrate, fantasy's products: fabulous beings that story-spinning fantasy may already have brought forth apart from, and before, the stirring of daemonic dread.

5.5 According to laws still to be discussed, this feeling of the "wholly other" will attach itself to, or be occasionally aroused along with, objects that are already "naturally" puzzling in themselves, that strike one as strange and startling. It will attach itself to, and be aroused by, strange and striking phenomena, events and things in nature, among animals, among human beings. But here too it is then a matter of the association of a *feeling*-element of a special kind, namely a numinous one, with a "natural" one, and not of an increase in the degree of the latter. There is no transition by degrees from natural strangeness to daemonic strangeness. And it is really only for the latter that the expression "mystery" has its full resonance. One perhaps feels this even more with the adjective "mysterious" than with the noun "mystery." No one will *seriously* say of a clockwork he cannot see into, or of a science he does not understand: "That is 'mysterious' to me." It might perhaps be objected that what is mysterious to us is what is and remains beyond our understanding, absolutely and in every case, whereas what is merely not yet understood but is understandable in principle should be called only "problematic"[4]. But that by no means exhausts the matter. The truly "mysterious" object is ungraspable and incomprehensible not merely because my knowledge has certain insuperable limits with regard to it. It is so because here I come upon something "wholly other" altogether, which in kind and essence is incommensurable with my own being, and before which I therefore recoil in numbing astonishment[5].

5.6 What has just been said can be made clearer still by the spurious offshoot and caricature of the numinous: the fear of

4 OTTO'S NOTE. This is how Fries, for example, understands it.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773–1843), post-Kantian philosopher on whose theory of religious knowledge Otto drew heavily.

ghosts. Let us attempt an analysis of the ghost. We have already described above the peculiar element of feeling in the "awe" it inspires as that of "creepiness" or "the horrors." Creepiness itself evidently contributes to the charm that ghost stories exert, insofar as the relaxation that sets in afterward, and the mind's release from it, produce a pleasant sense of comfort. In this respect, however, it is not really the ghost itself that gives pleasure, but the fact that we are rid of it again. Yet this is clearly not nearly enough to explain the spellbinding charm of the ghost story. The ghost's real charm lies rather in its being a *mirum*. As such it acts on the imagination by itself in an extraordinarily stimulating way, awakening interest and strong curiosity. The thing itself, this strange thing, lures the imagination. But it does not do so by being "something long and white" (as someone once defined "ghost"), or by being a "soul," or by any other of the positive and conceptual predicates that fantasy invents for it. It does so by being a thing of wonder, a "non-thing," a thing that "really doesn't exist at all"; by being the "wholly other," a Something that does not belong to the circle of our reality but to an absolutely different one, which at the same time awakens an unbridled interest in the mind.

5.7 But what is still recognizable in such a caricature holds in a much stronger sense of the daemonic itself, of which the caricature is only an offshoot.

5.8 What is that which gleams through me and strikes my heart without wounding it? I both shudder and glow. I *shudder*, inasmuch as I am *unlike* it. I glow, inasmuch as I am like it.

5.9 And as, along the line of the daemonic, this element of numinous feeling, this feeling of the "wholly other," intensifies and becomes clearer, its higher forms arise. These set the numinous object in contrast not only to everything customary and familiar, that is, ultimately to "nature" as a whole, and so

5 OTTO'S NOTE. Augustine gives an excellent account of this numbing element of the "wholly other," the *dissimile* [the unlike], and its contrast with the rational side of the *numen*, the *simile* [the like], in *Confessions* 11.9.1:

make it the "supernatural." In the end they set it in contrast to the "world" itself, and so raise it to the "supramundane" itself.

5.10 The *epekeina* [the "beyond"] of mysticism, too, is once again only the utmost straining and overstraining of the nonrational elements already present in religion itself. Mysticism simply carries this opposition of the numinous object as the "wholly other" to its extreme. It is not content to set it against everything natural and worldly, but finally sets it against "being" and "that which is" themselves. In the end it calls it "the Nothing" itself. By the Nothing it means not only that which nothing can express, but that which is absolutely and essentially other than, and opposed to, everything that is and can be thought. Negation, opposition, is the only thing the *concept* can accomplish here in grasping the element of "mystery." But as mysticism heightens this negation to the point of paradox, the positive character of the "wholly other" becomes at the same time intensely alive for it in feeling, and indeed in an overabundance of *feeling*. And what holds in this way of the strange *nihil* [nothing] of our mystics holds in exactly the same way of the *śūnyam* and the *śūnyatā*, the "void" and the "emptiness," of the Buddhist mystics. Some people lack an inner feel for the language of the mysteries and for the ideograms, or interpretive signs, of mysticism. They do not themselves possess the matrix from which these are necessarily born. To such a person, this striving of devout Buddhists after the "void" and "becoming void" must seem a kind of madness, just like our mystics' striving after the Nothing and after being brought to nothing. And Buddhism itself must then seem a morbid "nihilism." But like the "Nothing," the "void" is in truth a numinous ideogram of the "wholly other." The *śūnyam* is the *mirum* pure and simple, heightened at the same time into the "paradoxical" and the "antinomic," which we shall discuss shortly. Anyone who does not bring this insight with him must find the writings on the *prajñā-pāramitā* [the perfection of wisdom], which set out to glorify the *śūnyam*, sheer madness. And it must remain utterly incom-

prehensible to him what a spell precisely these writings have cast over millions.

5.11 The "supernatural" and the "supramundane" are designations that look like positive predicates. And as we attribute them to the mysterious, the "mystery" seems to shed its initially only negative meaning and to become a positive statement. As regards the concept, this again is mere appearance. For "supernatural" and "supramundane" are obviously themselves only negating and excluding predicates with respect to nature and world. But it is correct as regards the content of feeling, which is indeed highly positive, though here again it cannot be analyzed. Through this content the names "supramundane" and "supernatural" become for us, as a matter of course, designations of a peculiar, "wholly other" reality and quality, of whose distinctive character we *feel* something without being able to give it clear conceptual expression.—

PARADOX AND ANTINOMY

The mystery grows from the merely strange to the paradoxical and finally to the antinomic.

5.12 Now this element of the numinous that we call its mystery undergoes, along almost all the lines of development in the history of religion, a development within itself. It is an intensification, an ever *harsher* raising to a higher power, of its character as *mirum*. Three stages can be identified: the stage of the merely strange, that of the paradoxical, and that of the antinomic. As the "wholly other," the *mirum* is first of all the ungraspable and incomprehensible, the *akatalēpton*, as Chrysostom says: that which eludes our "comprehension" insofar as it "transcends our categories." But it does not merely exceed them and render them powerless. At times it seems to set itself in opposition to them, to cancel and confound them.[6] It is then not only ungraspable; it actually becomes paradoxical. It is then not only above all

6 John Chrysostom (c. AD 347–407), Greek church father and preacher of Antioch and Constantinople.

reason; it seems to go "against reason." And the sharpest form of this, in turn, is what we call the antinomic. This is more still than the merely paradoxical. For here it seems that we arrive not only at statements that go against reason, its standards and its laws, but at statements that are divided against themselves and assert of their object *opposita* [opposites] that appear to be irreconcilable and insoluble contradictions. Here the *mirum* appears to the human desire to understand in its very harshest form. It is not only ungraspable by our categories, not only incomprehensible because of its *dissimilitas* [unlikeness], not only confounding reason, dazzling it, alarming it, driving it into distress. It is determined in itself in opposite ways, in contrast and contradiction. According to our theory, these elements must be found especially in "mystical theology," if that theology by its nature is to arise through "a preponderance of the non-rational in the idea of God." And by common consent they actually are found there. Mysticism is essentially, and first of all, a *theologia* of the *mirum*: of the "wholly other," of paradox and antinomies, of the *opposita* and the *coincidentia oppositorum* [coincidence of opposites]. (And where it degenerates, it plays a trifling game of clever bafflement with them.) But even so, "mysticism" is nothing absolutely opposed to ordinary religion. The true relations here at once become clear if one notices the elements named here, and their evident origin in the general religious element of the numinous "wholly other," without which there is no genuine religious feeling at all, precisely in men who are usually set against all mysticism: in Job and in Luther. The elements of the "wholly other" as paradox and antinomy make up precisely what we call the "Joban" train of thought, which is characteristic of no one more than of Luther.

Chapter 6: Numinous Hymns

Kapitel 6. Numinose Hymnen
Hymns and prayers that carry the non-rational element, compared with merely rational ones.

KAPITEL 6. NUMINOSE HYMNEN.

6.1 The difference between a merely "rational" glorification of the Godhead and one that also conveys a feeling of the non-rational, the numinous, in the elements of the *tremendum mysterium*, may be shown by comparing the following poems. Gellert knows how to sing "*The Glory of God in Nature*" mightily and splendidly enough:[1]

6.2 The heavens praise the glory of the Eternal One, their sound carries his name onward.

6.3 Everything here is bright, rational and intimate, right up to and including the final stanza: I am your Creator, I am wisdom and goodness, a God of order and your salvation. It is I! Love me with all your heart, and share in my grace. But however beautiful this hymn is, the "glory of God" is still not fully captured here. An element is missing, and we feel it at once when we compare this hymn with the one E. Lange wrote a generation earlier on "*The Majesty of God*":[2]

1 Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–1769), German Enlightenment poet; Beethoven set this hymn to music.
2 Ernst Lange (1650–1727), German Pietist poet and hymn writer.

6.4 Before you the choir of angels trembles,
they *cast* their eyes and faces *down*,
so *terrible* do you seem to them.
And of this their songs resound.
The *creature stands struck rigid*
before your presence,
with which the whole world is filled.
And this outward appearance shows,
unchanging Spirit,
an image in which you *veil* yourself.
Your praise is proclaimed for ever
by the cherubim and seraphim.
Before you the gray-haired host of elders
serve in humility on their knees.
For yours are the power and the glory,
the kingdom and the sanctuary,
where *terror snatches me from myself*.
With you is *majesty*,
which surpasses all things,
and is called *holy, holy, holy*[3].

6.5 That is more than Gellert. Yet even here something is still missing that we find in the song of the seraphim in Isaiah 6. Despite being "struck rigid," Lange sings ten long stanzas; the angels, barely two lines. And he addresses God incessantly as *you*, with the familiar *Du*; the angels speak before Yahweh in the *third* person[4]. The liturgy of Yom Kippur, the great Day of Atone-

3 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. A. Bartels: Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott. Deutsch-christliches Dichterbuch, p. 274.

4 OTTO'S NOTE. Indeed, one cannot always address the Highest with the familiar *Du*, and sometimes not at all. St. Teresa says "Your Majesty" to God, and the French like to say *vous*. And Goethe comes very close to the *tremendum mysterium* of the numinous when he says to Eckermann on December 31, 1823: People treat the divine name as if the incomprehensible, utterly unthinkable Supreme Being were not much more than their equal. Otherwise they would not say: the Lord God, the dear God, the good God. If they were imbued with his greatness, they would fall silent and, out of reverence, would not want to name him.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Johann Peter Eckermann (1792–1854), Goethe's assistant, recorded the aged poet's talk in *Conversations with Goethe*.

ment of the Jews, is unusually rich in numinous hymns and prayers. It is overshadowed by the thrice-holy of the seraphim from Isa. 6, which recurs again and again. It has such wonderful prayers as the *Uvekhen ten paḥdekha*: So let your fear come, YHVH our God, upon all your creatures, and reverent trepidation (*ēmātekhā*) before you upon all that you have made, that all your creatures may fear you and all beings bow before you, and that they may all become one band to do your will with their whole heart, as we know, YHVH our God, that dominion is yours, power is in your hand and might in your right hand, and your name is exalted above all that you have made. Or the *Qadosh attah*: Holy are you and terrible (*nora*) is your name, and there is no God beside you, as it is written: "And YHVH Sabaoth is exalted in judgment, and the holy God is hallowed in righteousness." The glorious hymns *Yigdal Elohim Ḥai* and *Adon Olam* carry this tone further, as do many pieces from "The Royal Crown" of Solomon ben Judah Gabirol, such as the *Nifla'im*: Wonderful are your works, and my soul recognizes and knows it. Yours, O God, are the power and the greatness, the splendor and the glory and the praise. Yours is dominion over all things, the riches and the honor. The creatures of the height and the depth bear witness that you endure when they sink into the void.[5] Yours is the power at whose mystery thought grows weary; for you are mightier than its limits. Yours is the veil of omnipotence, the mystery and the primal ground. Yours is the name hidden from the men of light, and the power that holds the world above nothingness, that reveals what is hidden on the day of judgment .... And the throne, exalted above all the fullness of majesty, and the dwelling in the ether's veil of mystery. Yours is the existence from whose light all life streams forth, of which we say that we weave only in its shadow. Or like the *Attah nimtsa*: You are! Neither the ear's hearing nor the eye's light can reach you. No how, why or where clings to you as a sign. You

5 Solomon ibn Gabirol (c. 1021–c. 1058), Hebrew poet and philosopher of Muslim Spain; *Keter Malkhut* ("The Royal Crown") is his great meditative poem, read on the Day of Atonement.

are! Your mystery is hidden: who can fathom it! So deep, so deep —who can find it!! From M. Sachs: Festgebete der Israeliten [Festival Prayers of the Israelites], Part 3; 15th edition, Breslau 1898.

Chapter 7: The Fascinans

Kapitel 7. 5. Das Fascinans
The numinous also attracts and enraptures: grace, bliss and the overflowing, and the uncanny "monstrous".

KAPITEL 7. 5. DAS FASCINANS.

7.1 You who alone satisfy / so essentially, so purely—

7.2 The qualitative *content* of the numinous (to which the *mysteriosum* gives form) is, on the one hand, the element of the repelling *tremendum* with its *majestas,* already set out. On the other hand, it is clearly at the same time something peculiarly *attractive*, captivating, fascinating, which now enters into a strange harmony of contrast with the repelling element of the *tremendum*. This harmony of contrast, this dual character of the numinous, is what the whole history of religion bears witness to, at least from the stage of "daemonic dread" onward. It is the strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion. However dreadful and terrible the daemonic-divine may appear to the mind, it is at the same time just as alluring and enticing. And the creature that trembles before it in the humblest dismay always has at the same time the impulse to turn toward it, indeed somehow to make it its own. For the creature, the mystery is not merely something to marvel at; it is also something marvelous. Alongside what bewilders the senses comes what bewitches them, what carries one away, what strangely enraptures, often enough rising to frenzy and intoxication: *the* Dionysian element in the effects of the *numen*.

7.3 The rational ideas and concepts that run parallel to *this* non-rational element of the *fascinans* and schematize it are love,

mercy, compassion and readiness to help. All of these are "natural" elements of common psychological experience, only thought of as perfected. But however important these elements are for the religious experience of bliss, they by no means exhaust it. Religious misery, as the experience of *ira* [wrath], has deeply non-rational elements in it, and so does its counterpart, religious bliss. Being made blessed is more, much more, than mere natural consolation, confidence, happiness in love, however highly these may be intensified. "Wrath," taken purely rationally or purely ethically, did not yet exhaust that deep *power to make one shudder* enclosed in the mystery of the Godhead. And "a gracious disposition" does not yet exhaust the deep *wonderfulness* that lies in the blissful mystery of the Godhead as experienced. It can indeed be designated by the name "grace," but then in the fuller sense of the word in which the language of the mystics actually uses it: a sense in which it includes the gracious disposition, but also something "more."[1]

7.4 This "something more" has its early stages far back in the history of religion. It would indeed be possible, even almost probable, that at the first stage of its development religious feeling broke forth at first with only one of its poles, the repelling one, and took shape at first only as daemonic dread. One point in favor of this is that even at late stages of development the word for "to worship religiously" really means "to appease," "to still wrath." So it is with the Sanskrit *aparādh*. (Later the original sense may have faded almost completely, and the word then simply means "to worship.") But suppose there were only such daemonic dread, if it were nothing more, and not itself only one element of something fuller that gradually presses into consciousness. From it alone there could be no transition to the feelings of positive turning toward the *numen*. From it a cult could arise only in the form of *apaiteisthai* and *apotrepein* [beg-

1 OTTO'S NOTE. "Just as we honor a sanctuary with fear and yet do not … flee from it, but rather press closer to it," says Luther. Cf. Sermon von den guten Werken [Sermon on Good Works], on the first commandment of the second table, paragraph 3.

ging off and averting], in the form of atonements and propitiations, of stilling and averting wrath. It can never explain why the numinous is sought, desired, longed for: longed for not only for the sake of the natural furtherance and help expected from it, but also for its own sake. And it is longed for not only in the forms of "rational" worship, but also in those strange "sacramental" acts, rites and methods of communion by which human beings seek to take possession of the numinous themselves.

7.5 The history of religion has in its foreground the normal and easily understood expressions and forms of religious action: propitiations, petition, sacrifice, thanksgiving and so on. Alongside these stands a series of strange things that increasingly attract attention, and in which people believe they can recognize, alongside religion as such, the roots of "mysticism." Here, through a host of strange practices and imaginative means, the religious person tries to take possession of the mysterious itself, to fill himself with it, even to become identical with it. These practices fall into two classes. On the one hand, there is magical identification of oneself with the *numen* through magical and cultic action: through formula, "hallowing," conjuration, consecration, binding by spells and the like. On the other hand, there are the shamanistic procedures of "possession," indwelling, and self-filling in exaltation and ecstasy. The starting points here were probably simply magical at first, and the aim was probably at first only to appropriate the *wonder-working power of the numen* for "natural" ends. But it does not stop there. Possessing the *numen*, and being seized by it, becomes an end in itself. It is sought for its own sake, with the most refined and the wildest ascetic practices brought to bear. The *vita religiosa* [religious life] begins. *To* dwell in these strange, often bizarre states of numinous seizure itself becomes a good, indeed a salvation, wholly different from the profane goods sought through magic. Here too, then, the development, purification and maturing of the experience sets in. The most sublime states of purified "being in the Spirit" and of ennobled mysticism are the end of the matter. And however much these states differ among them-

selves, what they have in common is that in them the mystery is experienced in its positive reality and its inner nature, as something that blesses beyond anything heard of. Yet again it is experienced in such a way that what this blessedness really consists in cannot be stated or made conceptual, but only experienced. It encompasses and quickens all the positively specifiable goods of salvation that the "doctrine of salvation" can point to, but it is not exhausted in them. And by pervading them and setting them aglow, it makes of them more than the understanding grasps and says of them. It gives the peace that passes all understanding. The tongue can only stammer of it. And only in images and analogies does it give, from afar, an inadequate and confused notion of itself.

7.6 "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, what has not entered into the heart of any human being"—who does not feel the exalted resonance of these words of Paul's, and the rushing, Dionysian quality in them? What is instructive about them is that in such words, in which feeling would like to say its utmost, all "images" recede too; that here the mind "lets go of images" and reaches for pure negatives. And more instructive still is that when we read and hear such words we do not notice at all that they are merely negative! That we can be delighted, even intoxicated, by whole chains of such negations, and that whole hymns of the deepest impressiveness have been written in which, strictly speaking, nothing is said:

7.7 O God, you depth without a ground,
how can I know you well enough?
You great height, how shall my mouth
name you by your attributes?
You are an incomprehensible sea:
I sink myself into your mercy.
My heart is empty of true wisdom;
enfold me in your arms.
I would gladly picture you
to myself and to others.
Yet I become aware of my weakness.
Because all that you are
is without end and beginning,
I lose all my senses over it!

7.8 This is instructive for how independent the positive content is of conceptual expression. It shows how strongly the content can be grasped, how thoroughly "understood," how deeply appreciated, purely with, in and from feeling itself. Mere "love," mere "trust," however much happiness they bring, do not explain to us that element of rapture woven into our tenderest and most heartfelt hymns of salvation, especially our hymns of longing for final salvation:

7.9 Jerusalem, you city built on high … or

7.10 Lord, I have *beheld* your throne from afar … or in the almost dancing verses of Bernard of Cluny: Zion, city unique, mystic dwelling founded in heaven, now I rejoice in you, now I mourn for you, I grieve, I yearn. Since I cannot enter you with my body, I often enter you with my heart; but being earthly flesh and fleshly earth, I soon fall back. No one can unfold, no one can utter with the mouth, how full of radiance your walls are, how full your citadels. I can tell of it as well as I can touch the sky with my thumb, run upon the sea, or fix a spear in the air. That beauty of yours overwhelms every heart, O Zion, O peace. City beyond time, no praise of you can ever be false. O new dwelling, the devout assembly, the devout people, fortifies you, advances you, stirs you, enlarges you, makes you one with itself, perfects

you, unites you. Ernst Lange's († 1727) hymn on God's majesty, in A.[2] Bartels, p. 273. Bernardus Morlanensis: De vanitate mundi et gloria caelesti [On the Vanity of the World and the Glory of Heaven] (ed. Eilh. Lubinus, Rostock, 1610; B, 2.) or

7.11 Most blessed Being, infinite delight, abyss of the most perfect joy, eternal glory, most splendid sun, that has never known change or alteration.

7.12 or:

7.13 Oh, if only one were wholly drowned in the sea of the Godhead's primal ground, so as to have sunk wholly away from all grief, fear and woe.

7.14 Here the "more" of the *fascinans* is alive. It is just as alive in the high-pitched praises of the good of salvation that recur in all religions of salvation. Everywhere these stand in strange contrast to the apparent poverty, and frequent childishness, of what is actually held out in concept or image. Anyone who has wandered with Dante through Hell, Purgatory, Heaven and the heavenly Rose, in ever more tense expectation that the curtain will at last fall, has surely felt this. It falls. And one is almost startled, so little is behind it:

7.15 In the deep and clear subsistence of the lofty light there appeared to me three circles, of three colors and of one extent.

7.16 Has one traveled so far, asks the "natural man," to see three colored circles! And yet the seer's tongue still stammers with excitement at the thought of what he has seen:

7.17 Oh, how short is speech, and how feeble, for my conception! And this, compared with what I saw, is such that it is not enough to call it little.

7.18 Everywhere "salvation" is something that often makes very little sense, or none at all, to the "natural" man. Insofar as he understands it, it often strikes him, on the contrary, as extremely boring and uninteresting, and sometimes as utterly contrary to his taste and nature. Such is the *visio beatifica* [beatific vision], the beholding of God, in our own doctrine of

2 Bernard of Cluny (also called Bernard of Morlas), twelfth-century monk, author of a long Latin satire on the world and hymn to the heavenly Jerusalem.

salvation, or the *henosis* [union] of "God all in all" in the mystics. "Insofar as he understands it"—but he does not understand it at all. What is offered him as an expression of it is the interpretive conceptual analogue, the mere ideogram of feeling. Without the inner teacher he must necessarily confuse this with natural concepts and understand it "naturally," and so he only strays further from the goal.

7.19 It is not only in religious longing that the *fascinans* comes alive. It is already present in the element of "solemnity": both in collected, absorbed individual devotion and the lifting of the mind to the holy, and in communal worship practiced with earnestness and depth (which among us, unfortunately, is more a wish than a reality). It is the *fascinans* itself that, in "the solemn," can fill the soul so unspeakably and give it peace. Perhaps what Schleiermacher asserts of it in *The Christian Faith* (*Glaubenslehre*) § 5 holds of it, and of the feeling of the numinous in general: namely, that it can never fill a moment on its own, without connection with and interpenetration by rational elements; that is, it can never really occur by itself. But even if that were correct, it would hold for other reasons than those Schleiermacher gives. And in any case it can occur with a greater or lesser degree of predominance, and can then occasionally lead to states both of *hesychia* [stillness] and of rapture, in which it *almost* alone fills both the moment and the soul. It may take the form of a coming kingdom of God and the bliss of a paradise beyond, or the form of one's own entry into the blissful supramundane itself. It may come first in expectation and presentiment, or already in present experience ("If I have only you, I *ask* nothing of heaven and earth"). In any case, in the most manifold forms and appearances, inwardly related, there stirs a strangely powerful drive toward a good that only religion knows. This good is non-rational through and through. The mind knows of it in searching intimation, and recognizes it behind dark and inadequate symbols of expression. This circumstance also shows that above and behind our rational nature there lies hidden something ultimate and highest in our nature. It is not yet satis-

fied by the sating and stilling of the needs of our sensuous, psychic and intellectual drives and desires.—The mystics called it the "ground of the soul."

THE OVERABOUNDING

The fascinans heightened into mystical bliss, in conversion, grace and the raptures of the mystics.

7.20 With the element of the mysterious, the supernatural and the supramundane arose out of the "wholly other," and beyond these, in mysticism, the *epekeina* appeared through the utmost heightening and overstraining of the non-rational in religion itself. In just the same way, the element of the *fascinans* again opens the possibility of a passage into mysticism. Raised to its highest tension, it becomes the "overabounding." As a mystical element on this line, the overabounding corresponds exactly to the *epekeina* on that other line, and is to be understood accordingly. But a trace of the overabounding lives in every genuine feeling of religious bliss, even where that feeling appears in moderation and under control. This comes out most clearly when we study those great experiences in which religious life appears in typical purity and in a heightened act, and shows itself more tangibly than in the less typical form of a quietly inculcated piety: the experiences of "grace," of "conversion," of "rebirth." In the Christian forms of such experiences, the fixed center is redemption from the guilt and bondage of "sin." We shall have to see below that this redemption, too, does not come about without non-rational strands. But apart from that, we must point out here already the inability to say what one has actually experienced. There is the blissful agitation, the inability to contain oneself, the exaltation, and the frequent brush with the abnormal and bizarre into which such experience can

pass[3]. The personal testimonies and life stories of the "converted," beginning with Paul, bear witness to this. James has collected a whole number of them, without himself paying heed to the "non-rational" that trembles in them: I felt at that moment nothing but unspeakable joy and delight. It is impossible to describe the experience completely. It was like the effect of a great orchestra, when all the separate notes melt into one harmony that awakens in the listener only the feeling that his soul is being lifted up and is almost bursting with rapture (p. 55). And another: But the more I seek for words to depict this intimate communion, the more clearly I see that it is impossible to describe the experience by our ordinary images (p. 55). And a third marks, with almost dogmatic sharpness, how this bliss differs in quality from other, "rational" joy: The ideas the converted form of God's goodness, and the joy they take in it, are something quite unique and utterly different from anything an ordinary person can possess or even imagine (p. 185). Compare also pp. 57, 154, 182. And the testimony of Jakob Böhme *on p. 328*: But what a triumphing there was in the spirit, I can neither write nor speak.[4] It can be compared with nothing but that moment when life is born in the midst of death, and it is like the resurrection from the dead.

7.21 In the mystics these experiences rise wholly into the overabounding:

7.22 Oh, that I could tell you what the heart feels, how it burns and is consumed within! But I find no words to express it. I can only say this: if but one little drop of what I feel were to fall into hell, hell would be turned into a paradise.

3 OTTO'S NOTE. This may be found tiresome by those who are trying to build themselves a "religion within the limits of pure reason" or of "humanity." But when we ask about religion not as it is within limits drawn in advance, but as it is in its own essence, this is simply how matters stand with it, as we describe. And this procedure of positing a "humanity" before and apart from the innermost and most proper faculty of *homo*, the human being, is like forming a normative concept of the body after first cutting off its head.

4 Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), shoemaker of Görlitz and Lutheran mystic.

7.23 So says Catherine of Genoa, and the whole company of her kindred spirits says and testifies the like. And the church hymn says the same, only more gently:[5]

7.24 What the King of heaven has given them
Is known to none but to themselves alone.
What no one perceives,
What no one touches,
Has adorned their enlightened senses
And led them to divine dignity.

7.25 The experiences that we know in Christianity as the experience of grace and as rebirth have their counterparts in the higher spiritual religions outside Christianity too. Such counterparts are the breaking forth of the saving *bodhi*, the opening of the "heavenly eye," the *jñāna* that shines out in an incommensurable experience and conquers the darkness of unknowing, or Īśvara's *prasāda*[6]. And here too the wholly non-rational and wholly distinctive character of the bliss is immediately noticeable. In its quality this bliss is very various, and quite different from what is experienced in Christianity. In its degree of intensity, however, it is much the same everywhere. Everywhere it is a *fascinans* pure and simple. Everywhere it is a "salvation" that, set against everything "natural" that can be said or compared, is the "overabounding" itself, or bears strong traces of it.[7] And this holds fully for the Buddha's nirvana too, and its only seemingly cool or negative delights. *Only* in *concept* is nirvana a negative; in feeling it is a positive of the strongest kind, and a *fascinans* that can send its devotees into raptures. I vividly remember a conversation with a Buddhist monk. With the most stubborn consistency he had lavished on me his *theologia negativa*, his negat-

5 Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510), Italian mystic and hospital worker.

6 OTTO'S NOTE. See *Dīpikā des Śrīnivāsa. Eine indische Heilslehre* [Śrīnivāsa's Dīpikā: An Indian Doctrine of Salvation], translated from the Sanskrit by R. Otto, page 51.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Otto's own translation (1916) of a short treatise of the Hindu Rāmānuja school.

7 Sanskrit: *bodhi*, awakening or enlightenment; *jñāna*, saving knowledge; Īśvara's *prasāda*, the grace of the Lord.

ive theology, and the arguments for his doctrine of *anātman* (no-self) and of the emptiness of all things. But when we came to the last question, what nirvana itself is, there came at last, after long hesitation, softly and with restraint, the one answer: "Bliss—unspeakable." And in the softening and restraint of the answer, in the solemnity of voice, face and gesture more than in the word, it became clear what was meant. That was a confession of the *mysterium fascinans*, and it said in its own way what Jalal ad-Din *says* in his[8]:[9]

7.26 The essence of faith is nothing but wonder, / Yet not so as to look away from God; no—*drunk*

7.27 To cling to the Friend, wholly sunk in him. And the "Gospel of the Hebrews" says these strangely beautiful words:[10]

7.28 But whoever has found it will marvel. / And marveling he will be king.

7.29 And so, following the *via eminentiae et causalitatis* (the way of eminence and of causality), we assert that the divine is the highest, strongest, best, most beautiful, most beloved of all that a human being can *conceive*. But following the *via negationis* (the way of negation), we say that It is not only the ground and the superlative of all that can be conceived. God is, in himself, yet a thing apart.

DEINÓS AND THE MONSTROUS

The Greek deinós and the German ungeheuer are ordinary words that still carry the whole numinous.

7.30 A peculiarly untranslatable word, a hard concept to grasp with strangely different sides, is the Greek "*deinós*." Why is it so difficult and so elusive? Because it is nothing other than the numinous—mostly, it is true, on a lower level, thinned out by rhetoric or poetry and worn smooth. That is why it is *dirus* and

8 OTTO'S NOTE. Rosen, *Mesnevi*, p. 89.

9 Jalal ad-Din Rumi (1207–1273), Persian mystic poet, author of the *Masnavi*; Otto quotes Georg Rosen's German version.

10 A lost Jewish-Christian gospel known only from quotations; this saying is preserved by Clement of Alexandria.

tremendus; it is bad and imposing, mighty and strange, bizarre and admirable, dread-inducing and fascinating, divine and daemonic and "energetic." In the song of the chorus Sophocles seeks to awaken a feeling of numinous awe, in all its elements, before that wondrous being, the human:[11]

7.31 πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοὐδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει. [Many things are *deinós*, and nothing is more *deinós* than the human being.] And this line is untranslatable for us precisely because our language lacks a word that designates the numinous impression of a thing definitely, on its own and gathered together. Perhaps our word "das Ungeheure," the monstrous, comes closest. And one could render the line above fairly exactly in its mood if one translated:[12]

7.32 Much there is that is monstrous. But nothing / Is more monstrous than the human being,

7.33 that is, if one attends to the first, basic sense of our word "ungeheuer" (monstrous), which has come to us mostly from feeling. Today by "ungeheuer" we usually mean simply what is very large in size or character. But that is, so to speak, a rationalistic interpretation of the real concept, at any rate a rationalized and secondary one. For "ungeheuer" is properly and originally that which is "nicht geheuer" to us, that which makes us ill at ease: the *uncanny*, that is, something numinous. And it is precisely this sheer uncanniness in the human being that Sophocles means in our passage. If one feels one's way through to this basic sense of the word, it could be a fairly exact expression for the numinous in its elements of the *mysterium*, the *tremendum*, the *majestas*, the *augustum* and the *energicum* (indeed, even the *fascinans* resonates in it).

7.34 The meanings of "ungeheuer," and how they shifted, can be traced well in Goethe. He too uses it first for what is very large in extent, so large that it exceeds the limits of our spatial

11 The ode in Sophocles' *Antigone* (lines 332 ff.); *deinós* means at once terrible, awesome, wondrous and clever.

12 Otto's "das Ungeheure," rendered "the monstrous," means the uncanny and overwhelming, like *deinós*, not merely the huge.

power of comprehension. An example is the immeasurable vault of the night sky, in the passage of the *Journeyman Years* where Wilhelm, in Makarie's house, is led up to the observatory by the astronomer. And here he remarks, finely and rightly:[13]

7.35 The monstrous (in this sense) ceases to be sublime. It *outreaches* our power of comprehension[14].

7.36 But elsewhere he still uses the word wholly with the colors of its original sense. Then the monstrous is for him rather the monstrous, uncanny and appalling:

7.37 So a house, a city, in which a *monstrous* deed has been done, remains fearful to everyone who enters it. There the light of day does not shine so brightly, and the stars seem to lose their brilliance[15].

7.38 Softened, it is then for him the *incomprehensible*, in which a faint shudder still trembles on:

7.39 And he believed he saw more and more clearly that it was *better* to turn one's thoughts away from the *monstrous*, the incomprehensible[16].

7.40 So the monstrous easily becomes for him our "*stupendum*" or "*mirum*," as the wholly unexpected, the disconcertingly other:

7.41 Unhappy man! I have scarcely recovered yet! When something wholly *unexpected* befalls us, When our gaze beholds something monstrous,

7.42 Our mind stands still for a while: / We have nothing to compare it with.

7.43 In these words of Antonio in *Tasso*, the monstrous is naturally not something large, for there was truly nothing of the sort. Nor is it, properly, something "appalling," but rather what *thambos* sets off in us: "We have nothing to compare it with." Our

13 Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years* (1821, revised 1829).

14 OTTO'S NOTE. *Journeyman Years*, Book 1, ch. 10. Compare also *Poetry and Truth* 2, 9: the monstrous scale of the façade of Strasbourg Minster.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. *Poetry and Truth* (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*) is Goethe's autobiography.

15 OTTO'S NOTE. *Elective Affinities* 2, 15.

16 OTTO'S NOTE. *Poetry and Truth* 4, 20; in the account of his own religious development in his youth.

people have an excellent name for the corresponding *feeling*: "sich verjagen," to be startled out of oneself. The word comes from the root *jäh*, *jach* (sudden), and its sense points to the sudden onset of something wholly unexpected and puzzling, which *obstupefacit* the mind, strikes it dumb, or puts it into *thambos*.— Finally, the word "ungeheuer" becomes outright and wholly a name for our numinous, in all its aspects, in Faust's wonderful words:[17]

7.44 Shuddering awe is the best part of humankind. However costly the world may make that feeling for him, Gripped, he feels deeply the *monstrous*.[18]

17 Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso* (1790). Greek *thambos*: astonishment, amazement.
18 Goethe, *Faust*, Part II, Act 1 (lines 6272–6274).

Chapter 8: Analogies

Kapitel 8. Entsprechungen
Related feelings such as the sublime, the law of association of feelings, and how rational ideas "schematize" the numinous.

KAPITEL 8. ENTSPRECHUNGEN.

8.1 To do justice to this second side of the numinous, we had to add to the "*mysterium tremendum*" above that it is at the same time a *fascinans* pure and simple. And in this thing, at once infinitely full of shuddering and infinitely full of wonder, the mystery has its own *positive* double content, which makes itself known to feeling. We are trying to describe this harmony of contrasts in the "what" and "how" of the mystery's content, and we cannot. But it can be hinted at from afar through an analogy from a field that belongs not to religion but to aesthetics. The analogy is only a pale reflection of our subject, and is moreover itself something hard to analyze: it is the category and the feeling of the sublime[1]. The correspondences in feeling between the sublime and the numinous are easy to make clear. First: the "sublime," too, is, in Kant's words, a "concept that cannot be unfolded." One can indeed gather some general "rational" marks that recur consistently whenever we call an object sublime. For example, that it approaches the limits of our power of comprehension and threatens to exceed them, "dynamically" or "mathematically," through mighty displays of force or through spatial

1 OTTO'S NOTE. Neither heterogony nor epigenesis is genuine evolution. They are rather exactly what biology calls *generatio aequivoca* [spontaneous generation], and on that basis mere formation of aggregates by addition and accumulation.

size. But that is obviously only a condition of the impression of sublimity, not its essence. Something merely large is

8.2 not yet sublime. The concept itself stays folded up; it has something mysterious about it, and this it has in common with the numinous. Secondly, there is the fact that the sublime too has that peculiar double element: its impression on the mind first repels, and yet at the same time attracts it uncommonly strongly. [1] People readily and often fill the negative concept of the "supramundane" with this familiar emotional content, and even explain God's supramundaneness outright as his "sublimity"; and as an analogical designation that is quite permissible. But if one meant it seriously and literally, it would be an error. Religious feelings are not aesthetic ones. The "sublime," however, still belongs to aesthetics, next to the "beautiful," however very different from the beautiful it is. It humbles the mind and at the same time exalts it, confines it and carries it beyond itself. On the one hand it releases a feeling that bears a likeness to fear; on the other hand it gladdens. So through likeness it attaches itself closely to the concept of the numinous. It is suited to "stimulate" the numinous as well as to be stimulated by it, to "pass over" into it as well as to let the numinous pass over into it and die away in it.

THE LAW OF ASSOCIATION OF FEELINGS

Feelings stimulate similar feelings; one can pass over from one to another, but no feeling turns into another.

8.3 These expressions, "stimulating" and "passing over," will become important to us later. The latter in particular is surrounded by misunderstandings that are strong in present-day theories of evolution and lead to false claims. So we shall go into them more closely here and now.

8.4 It is a well-known basic law of psychology that ideas "attract" one another: one idea stimulates another and brings it into consciousness along with it, if the other is similar to it. But a quite similar law holds for feelings. A feeling, too, can make a

feeling similar to it resonate along with it, and can cause me to harbor the other at the same time. Indeed, just as there, by the law of attraction through similarity, ideas get confused, so that I harbor idea x where y would be in place, so here too feelings can get confused. I can respond to an impression with feeling x when feeling y would rightly correspond to it. Finally, I can pass over from one feeling to another, and do so by an imperceptible, gradual transition: feeling x gradually dies away, while, to the same degree, feeling y, stimulated along with it, grows and strengthens. What "passes over" here is in truth not the feeling itself. It is not the feeling that gradually changes its quality or "develops"—that is, in truth, *transforms* itself into something wholly other. Rather, I pass over, from one feeling to another, as my states alternate, through the gradual decrease of the one and increase of the other. A "passing over" of the feeling itself into another would be a genuine "transformation." It would be psychic alchemy, the making of gold.

8.5 Yet present-day evolutionary theory—which ought more correctly to be called transformation theory—often assumes just such a transformation. It introduces it with the ambiguous phrase "gradually developing" (from one quality, that is, into another), or with equally ambiguous terms such as "epigenesis," "heterogony"[1] and the like. In this way, for example, the feeling of the moral "ought" is supposed to "develop." First—so we are told—there is the simple compulsion of habitual, uniform action, say in the community of the clan. Out of this, so we are told, there then "arises" the idea of a universally binding "ought." How the idea manages this is not revealed. What is overlooked is that it is something *qualitatively* quite different from the constraint of habit.[2] Here the finer, more penetrating psychological analysis that grasps differences of quality is grossly neglected, and so the problem is missed. Or one senses something of it, but then covers it up with "gradually developing," and lets the one become the other "*par la durée*" [through

2 "Heterogony of ends" is Wilhelm Wundt's term for new purposes arising as unintended results of action; "epigenesis" is borrowed from biology.

duration], as milk turns sour from standing a long time. But the "ought" is a wholly distinctive and original content of thought, which cannot be derived from anything else, any more than blue can be derived from sour. And there are no "transformations" in the psychic realm, any more than in the physical. Only from the human spirit itself can the idea of the "ought" be "developed"—that is, awakened—because it is predisposed in it. If it were not, no "development" would put it there.

8.6 The historical process itself may have been entirely as the evolutionists suppose: a gradual succession of different elements of feeling, appearing in a certain historical order. Only it is to be explained quite differently from how they think, namely by the law by which feelings and ideas stimulate and awaken one another according to the measure of their similarity. Between constraint by custom and constraint by the "ought" there is indeed a very strong correspondence, for both are practical constraints. The former can therefore *awaken* the latter in the mind, if the mind was itself predisposed to it. The feeling of the "ought" can resonate along with it, and gradually a person can pass over from the one to the other. It is a matter of the *replacement* of the one by the other, not of the transformation of the one into the other.

8.7 As with the feeling of moral obligation, so now with the feeling of the numinous. It is a content of feeling that cannot be derived from any other feeling; it is not "developable" in this sense, but qualitatively unique. Yet it is a content of feeling that at the same time has many correspondences with others. It can therefore both "stimulate" those others and cause them to appear, and be caused by them to appear. What must take the place of the "epigenetic" and other constructions of the course of religion's evolution is this: to seek out these occasioning elements, these "stimuli," and to show by virtue of which correspondences they could act as occasions—in short, to track down the chain of stimuli under whose influence the numinous feeling awoke.

8.8 One such stimulus, certainly, has often been the feeling of the sublime, according to the law we found and through the correspondences it has with numinous feeling. But this stimulus itself undoubtedly appeared only late in the chain of stimuli. And probably it was the religious feeling that preceded it that first awakened and released it—released it, moreover, not from itself, but from the rational spirit and its a priori faculty.

SCHEMATIZATION

Rational ideas relate to the numinous as Kant's schemata relate to categories, by essential correspondence.

8.9 Schematization.

8.10 The "association of ideas"—or, to use the German word, *Gesellung*—does not merely bring about the occasional appearance of idea y along with x when x is given. Under certain circumstances it also establishes longer-lasting relations between the two, even permanent connections. And the association of feelings does so no less. So we see religious feeling, too, in lasting connections with other feelings that are coupled with it by such a law. Coupled, often, rather than truly joined. For such mere couplings, or chance connections according to laws of merely external correspondence, are to be distinguished from necessary connections according to principles of real inner kinship and rightful belonging together. *Such* a connection of inner belonging together, and indeed according to an inner a priori principle, is for example, in Kant's teaching, the connection of the category of causality with its temporal schema. That schema is the temporal succession of two events following one another, which, when that category is added, is recognized as a relation of cause and effect between the two. The agreement between the two, between category and schema, is not an external, chance similarity but an essential correspondence, and the belonging together of category and schema is here a rational necessity. On

the basis of such correspondence, temporal succession "schematizes" the category.[3]

8.11 Now the relation of the rational to the non-rational in the idea of the holy is also such a relation of "schematization." And the non-rational numinous, schematized by the rational concepts we indicated above, gives us the rich and full complex category of the holy itself, in the full sense. Genuine schematization differs from a mere connection of similar things in this: as the religious feeling for truth grows and develops further, it does not fall apart again and get discarded, but is only recognized more firmly and definitely. And for that reason it is probable that the intimate connection of the holy with the sublime is also more than a mere association of feelings. The association may be only its historical awakening and first occasion. But their intimate and lasting connection in all the higher religions indicates that the sublime, too, is a genuine "schema" of the holy itself.

ANALOGIES FROM LOVE AND MUSIC

Sexual love and song set to music show a rational element interwoven with a non-rational one.

8.12 The intimate interpenetration of the rational elements of religious feeling with the strand of the non-rational can be made clearer by another, very familiar case: the interpenetration of a general human feeling, namely affection, with a special element that is likewise wholly "non-rational," namely the sexual drive. This latter element, sexual excitability, lies, *to be sure*, on exactly the opposite side of *ratio*, of reason, from the numinous. For while the numinous is "above all reason," the other is an element below reason, an element of the life of drives and instincts. While the former sinks down into the rational from above, the latter pushes up from below—healthily and naturally

3 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, "On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding": the schema is the temporal form through which a category applies to experience.

—out of the general animal nature of the human being into the realm of what is higher in us. So the two things compared here lie on quite opposite sides of our humanity; yet in how they are linked to what lies in the middle between them, they do correspond. The reproductive drive penetrates from the life of drives into the higher human life of mind and feeling, and weaves its strand into wishes, desires and longings, into affection, friendship and love, into lyric, poetry and the making of fantasy in general. Only then does the wholly distinctive realm of the erotic arise. So what belongs to it is always a compound. It is made up of something that also occurs in the general human sphere at large—such as friendship, affection, the feeling of companionship, or a poetic mood, joyful elation, and the like— and of a strand of an entirely peculiar kind, which does not stand in line with these, and which is not sensed, understood or noticed by anyone whom Amor does not himself teach inwardly. And this too corresponds: the linguistic means of expression of the erotic are for the most part simply the expressions of the rest of the life of the mind. They lose their "innocence" only when one already knows that it is the lover who is speaking, making verses or singing. And here too the real means of expression is less the word itself than the aids to expression that come with the word: tone, gesture, facial expression. Word and sentence are the same whether a child says of its father or a girl says of her lover: "He loves me." But in the second case what is meant is a love that is at the same time "something more"—and a "more" not only of how much but also of how. Likewise, word and sentence are the same when one says of child and father and when one says of the human being and God: "We are to fear him, love him, trust him." But in the second case there is a strand in the concepts that only the devout person senses, understands and notices. Through it the fear of God is and remains the most genuine, universal reverence of a child, and yet is at the same time "something more"—and not only in how much but also in

how.—Suso means this of love and the love of God at once when he says:[4]

8.13 There was never a string so sweet: if one strings (stretches) it on a dry log—it falls silent. A heart not rich in love can no more understand a language rich in love than a German can understand someone speaking a Romance tongue[5].

8.14 And in yet another field we find an example of such interpenetration of rational with wholly non-rational elements of our emotional life. It stands even closer to the complex feeling of the holy than the previous one, since in it, too, a suprarational element forms the strand. It is the mood that a song set to music arouses in us. The text of the song expresses "natural" feelings—say, longing for home, confidence in danger, hope for some good, joy in a possession: all concrete elements of natural human fortune, describable in concepts. But music, purely as such, does not do this. It releases in the mind a rejoicing and a blissfulness, a twilight and a spellbound absorption, a storming and a surging, without anyone being able to say, or any concept to explain, what it actually is in it that moves us so. And when we say that it laments or exults, urges or holds back, these are only interpretive signs taken from the rest of our psychic life and chosen by similarity; or at least what it laments or exults about, and how, cannot be said. It arouses an experience, and vibrations of experience, of a wholly distinctive, namely musical, kind. But their rise and fall and their manifold variety do (though again only in part[6]) have certain fluid correspondences and affinities with our familiar extra-musical states and movements of mind. So they can make these resonate along with them, and can fuse with them. When they do, they "schematize" or rationalize themselves through these, and a complex of mood arises in which the general human feelings provide the warp and the non-rational musical feelings the weft. The song is

4 Henry Suso (Heinrich Seuse, c. 1295–1366), German Dominican mystic and disciple of Meister Eckhart. The quoted phrase echoes Luther's Small Catechism on the First Commandment.

5 OTTO'S NOTE. *Deutsche Werke* [German Works], ed. Denifle, pp. 309 f.

6 OTTO'S NOTE. More on this later.

thus rationalized music.—"Program music," however, is musical rationalism! For it interprets and uses the musical idea as if its *content* were not mysteries but the familiar processes of the human heart. It tries to narrate human destinies in figures of sound. In doing so it abolishes the autonomy of the musical, confuses similarity with identity, and makes a means of what is end and substance in itself. The mistake here is the same as when one lets the "*augustum*" of the numinous not so much be schematized by the morally good as be absorbed into it, or when one equates the "holy" with the "perfectly good will." Indeed, even the "music drama," as an attempt at *a continuous* union of the musical with the dramatic, goes against the non-rational spirit of music and against the autonomy of both. For the schematization of music's non-rational element by human experience succeeds only in stretches and in fragments. That is because music in itself by no means has the human heart as its real *content*, and is by no means merely a second dialect for expressing it alongside the ordinary one. It is something "wholly other," which does meet human experience in stretches through similarities, but cannot be made to coincide with it across large and continuous connections. For the stretches where they do meet, however, the magic of the word set to music arises, through mixture. And the very fact that we ascribe magic to it points to the strand of something not comprehended, something non-rational[7].

8.15 Here, however, one must beware of confusing the non-rational element of music with the non-rational element of the numinous itself, as Schopenhauer does. Each is a thing of its

7 OTTO'S NOTE. These are the standards by which to measure what is excellent and what is inadequate in E. Hanslick's book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* [On the Musically Beautiful]. Compare also F. Busoni, *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* [Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music], Insel-Bücherei, no. 202.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904), Viennese critic who held that music has no content beyond its forms; Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), composer and pianist.

own. Whether, and how far, the former can become a means of expression for the latter, we shall discuss later.[8]

8 Schopenhauer held that music directly expresses the will, the inner nature of the world.

Chapter 9: The Holy as a Numinous Value

Kapitel 9. 6. Das sanctum als numinoser Wert: Die Sünde als numinoser Unwert.—Bedeckung, Sühne
Sin as numinous unworthiness, and the need for covering and atonement; what "non-rational" means.

KAPITEL 9. 6. DAS SANCTUM ALS NUMINOSER WERT: DIE SÜNDE ALS NUMINOSER UNWERT. — BEDECKUNG, SÜHNE.

9.1 Above, we came upon the strange, deep response of the mind to the numinous when it is experienced, which we chose to call "creature-feeling." It is accompanied by feelings of sinking, of becoming small and becoming nothing (we must always keep in view that these expressions as such do not hit exactly and fully what is really meant, but only point toward it[1]. For this becoming small and becoming nothing is, after all, again quite different from when a person otherwise becomes aware of their insignificance, weakness or dependence). In it we could observe the mark of a definite *devaluation* of oneself—so to speak, with regard to one's reality, with regard to one's very existence. Beside this there now comes another devaluation, which has long been generally noticed and need only be stated:

9.2 "I am of unclean lips, and of an unclean people"—

9.3 "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man!" say Isaiah and Peter, when the numinous meets them and becomes palpable to them. What is distinctive in both is how immediate and

1 OTTO'S NOTE. "Words have been taken up so that what could not be comprehended might in some measure be understood," says Hugh of St. Victor.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1096–1141), theologian of the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris.

spontaneous, how almost instinctive, this self-devaluing response of feeling is. It does not come from reflection or follow a rule; it jerks up out of the soul, as it were, like an immediate and involuntary reflex movement against the numinous. These outbursts of feeling are so immediate: they do not arise only once one reflects on transgressions committed, but are given straightaway with the feeling of the *numen*; and they devalue oneself before the numinous, together with one's "people," and really together with all existence whatever. That they are not simply—and probably at first not at all—*moral* devaluations, but belong to a wholly peculiar category of valuation, is today, I think, generally conceded. They are by no means the feeling of having transgressed the "moral law," however much and however naturally they draw such a transgression into themselves where there is one. They are rather the feeling of absolute profaneness.

9.4 But what, again, is that?—This too the "natural" man cannot know, cannot even feel his way into. Only the one who is "in the Spirit" knows and feels it; but that person does so with piercing sharpness and the severest self-devaluation. And he applies it to himself not merely because of particular profane acts, but outright to his very existence as a creature, before that which is above all creatures[2]. That which is above all creatures, however, he values in the same moment with the category of a wholly peculiar value, exactly opposed to the disvalue of the "profane," a value that belongs to the *numen* alone and to it absolutely: "Tu *solus* sanctus" [You *alone* are holy]. This *sanctus* is not "perfect," not "beautiful," not "sublime," nor yet "good." On the other hand, it agrees with these concepts in a definitely perceptible way: it too is a value, and an objective value at that, at the same time an absolutely unsurpassable, an infinite value. It is the numinous value, to which a numinous disvalue corresponds on the creature's side.

9.5 There is no more highly developed piety in which moral obligation and moral demand have not developed along with it

and do not count as the demand of the deity. And yet a deeply humble acknowledgment of the *sanctum* can be present without always or definitely being filled with moral demands. It is then the acknowledgment of something that claims incomparable respect, something to be acknowledged in one's inmost being as the most valid of values. It is by no means the case that awe before the *sanctitas*, the holiness, is simply itself the "fear" of what is absolutely overwhelming and its *tremenda majestas*, its aweful majesty, before which there would be nothing but blind, awed obedience. "*Tu solus sanctus*" is a *hymn of praise*. It does not merely stammer an admission of overwhelming power; at the same time it seeks to acknowledge and extol something valuable beyond all concepts. What is thus praised is not merely the absolutely powerful, which makes its claims and enforces them. It is that which at the same time, in its own nature, has the highest *right* to make the highest claim to service, and which is praised because it is absolutely worthy of praise. "You are *worthy* to receive glory and honor and power."

THE AUGUST

The holy is also an objective value, the augustum, owed respect and obedience apart from morality.

9.6 Where it has been understood that *qadosh* or *sanctus* is not originally a *moral* category, it is often translated as "supramundane." We have criticized the one-sidedness of this translation and supplemented it with our broader account of the numinous. Its most essential defect, however, is that supramundaneness is a statement purely about being and not at all about value. Supramundaneness can, at a pinch, make us bow, but it cannot move us to acknowledging *respect*. To underline this side of the numinous it would be useful to introduce yet another name of its own, and here *augustus* and *semnós* suggest themselves. *Augustus*, like *sebastós*, properly belongs only to

2 OTTO'S NOTE. This is the element of truth in the church's doctrine of "original sin."

numinous objects (for instance, to rulers as descended from gods or akin to them).[3] And while *sebastós* would then denote rather the numinous *being*, *semnós—augustus* would refer to the numinous value, to what is exalted and illustrious.—The *fascinans* would then be that in the *numen* by which it is of *subjective* value for me, namely of value that gives me bliss. It would be *augustum*, however, insofar as it is of *objective* value in itself, a value to be respected. And because such an *augustum* is an essential element of the numinous, religion is *essentially*, even apart from all moral schematization, the most inward *obligatio*: an obligation laid on the conscience and a binding of the conscience. It is obedience and service, not from the mere compulsion of the overpowering, but from bowing in acknowledgment before the holiest value.

9.7 Only when the character of numinous disvalue is carried over into *moral* failing as well, and settles into it, does mere "unlawfulness" become "sin," become "impious" and a "sacrilege." And only when it has thus become "*sin*" for the mind does it take on that terrible weight for the conscience which throws it down and makes it despair of its own strength. What "sin" is, the "natural" man does not understand, nor does the merely moral man. And the dogmatic claim that the moral demand as such drives a person to "collapse" and into "the deepest distress," and then compels them to look about for redemption, is patently incorrect. There are morally earnest people, striving capably, who do not understand it at all and dismiss it with a shrug. They know that they err and fall short, but they know and practice the means of self-discipline, and press forward on their path bravely and vigorously. The old rationalism, with its moral capability, lacked neither a respectful, honest acknowledgment of the moral law nor a sincere effort to live up to it. It knew what was "wrong" and disapproved of it severely, and in preaching and teaching it guided people to recognize it and take it seriously. But it knew no "collapses" and no "need of redemption,"

3 Greek *semnós*, "revered, solemn"; *sebastós*, "venerable," the Greek equivalent of the imperial title Augustus.

because it did in fact, as its opponents reproach it, lack any understanding of what "sin" is[4]. On a merely moral basis there grows neither the need for "redemption" nor the need for that other peculiar good, which again has a wholly and specifically numinous character: the need for "covering" and "*expiation*."[5] There would perhaps be less dispute about the legitimacy of these two things, and about their validity in Christian doctrine, if dogmatics itself had not moved them out of their mystical sphere into the rational-ethical one and flattened them into moral concepts. In the former they are as genuine and necessary as they are apocryphal in the latter.

COVERING AND ATONEMENT

The profane person needs covering and expiation before the holy, a need Christianity expresses most fully.

9.8 The element of "covering" meets us with particular clarity in the religion of Yahweh, in its rites and its feelings. But it is also contained, more obscurely, in many other religions. It contains, first of all, an expression of "awe": the feeling that the profane person cannot simply approach the *numen*, the sense of needing a covering and armor against its *orgē*, its wrath. Such "covering" is then a "consecration"—that is, a procedure that makes the one who approaches himself "numinous" for the moment, withdraws him from his profane nature, and makes him fit for communion with the *numen*. The means of consecration, however

4 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare the self-testimony of a mind that was certainly not coarse, that of Theodore Parker, in James, *Religious Experience*, p. 66: I have done wrong enough in my life, and do so still today. If I miss the mark, I try *again*... They (the ancient classical writers) were conscious of anger, drunkenness and other vices, fought them and overcame them; but they were not conscious of "enmity against God," and did not sit with their hands in their laps to lament and groan over an evil that does not exist at all. Such a statement is not coarse, but it is certainly *shallow*. The depths of the non-rational must be stirred before one finds, with Anselm, how great a weight sin is.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Theodore Parker (1810–1860), American Unitarian minister. Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 1.21: "quanti ponderis sit peccatum."

5 The "old rationalism" is the Enlightenment school of German Protestant theology of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

—"means of grace" in the proper sense—are bestowed, derived or instituted by the *numen* itself. The *numen* itself bestows something of its own nature, to make one capable of communion with it. That act is something very different from the "removal of mistrust," as Ritschl tries to rationalize these relations.

9.9 "Expiation," in turn, is then itself also a "covering," but a deepened form of it. For it arises only from the idea, just developed, of numinous value and *disvalue*. Mere "awe," the mere need for covering against the *tremendum*, is heightened here into the feeling that one, being profane, is not worthy to stand near the holy, and that one's own utter disvalue would "defile" the holy itself. This is plainly the case in Isaiah's vision of his calling. It recurs, softened but quite palpably, in the story of the centurion of Capernaum. "I am not worthy that you should come under my roof," he says. That is both at once: the softly trembling awe before the *tremendum* of the numinous, but still more the feeling of that peculiar disvalue which the profane person feels in the presence of the *numen*, and through which he believes he would harm it, would stain it.

9.10 And here the necessity of "expiation," and the longing for it, sets in—all the more strongly the more the nearness of the *numen*, communion with it and lasting possession of it, are loved and desired as a good, and as the highest good. It is the longing for the removal of this separating disvalue, which is given with existence itself, as a creature and as a profane natural being. Now this element does not dwindle as religion and religious feeling deepen and reach their highest stage. On the contrary, it grows ever stronger and more pronounced. Since it belongs wholly to the non-rational side of religion, it can become latent where, in the course of development, the rational side must first unfold and take shape vigorously. It can retreat behind other elements and fade—but only to come forth again all the more powerfully and urgently once this has gone too far. It can then become a one-sided concern that shuts out everything else, can drown out all others with its cry, and so distort and disfigure religious feeling itself. And it will readily do so

where, over long periods, the rational sides of religion have been cultivated one-sidedly and at the expense of the non-rational.

9.11 This need for expiation, and its peculiar emotional character, can be brought somewhat closer to us by something similar from our "natural" emotional life. At the same time it is important to set it clearly apart from this similar thing, which is only similar and not the same, since confusions frequently arise here. In the field of moral failing, we practice a clear, readily intelligible and familiar devaluation when we judge ourselves *guilty* of a bad action and judge the action itself to be *bad*. The badness of the action weighs on us and destroys our *respect* for ourselves. *We accuse* ourselves. And remorse sets in. But beside this devaluation stands a second one, which can concern the same action and yet uses categories of a quite different tone. The same wrong action *stains* us. Here we do not accuse; rather, we feel *dirtied*. And the characteristic form of the mind's response here is not remorse but disgust. A need arises that uses images of *washing* to express itself. The first and the second devaluation run parallel and can relate to the same action, but they are obviously different in their inner, essential tone. Now the second kind of devaluation is something similar to the need for "expiation," and can therefore be drawn on to discuss it and used as its symbol. At the same time, however, it is only something similar, from another realm (namely the aesthetic).

9.12 In no religion has the mystery of the need for atonement found such complete, deep and forceful expression as in Christianity. And here too this shows its superiority over other forms of piety. It is more perfectly *religion*, and a *more perfect* religion, than the others, insofar as what is latent in religion as such has in it become fully actual, *actus purus*. The widespread mistrust of this mystery of Christianity can be explained only by the habit of looking at the rational side of religion alone. It is a habit for which our teaching, in scholarship as much as in preaching, worship and instruction, is itself largely to blame. Yet Christian doctrine cannot do without this element if it means to represent

Christian and biblical religiosity. By unfolding the devout Christian's experience of feeling, it will have to make clear how here the "*numen* pure and simple" makes itself the means of expiation by imparting itself. For it is clear that in this connection feeling-elements of this kind, and genuine ideas and intuitions of faith, must develop of their own accord, and their rightful claim deserves to be recognized. And as regards them, not so very much hangs on the verdicts of the exegetes: whether Peter, Paul or Pseudo-Peter wrote anything about atonement and expiation, and what they wrote, or indeed whether the thing "is written" at all. Were it not written, it could be written today. Then again, it would be strange if it had not been written long ago. The God of the New Testament is not less holy than the God of the Old, but more. The distance between the creature and him is not smaller but absolute. The disvalue of the profane before him has not faded but grown sharper. That he nonetheless makes himself approachable is not something to be taken for granted, as the sentimental optimism of the "dear God" mood supposes. It is incomprehensible grace, an immense paradox. To take this paradox away from Christianity is to flatten it beyond recognition. But once it is kept, these deep insights and needs of "covering" and "expiation" follow as directly as anything can. And the means of self-revelation that God has ordained—the "Word," the "Spirit," the "person of Christ" himself—become, where they are experienced and valued as such, that to which one "flees," in which one takes refuge, to which one "clings," in order to approach the holy itself, consecrated through them and freed from what is profane.

9.13 Here too, toward these things, which arise directly and spontaneously from religious feeling itself, mistrust springs from two sources. On the one hand, it springs from one-sidedly moralizing, in theory, an element that is religious in kind. On the ground of mere *morality*, and before a God who is *conceived* essentially as the personified moral order of the world, furnished in addition with love, none of these things applies at all; indeed they are really a disturbance. What is at issue here are

religious insights, and it is hard to argue about their right or wrong with someone whose concern is only moral and not religious. He cannot appreciate them at all. But anyone who enters into what is distinctive in religious feeling, and lets it awaken in himself, will find their truth open to experience as soon as he immerses himself in them. On the other hand, mistrust springs from the attempt made in the dogmatic systems to develop these things in *conceptual theories* and to make them objects of speculation—things that are all pure intuitions, all bearing a non-conceptual stamp of feeling. So in the end they turn into the almost mathematical calculus of the "doctrine of imputation," with its drastic transfer of the "merit of Christ" to the account of the "sinner," together with learned inquiries into whether God, in doing so, "pronounces analytic or synthetic judgments."

WHAT "NON-RATIONAL" MEANS

Otto defines the term: what lies beneath conceptual clarity and can be indicated only by ideograms.

9.14 From here, let us look back once more over the whole of our inquiry so far. We were seeking the non-rational in the idea of the divine, as the subtitle of our book indicates. People today have almost made a sport of this word. They look for "the non-rational" in the most varied fields. In doing so they usually spare themselves the trouble of stating precisely what they mean by it. Not infrequently they understand the most diverse things by it, or use it with such slapdash generality that the most diverse things can be understood by it: the purely factual as against law; the empirical as against *ratio* [reason]; the contingent as against the necessary; the blind as against the derivable; the psychological as against the transcendental; what is known a posteriori as against what can be determined a priori; power, will and arbitrary choice as against reason, knowledge and determination by value; drive, instinct and the dark forces of the subconscious as against insight, reflection and intelligent planning; mystical depths and stirrings in the soul and in humanity,

inspiration, intimation, deep insight, the gift of the seer, and finally also the "occult" powers; or, quite generally, the restless urge and general ferment of the age, the groping after the unheard-of and the unseen in poetry and the visual arts. All this and more can be "the non-rational," and it is praised or condemned, as the case may be, as modern "irrationalism." Anyone who uses the word today is obliged to say what he means by it. We did so in the opening chapter. First, by "rational" in the idea of the divine we mean that part of it which enters into the clear grasp of our conceptual faculty, into the realm of familiar and definable concepts. Second, we maintain that beneath this realm of pure clarity lies a dark depth which is not accessible to our concepts, and which in this sense we call "the non-rational." Let us make this clear to ourselves in something like the following way. Our mind may be filled with a deep joy without our being clear, for the moment, about the ground of the feeling of joy. For the time being it is obscure to us. But if we turn our attention to it and reflect on it sharply, it becomes clear to us. We can then determine the object, name it, raise it to a clear concept, and state what it is and how it is that fills us with joy. Such an object we will not then regard as non-rational. It is quite otherwise with the bliss felt at the *fascinans* of the numinous. Here, even with the most intense effort of attention, we cannot bring the what and the how of the object into the realm of conceptual understanding. It remains in the insoluble darkness of purely felt, non-conceptual experience. And it can be suggested only through the musical notation, as it were, of interpretive ideograms. That is what we mean by saying it is non-rational. The same holds for all the elements of the numinous we have found, and most obviously for the element of the *mirum*. As the "wholly other," it eludes all utterance. At the same time it compels us to make ideogrammatic statements which are not merely "above our reason" but downright paradoxical, that is, against our reason. They may even run into harsh antinomies within themselves, and then they are the non-rational in its sharpest form. —At the same time, the non-rational in this sense sets us a

definite task. We are not to rest content with merely establishing it, and then throw the door wide open to whim and enthusiastic chatter. We are to fix its elements as firmly as possible in ideogrammatic designations that come as close to it as they can. In this way we are to secure with lasting signs what hovered in the fluctuating appearance of mere feeling, and so to arrive at unambiguous and universally valid discussion and to form strict "doctrine": doctrine that claims objective validity and has a firm structure, even if it works with conceptual symbols instead of adequate concepts. For us, then, the term "non-rational" is purely formal, merely a term of contrast, and so only provisional. It becomes a matter of indifference to us as soon as we succeed, through discussion, in reaching an understanding about that "depth." And this we achieved in the ideograms, or interpretive signs, of the numinous.

Chapter 10: Means of Expressing the Numinous

Kapitel 10. Ausdrucksmittel des Numinosen
Direct and indirect expression, and the numinous in art: the sublime, the magical, darkness, silence and emptiness.

KAPITEL 10. AUSDRUCKSMITTEL DES NUMINOSEN. 1. DIREKTE.

10.1 It helps to shed light on the nature of numinous feeling if we reflect on how it expresses itself outwardly, and how it passes and is transmitted from mind to mind. Strictly speaking, it is not "transmitted" at all: it cannot be "taught," only awakened from "the Spirit." The same is sometimes said of religion in general and as a whole. Wrongly. Much in religion can be taught, that is, handed on in concepts and even turned into classroom instruction. Only not this, its background and underground. This can only be prompted, stirred, awakened. And least of all by mere words; rather, in the way mood and feeling are transmitted elsewhere too: by feeling along with, and feeling one's way into, what is going on in another's mind. In solemn bearing, gesture, tone of voice and expression of face, in the expression of the strange importance of the matter, in the solemn recollection and devotion of the praying congregation, more of it lives than in all the words and negative designations we ourselves have found. These, after all, never state the object positively. They help only insofar as they mean to designate an object at all, and at the same time set it against another from which it is distinct and to which it is superior—for example, the invisible, the

eternal (= the timeless), the supernatural, the supramundane. Or they are simply ideograms for the peculiar contents of feeling themselves, which one must already have had in order to understand them. By far the best means are "holy" situations themselves, or their rendering in vivid description. Anyone who does not grasp what the numinous is when reading Isaiah 6 will be helped by no amount of "ringing, singing and saying." In theory, in doctrine, even in preaching, unless it is *heard*, there is usually nothing of it to be noticed, while preaching by the spoken word can be steeped in it. No element of religion needs the *viva vox*, the living voice, as much as this one does, or the living community that carries it on, or personal connection. Suso says of such transmission:

10.2 One thing should be known: as unlike as it is when one *hears for oneself* a sweet stringed instrument sweetly sounding, compared with merely hearing it spoken of, just so unlike are the words received in pure grace and flowing out of a *living heart* through a *living* mouth, compared with the same words when they come onto dead parchment … For then they grow cold, I know *not how*, and fade like plucked roses. For the lovely *melody* that above all stirs the heart then dies away. And then they are received in the dryness of the dry heart[1].

10.3 But even in the form of the *viva vox*, the mere word is powerless without the answering "Spirit in the heart," without a kindred mind in the one who receives it, without the *conformem esse verbo* [being conformed to the word], as Luther says. And this Spirit must do the greater part. Where it is present, however, a very small stimulus, a very remote prompting from outside, is very often enough. It is astonishing how little—and that, too, often in great clumsiness and confusion—is often enough to rouse the spirit, of its own accord, to the strongest and most definite stirring. And where it "blows," the rational expressions in the proclamation of the word, although they mostly derive only from the general life of feeling, are themselves usually strong enough to tune the mind at once to the right note. The awaken-

1 OTTO'S NOTE. Suso's German works (*Deutsche Werke*), ed. Denifle, p. 309.

ing of what they only schematize happens here quite readily and hardly needs any help[2]. Anyone who reads Scripture "in the Spirit" lives in the numinous, even if he has neither concept nor name for it—indeed, even if he were incapable of analyzing his own feeling and making that strand clear to himself on its own.

INDIRECT MEANS OF EXPRESSION

The fearful, the sublime, miracle and half-understood sacred language all stir numinous feeling by analogy.

10.4 For the rest, the means of representing and arousing numinous feeling are *indirect*: namely, all the means of expression for feelings of the natural sphere that are related or similar to it. We have come to know such similar feelings. We shall find them again at once if we reflect on which means of expression religion has actually used, always and everywhere.

10.5 One of the most primitive, which is later felt to be increasingly inadequate and finally rejected as "unworthy," is quite naturally the fearful, the terrible, even the hideous (and sometimes even the repulsive[3]). Because the feelings corresponding to these closely resemble the feeling of the *tremendum*, their means of expression become indirect means of expression for "awe," which cannot be expressed directly. The ghastly, fearsome quality of primitive images and descriptions of gods, which so often seems repellent to us today, quite definitely has the effect, for early peoples and for the naive—even today, and occasionally still among us—of arousing genuine feelings of genuine religious awe. And conversely, this awe in turn acts as the very strongest stimulus to produce the fearful in imagination and representation. The hard, stern and in part rather fearsome old Byzantine Madonnas move many Catholics to devotion more than the lovely Madonnas of Raphael. This trait is especially noticeable

2 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. R. Otto, *Die Anschauung vom heiligen Geiste bei Luther*, p. 86: "The experiences will indeed ..."

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Otto's first book, *Luther's Conception of the Holy Spirit* (1898).

3 OTTO'S NOTE. Thus in some peculiar forms of Indian religion: the Aghoras.

in certain Indian figures of gods. Durgā, the "great mother" of Bengal, whose cult can be surrounded by a veritable cloud of the deepest shudders of devotion, is in her canonical representation a veritable devil's grimace. And this mixture of appalling fearsomeness and supreme holiness can perhaps be studied in still purer form in the eleventh book of the Bhagavad Gita. Vishnu, who toward his faithful is goodness itself, wishes here to reveal himself to Arjuna in his true divine majesty. Here too the mind as yet has only the appalling, even the ghastly, as its means of expression for this—though at the same time pervaded by the element of the grandiose, which we are about to discuss.[4]

10.6 For at a higher stage the grandiose, or the sublime, takes the place of the fearful as a means of expression. We find it in unsurpassable form in Isaiah 6. Sublime here are the high throne, the royal figure, the flowing train of his robe, the solemn court of angels around him. While the fearful is gradually overcome, the connection with the sublime and its schematization by it becomes permanent and persists as legitimate right into the highest forms of religious feeling. This indicates that between the numinous and the sublime there is a hidden kinship and belonging-together that is more than a merely chance similarity. Even Kant's *Critique of Judgment* bears distant witness to it.

10.7 What we have said so far concerned the element of the numinous that we found first, above, and tried to symbolize by the *tremendum*. The second element was the mysterious. And here we meet the correspondence and the means of expression that recurs in all religions, that seems almost inseparable from religion, and whose theory we can give here: miracle. "Miracle is faith's dearest child." If the history of religions did not teach it to us anyway, we could construct it and expect it a priori from the element of the "mysterious" that we found.[5] For nothing can be found in the natural sphere of feelings that corresponds so

4 The Bhagavad Gita is a Sanskrit devotional poem within the epic Mahabharata; Otto gives this chapter in Appendix I.1.
5 Goethe, *Faust*, Part One, line 766.

directly—though in a purely "natural" way—to the religious feeling of the unsayable, the inexpressible, the absolutely other, the mysterious, as does the not-understood, the unaccustomed, the enigmatic, wherever and however it may confront us. Especially the *mighty* not-understood and the *fearsome* not-understood, which contain a double correspondence to the numinous: to the element of the mysterious, and at the same time to that of the *tremendum*, and indeed to both of its sides described above. If the feelings of the numinous can be aroused by natural similarities at all, and then transferred to these, it must be here. And so indeed it has been, everywhere among humankind. Whatever broke, not understood and terrifying, into the sphere of a person's activity; whatever in natural processes, events, people, animals or plants produced bewilderment, astonishment or stunned staring, especially when it was bound up with power or terror—that has always aroused daemonic fear and drawn it to itself; that has become *portentum*, *prodigium*, *miraculum* [portent, prodigy, miracle]. Thus, and only thus, did miracle arise. And conversely: just as the *tremendum*, as we saw, became for imagination and representation a stimulus to choose or creatively invent the fearful as a means of expression, so the mysterious became the most powerful stimulus to the naive imagination to expect, invent, experience and tell of "miracles." It became the never-tiring impulse behind inexhaustible invention in fairy tale, myth, saga and legend; it pervaded rite and cult; and to this day, for the naive, in story and in cult, it is the most powerful factor in keeping religious feeling alive. Here too, as with the fearful, the advance to higher development then means discarding again something that is, after all, only outwardly similar. So miracle begins to fade at a purified stage; Christ, Muhammad and the Buddha alike refuse to be "miracle-workers"; Luther dismisses "outward miracles" as "conjurers' miracles" and as "apples and nuts for the children"; and super-

naturalism is finally discarded from religion again as something that is only a similarity, not a genuine schema of the numinous.[6]

10.8 In many other ways as well, the mysterious shows its attraction for things and elements that correspond to it by being something not understood. This comes to expression most drastically in the appeal of a cult language that is half or wholly not understood, and in the undoubtedly real heightening of devout awe that it brings. All this belongs here: the archaic expressions, no longer quite transparent, in the Bible and hymnbook, among us too; the special power of Hallelujah, Kyrie eleison and Selah to create a mood, precisely because they are "wholly other" and not understood; the Latin in the Mass, which the naive Catholic feels not at all as a necessary evil but as especially holy; the Sanskrit in the Buddhist masses of China and Japan; the "language of the gods" in the sacrificial rituals of Homer; and a thousand other things. Here too belongs the half-revealed, half-hidden quality in the worship of the Mass, in the Greek liturgy and in so many other liturgies. And in this there is even an element of justification. Even the patched-together remnants of the Mass, as they recur in our Lutheran orders of service, undoubtedly still have far more of the devotional about them—precisely because their arrangement has little rule or conceptual order. They have far more than the orders devised by the latest practitioners, built up neatly like an essay according to well-ordered schemes. In these nothing is accidental and therefore so full of meaning; nothing is unintended and therefore so awakening of intimations; nothing rises from unconscious depths and is therefore necessarily fragmentary; nothing breaks through the unity of the "outline" and therefore points to higher connections; nothing is pneumatic—and so, as a rule, there is not very much spirit in them either. And where does the power of all these things to create a mood come from? Precisely from the correspondence between what is not quite understood,

6 OTTO'S NOTE. Nowhere can the non-rational element of the *orgē* be better studied than in this chapter, which therefore ranks among the classic chapters of the history of religions.—Cf. the appendix.

unusual, special (and at the same time venerable through age) and the mysterious itself—which they thereby, as it were, symbolize, and which they arouse through *anamnesis*, a recollection, of what is similar.

THE NUMINOUS IN ART

Architecture, the magical in Chinese and Gothic art, and the direct means of darkness, silence and emptiness.

10.9 In the arts, the most effective means of representing the numinous is almost everywhere the sublime. Especially in architecture. And in architecture, it seems, earliest of all. It is hard to escape the impression that this element was already beginning to awaken in the megalithic age. The erection of those gigantic blocks of stone, rough or hewn, singly or in mighty rings, may originally have had the purpose of magically storing up the numinous in massive form, localizing it and so securing it for oneself. Even so, the change of motive was provoked here far too strongly not to occur early. For the dim feeling for solemn grandeur, as well as for pompous, sublime gesture, is a fairly original feeling, familiar not least to "early" peoples. And when mastabas, obelisks and pyramids were being built in Egypt, this stage had undoubtedly been reached. These mighty temples, this Sphinx of Giza, make the feeling of the sublime—and, accompanying it, the feeling of the numinous—flash up from the soul almost like a mechanical reflex. That their builders themselves knew this and intended it is surely beyond doubt.

10.10 Further, we say of many a building, or of a song, a formula, a sequence of gestures or sounds, and above all of certain products of decorative or ornamental art, of certain symbols, emblems, scrollwork or patterns of line, that they make a "downright *magical*" impression. And we sense the style and the particular character of the magical with fairly great certainty, even under the most varied conditions and circumstances. Unusually rich and deep in such "magical" impressions is, above

all, the art of China, Japan and Tibet shaped by Taoism and Buddhism. Even the less practiced observer feels this strand here easily and soon. The term "magical" is correct here in historical terms as well. For this language of forms really does derive, originally, from genuinely magical ideas, signs, devices and practices. But the impression itself is entirely independent of this historical connection. It occurs even if one knows nothing whatever of it—indeed, it is then at its strongest and most unbroken. There is no doubt that art has means here of producing, without reflection, an impression of an entirely distinctive kind, namely that of the "magical." Now the "magical" is nothing other than a subdued and muted form of the numinous, and at the same time a crude form of it, which is ennobled and transfigured in *great* art. And then one may no longer speak of the "magical." Then it is rather the numinous itself that confronts us, in its non-rational power and with its rapturously moving force, in mighty rhythms and vibrations. This is perhaps true of no art more, or more completely, than of the great landscape painting and painting of holy figures in China in the classical periods of the Tang and Song dynasties. Otto Fischer says of it:[78]

10.11 These works are among the deepest and most sublime things human art has ever created. Whoever immerses himself in them senses, behind these waters and mists and mountains, the primeval Tao breathing mysteriously, the rise and fall of innermost being. Many a deep mystery lies in these pictures, hidden and yet revealed. The knowledge of "nothingness," the knowledge of "emptiness," the knowledge of the Tao of heaven and earth, which is also the Tao of the human heart, lies in them. And so, for all their eternal movement, they seem at the

7 OTTO'S NOTE. On painting, cf. Oscar Ollendorf, *Andacht in der Malerei* (Devotion in painting), Leipzig 1912.—On the *sonic* expression of the numinous, compare the instructive study by W. Matthießen, "Das Magische der Sprache im liturgischen Kirchengesang" (The magic of language in liturgical chant), *Hochland* XV, no. 10.
8 Otto Fischer (1886–1948), German art historian and scholar of Chinese art.

same time to possess so deep a distance and stillness, as though breathing hidden beneath a sea[9].

10.12 To us Westerners, Gothic will seem the most numinous art, and first of all on account of its sublimity. But that is not enough. It is to Worringer's credit that in his work *Probleme der Gotik* he shows that the particular impression made by Gothic does not rest on its sublimity alone. It rests on a strand and inheritance of age-old *magical* form-giving, which he tries to trace historically. And so for him the impression of the Gothic is chiefly a magical one. That he is on the right track here is certain, quite independently of whether his historical derivations are correct. Gothic has a "spell" in its impression, and this is more than the spell of the sublime. But on the other hand, the tower of Ulm Minster is simply no longer "magical": it is numinous.[10] And what distinguishes the numinous from the merely magical can be felt precisely in the fine illustration Worringer gives of this marvel. Still, the word "magical" may remain in use as a name for the style and the means of expression by which the impression of the numinous is produced here, since with things so great everyone will take it in a deep enough sense.

10.13 The sublime, and also the merely magical, however strongly they may work, are always only indirect means of representing the numinous in art. Of direct means, art here in the West has only two. And these, significantly, are themselves *negative*: they are darkness and silence. The darkness must be such that it is heightened by contrast and so made still more perceptible: it must itself be on the point of overcoming a last remnant of brightness. Only half-darkness is "mystical." And its impression is complete when it combines with the auxiliary element of the "sublime." Half-darkness glimmering *in* lofty halls, or beneath the branches of a tall avenue of trees, strangely enlivened and stirred by the mysterious play of the *mirum* of

9 OTTO'S NOTE. Otto Fischer, "Chinesische Landschaft" (Chinese landscape), in *Das Kunstblatt*, January 1920.

10 Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965), German art historian; his book appeared in 1911 as *Formprobleme der Gotik* (English: *Form in Gothic*).

half-lights, has always spoken to the heart; and the builders of temples, mosques and churches have made use of it.

10.14 In the language of sound, the counterpart of this is silence.
"Yahweh is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep *silence* before him."[11]

10.15 We—and probably the singer himself already—no longer know anything of the fact that this keeping silent arose, "historically and genetically," from *euphēmein*: that is, from the fear of using words of ill omen and therefore preferring to be silent altogether. We and the psalmist, and Tersteegen in his

10.16 God is present: / let all within us be *silent*,

10.17 feel the need for silence from a different impulse, and a wholly independent one. In us it is a direct effect of the feeling of the *numen praesens*, the *numen* present, itself. And here too the "historical-genetic" chain does not explain what has emerged and is present at the higher stage of development. Yet surely the psalmist and Tersteegen and we ourselves are no less interesting subjects for the study of the religious mind than the "early peoples" practicing their *euphēmia*.[12]

10.18 Besides silence and darkness, the art of the East knows a third means of strongly numinous impression: emptiness, and wide emptiness. Wide emptiness is, as it were, the sublime in the horizontal. The far-stretching desert, the boundless uniform steppe, are sublime, and as stimuli, through association of feelings, they release echoes of the numinous even in people like us. Chinese architecture, as the art of laying out and grouping buildings, uses this wisely and to deeply penetrating effect. It does not achieve the impression of solemnity through lofty halls or imposing verticals; but there is surely nothing more solemn than the still expanse of the squares, courts and forecourts it employs. The imperial Ming tombs near Nanjing and Beijing, which draw the empty expanse of a whole landscape into their

11 Habakkuk 2:20.

12 OTTO'S NOTE. Lord, speak you alone, in deepest *stillness*, to me in the *dark*, prays Tersteegen. And elsewhere: O high Majesty, you who dwell exalted in *still* eternity, in the *dark* sanctuary.

layout, are the strongest example of this. Still more interesting is emptiness in Chinese painting. Here there is a positive art of painting emptiness, of making it perceptible, and of varying this strange theme in many ways. Not only are there pictures on which there is "almost nothing"; not only is it part of the style to make the strongest impression with the sparest stroke and means. In a great many pictures, especially those connected with contemplation, one has the impression that emptiness itself is the subject painted, and a principal subject. We understand this only if we recall what was said above about the "nothing" and the "emptiness" of the mystics, and about the spell of the "negative hymns." Like darkness and silence, this emptiness is a negation—but a negation that clears away every "this" and "here," so that the "wholly other" may become actual[13].

10.19 Music, too, which can otherwise lend the most varied expression to every feeling, has no positive means of expressing the holy. Even the most perfect music for the Mass expresses the holiest, most numinous moment of the Mass, the consecration, only by falling silent—completely, and for some time, so that the silence itself can, as it were, resound. And nowhere else does it come anywhere near the mighty impression of devotion made by this "keeping silence before the Lord." It is instructive to examine Bach's B minor Mass with this in mind. Its most mystical part, as usual in settings of the Mass, is the "Incarnatus." The effect here lies in the softly murmuring, hesitant successive entries of the fugal writing, which dies away to pianissimo. With bated breath, only half aloud, and with these most strange descending passages in diminished thirds, these faltering syncopations and this rising and falling in disconcerting semitones, which render awed astonishment, the mystery is suggested rather than stated. And in this way Bach achieves his aim here

13 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. also Wilhelm's subtle remarks on "non-being" and "emptiness" in Laozi, in R. Wilhelm, *Laotse, Vom Sinn und Leben* (Laozi: on meaning and life), Diederichs, Jena 1911, p. xx.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930), German sinologist and translator of the *Tao Te Ching* and the *I Ching*.

far better than in the "Sanctus." The Sanctus is indeed an incomparably successful expression for the One who possesses "the power and the glory," a surging chorus of triumph of perfect, absolute *royal glory*. But it is utterly remote from the mood of the words underlying the setting, which are taken from Isaiah 6 and which the composer ought to have interpreted accordingly. That the seraphim covered their faces with two of their wings cannot be heard in this magnificent song. Jewish tradition, on the other hand, knew well what was at stake:

10.20 "All the mighty ones on high *whisper softly*: Yahweh is

10.21 King"—so it runs in the magnificent hymn *Melek Elyon* for New Year's Day. Mendelssohn subtly hits the mark in his setting of Psalm 2, at verse 11: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." And here too the expression of the thing lies less in the music itself than in its muting, its restraint—one might almost say its timidity—which the Berlin Cathedral Choir renders masterfully at this point. And insofar as music can capture the thing at all, the Berlin Madrigal Choir captures it in the *Popule meus* of Thomas Luiz. Here the first choir sings the Trisagion, *hagios ho theos, hagios ischyros, hagios athanatos*, and the second choir answers antiphonally with the Latin rendering, *Sanctus Deus, sanctus fortis, sanctus immortalis* [Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal].[14] This answer, too, trembles with a muted quivering. But the Trisagion itself, floating through the space in pianissimo like a whisper, from invisible singers in the far background, is indeed an all but perfect rendering of the scene in Isaiah 6.

14 "Melek Elyon" (The King most high), a hymn of the Jewish New Year service, is given in Appendix I.3. "Thomas Luiz" is the Spanish composer Tomás Luis de Victoria (c. 1548–1611); *Popule meus* is from his Good Friday Reproaches.

Chapter 11: The Numinous in the Old Testament

Kapitel 11. Das Numinose im Alten Testamente
The living, wrathful God of the prophets, Ezekiel, and the God who answers Job out of the whirlwind.

KAPITEL 11. DAS NUMINOSE IM ALTEN TESTAMENTE.

11.1 If the feelings of the non-rational and numinous are alive in all religion whatever, they are so above all *in* Semitic religion, and especially in biblical religion. Here the mysterious lives and moves powerfully in the ideas of the daemonic and the angelic, by which, as by the "wholly other," this world is surrounded, surpassed and pervaded. It grows powerful in the expectation of the end and in the ideal of the kingdom of God, which stands over against the natural partly as what is to come in time, partly as the eternal, but always as the absolutely wondrous and "wholly other." And it is stamped on the nature of Yahweh and Elohim, who is also the "heavenly Father" of Jesus, and as such does not lose his Yahweh-character but "fulfills" it.

11.2 The lower stage of numinous feeling, as daemonic dread, has long since been left behind by the prophets and psalmists. But occasional echoes of it are not lacking either, especially in the older narrative literature. The story in Exodus 4:26 of how Yahweh, in his *orgē*, falls upon Moses by night and seeks his life still strongly bears this character. To us it makes an almost spooky, ghostly impression. And from the standpoint of a developed fear of God, these and similar stories easily give the impression that there is no religion here at all as yet, but pre-

religion, mere fear of demons or the like. But this involves a misunderstanding. "Mere daemonic fear" would relate to a "demon" in the narrow sense of the word, in which it means the same as goblin, tormenting spirit or fiend and is *opposed* to the *theion* [the divine]. But such a demon has not been a transitional point or link in the chain of development of religious feeling, any more than the "ghost" has. Like the ghost, it is an apocryphal offshoot of the imaginative products of numinous feeling. From such a demon, however, we must distinguish the *daimōn* in a much more general sense. This is not yet itself a god, but still less an anti-god; rather it is a "pre-god," a still bound, restrained, lower stage of the *numen*, out of which the "god" gradually grows in higher form. Echoes of *this* stage are what we have before us in those stories.

11.3 Further: two pointers can help us understand the real relationship here. First, what was said earlier about the capacity of the fearful in general to attract and express numinous feeling. Second, the following. A person with a strong musical gift, so long as he is untrained and a beginner, may be blissfully enraptured by the sound of a bagpipe or a barrel organ. Both may become unbearable to him once he has had a musical training. But if he reflects on the *qualitative* character of his earlier and his present experience, he must notice that one and the same side of his mind is at work in both. He must notice that in rising to the higher form of his feeling for music there has been no "leap into something else," but a process we call development or *maturing*, though we are in no position to say much about its nature. If we heard the music of Confucius today, it would probably be nothing *to* us but a series of strange noises. And yet he already speaks of the power of music over the mind in a way we cannot better today, and hits on the elements of its impression that we too must acknowledge. The most striking thing in this respect is the gift that many tribal societies have for grasping our music easily, their aptitude for it: when it comes to them, they take it up quickly and with delight, practice it and enjoy it. This aptitude did not enter into them through some heterogony,

epigenesis or other miracle at the moment the music reached them. It was simply there as a natural "predisposition"; it was stirred from within, and developed out of the existing predisposition as soon as the stimulus met it. And it had already stirred earlier, as *the same* aptitude, in crude and primitive form and expression. With our developed musical taste, we can often scarcely recognize this "crude, primitive" form of music as real music, or not at all; and yet it was the expression of the same impulse, the same element of the soul. It is entirely analogous when today's "God-fearing" person has difficulty finding in the account in Exodus 4 anything akin to his own feeling, or fails to recognize it altogether.—This is a point of view that should be taken into account more generally with regard to the religion of "early peoples," though with great caution. Quite false conclusions can certainly be drawn from it, and the danger of confusing the lower stages of development with the higher ones and of shrinking the distance between them is great enough. But to exclude this point of view altogether is more dangerous still, and unfortunately very common[1].

11.4 Recent scholars try to discover a difference of character between Yahweh, the stern God, and Elohim, the patriarchal and familiar one. And this attempt has something very persuasive about it. According to Söderblom's hypothesis, "the starting point for this"[2] is supposed to be that the idea of Yahweh derived from "animistic" ideas. I do not dispute the importance of "animistic" ideas for the course of religion's development. In this respect I go even further than he does; for he can declare them to be only a kind of primitive "philosophy," and so would have to exclude them altogether from the sphere of genuinely religious imaginative formation. Where animistic ideas had been formed, they could be a significant link in the "chain of stimuli": namely, by releasing and setting free from numinous feeling the element of "a being" that lay obscurely within it. This

1 OTTO'S NOTE. In this regard Marett in particular offers important new insights.
2 OTTO'S NOTE. Only "the starting point for this," not the full idea of Yahweh itself —

would fit very precisely into my own hypothesis. But what distinguishes Yahweh from El Shaddai-Elohim is not that the former is *anima* [soul], but that in him the numinous outweighs the familiar and rational, whereas in the latter the rational side outweighs the numinous. This is a difference by which types of gods can be distinguished more generally too. And one can speak only of being outweighed, not of any absence of the numinous element in Elohim. The genuinely numinous story of God's appearing in the burning bush, and the characteristic verse of Exodus 3:6,

11.5 "And Moses hid his face, for he was *afraid* to look upon Elohim," are Elohistic.—

11.6 The rich abundance of individual features of the ancient Israelite idea of God that belong here, and that could still be listed, is presented so fully in the handbook of the history of religions *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 2, pp. 1530 ff. and 2036, that it is enough simply to refer to it here.—With the venerable religion of Moses there begins, in ever-increasing measure, the process by which the numinous is moralized and rationalized generally, and fulfilled into the "holy" in the proper, full sense. The process is completed in prophecy and in the gospel. And herein lies the special nobility of biblical religion, which already at the stage of Second Isaiah entitles it to claim to be a universal world religion. Already here lies its clear superiority over, for example, Islam, whose Allah is one-sidedly *numen*, and who, looked at closely, is really Yahweh in his pre-Mosaic form, on an enlarged scale. But such moralizing and rationalizing is not the overcoming of the numinous; it is the overcoming of its one-sided predominance. It takes place upon the numinous, and is encompassed by it.

11.7 The example of the most intimate interpenetration of the two is Isaiah. What sounded in his vision of calling in Isaiah 6 pervades his whole message with palpable force. And nothing is so characteristic of this as the fact that precisely in his case the expression "the Holy One of Israel" becomes the standing, favorite name for the Godhead and, with its mysterious power, pre-

vails over other expressions. This remains so in the Isaianic tradition, in the writings of "Second Isaiah," Isaiah 40–66. True, if anywhere, it is in Second Isaiah that we also have to do with the God of conceptually clear omnipotence, goodness, wisdom and faithfulness. But these are, after all, predicates of the "Holy One," whose strange name Second Isaiah too repeats fifteen times, and always at points where it is especially impressive.

11.8 Related expressions beside the "holiness" of Yahweh are his "fury," his "zeal," his "wrath," the "consuming fire," and the like. They all mean not only his retributive justice, and not only the God of lively temperament who lives in strong *pathē* [passions] in general. They always mean all this encompassed and pervaded by the *tremendum* and the *majestas*, the *mysterium* and the *augustum* of his non-rational divine nature. And this holds also for the expression "the *living* God." His livingness has a palpable kinship with his "zeal," and shows itself in it as in all his *pathē* generally. Through his "life" this God is distinct from any mere "world-reason"; he is the ultimately non-rational essence, eluding all philosophizing, as which he lives in the consciousness of all the prophets and messengers of the Old and New Covenants. And wherever people later fought against the "God of the philosophers" for the "*living*" God, the God of *wrath* and love and the affects, they were always unconsciously defending the non-rational core of the biblical idea of God against its one-sided rationalization. To that extent they were right. But they were wrong, and sank into "anthropomorphism," when they defended wrath and the affects instead of "wrath" and the "*affects*." They failed to recognize the *numinous* character of these, and took them for "natural" predicates, merely raised to the absolute, instead of seeing that they can be valid only as

ideogrammatic designations of something non-rational, as symbols of feeling that merely point the way.[34]

11.9 In Ezekiel especially, the numinous shows its power to stretch and excite the imagination, through the element of the *mirum*. Ezekiel's dreams and images, and his fantastical depiction of the nature of Yahweh and of his court, belong here. In their expansiveness and their deliberately cultivated fantasticality they are at once a prototype and an example of an impulse of the religious drive toward the mystery that is already turning apocryphal. This impulse follows from the correspondences discussed earlier with the strange, the odd, the miraculous and the fantastic. Such an outgrowth and proliferation of the feeling of the *mirum* paves the way for "miracle," for the craving for wonders, for legend, for the dream-world of apocalyptic and mysticism. All of these are emanations of religion itself, to be sure, but refracted through a cloudy medium: a surrogate for the genuine thing, which ends at last in vulgarity. With its rank growths it overgrows the pure feeling of the mystery itself and hinders its immediate and pure stirring.

3 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. Deut. 5:23: "Where is there any mortal being who, like us, has heard the *living* God speaking with an audible voice out of the fire and has *remained alive*?" Further: Josh. 3:10.—1 Sam. 17:26, 36.—2 Kings 19:4.—Isa. 37:4, 17.—Jer. 10:10: He *is a living God* ..., at whose wrath the earth trembles and whose indignation the nations cannot endure. Jer. 23:36.—2 Macc. 7:33.—Matt. 26:63 (the oath by the *living* God, the terrible and fearful one).—Heb. 10:31: It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the *living* God.—In the ideas of the God who *avenges himself*, the Old Testament conception of the fearfully living God reaches its culmination. Its harshest expression is the almost horrifying image of the "treader of the winepress," Isa. 63:3: I trod them down in my anger and trampled them in my wrath, so that their juice spattered on my garments and I stained all my clothing.—The fearful image *recurs* in the New Testament, in Rev. 19:15: He treads the winepress of the wine of the fierce wrath.

4 The "God of the philosophers" recalls Pascal's *Memorial* (1654): "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars."

JOB AND THE WHIRLWIND

God answers Job not with purposes but with the sheer wonder of his creatures, and Job is stilled.

11.10 But we find the element of the *mysteriosum* and *augustum* again, in a strange purity, in chapter 38 of the Book of Job, which is surely among the most remarkable chapters in the whole history of religion. Job has argued with his friends against Elohim, and has plainly been in the right against them. They are forced to fall silent before him. Then Elohim himself appears, to conduct his own defense. And he conducts it in such a way that Job confesses that he is overcome—truly and rightly *overcome*, not merely forced into silence by sheer superior power. For he confesses:

11.11 Therefore I retract and *repent* in dust and ashes. That is the testimony of being inwardly *convinced*, not of a helpless collapse and resignation before mere superior power. Nor is the mood here at all merely the one that Paul occasionally strikes in Rom. 9:20:

11.12 Shall the thing formed say to the one who formed it: "Why have you made me like this? Has the potter no power over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"

11.13 One would misunderstand the Job passage if one interpreted it in this way. Job 38 does not proclaim the renunciation, or the impossibility, of a justification of God. On the contrary, it sets out to give a justification of God that holds good—one better than that of Job's friends, one able to convince even a Job, and not only to convince him but to quiet, in its inmost depths, his soul beset by doubts. For in the strange experience that comes to Job at once through Elohim's revelation there already lies an inner release of the tension of his soul's torment, and an appeasement. And this appeasement would by itself be quite sufficient as the solution of the problem of the Book of Job, even without Job's restoration in chapter 42, which is only a bonus

paid afterward on top of the real payment. But what is this strange element that here brings about both God's justification and Job's reconciliation?

11.14 In Elohim's speech, to be sure, practically everything one would naturally expect from the situation is sounded: appeal and reference to Elohim's superior power, to his majesty and greatness, and also to his superior wisdom. This last would at once yield a plausible, rational solution to the whole problem if it culminated in sentences such as: "My ways are higher than your ways. In my doings and dealings I have *purposes* that you do not understand"—the purposes, say, of testing and refining the devout, or purposes for the whole as such, into which the individual with his sufferings must fit. Starting from rational concepts, one positively *thirsts* for such an outcome to the dialogue. But nothing of the kind follows. And such considerations and solutions pointing to purpose are by no means the meaning of the chapter. In the last resort it appeals to something wholly other than what can be exhausted in rational concepts: to *wondrousness* itself, pure and simple, which lies above every concept, even the concept of purpose; to the mystery in its pure, non-rational form, both as the *mirum* and as the *paradoxon* [the paradoxical]. The magnificent *examples* speak very plainly for this. The eagle that nests on the rocks, on the crag's jagged peak and lookout, that spies out its prey, whose young suck up blood, and "where the slain are, there is he," is truly no example of *purposive* wisdom that has "prepared all things cleverly and finely." This eagle is rather the *strange and wonderful*, in which the wondrousness of its Creator himself becomes visible. And so too the ostrich hen with her *puzzling* instincts in v. 13. Truly, for the "rational" view she is, as depicted here, rather a cross to bear, and in terms of purposes there is little to be made of her:

11.15 The ostrich hen's wing flaps merrily.
Is it a *pious* pinion and plume?
No! she leaves her eggs to the earth,
Forgets that a foot may crush them,
Is harsh toward her young, as if they were not hers.
For God has *denied* her wisdom
And given her no share of *understanding*.

11.16 And so too the wild ox and the wild ass of vv. 5 and 9: animals whose perfect "dysteleology" is depicted with true splendor, but which, with their mysterious instincts and their enigmatic behavior, are as wonderful and as suggestively enigmatic as the mountain goat (v. 1) and the hind; as the "wisdom" of the mists in the clouds (38:36); as the "understanding" of the forms of the air, with their mysterious coming and going, arising and vanishing, shifting and shaping; or as the strange Pleiades high in the sky, and Orion, and the Bear with her cubs. —It is thought that the descriptions of the hippopotamus and the crocodile in 41:15ff. were inserted later. Perhaps rightly. But then it must be granted that whoever inserted them sensed very well the aim of the whole section. He merely gives the crassest expression to what all the other examples also say. Where they give *portenta* [portents], he gives *monstra* [monsters]. But the monstrous is simply the mysterious in crass form. To be sure, for divine "wisdom" understood as a wisdom that sets "purposes," these two creatures would be the most unfortunate examples anyone could possibly hit upon. But these examples, too, masterfully express the utterly stupendous, the almost daemonic, the wholly incomprehensible, the riddle-playing quality of the eternal creative power: what in it cannot be calculated, its "wholly other" character that mocks all comprehension and yet stirs the mind to all its depths, fascinates it, and at the same time fills it with the deepest acknowledgment. They express it just as all the preceding examples do, and as the whole context,

drift and sense of the passage does.[5] It is the "mystery" that is meant—and at the same time as a *fascinans* and an *augustum*. Here too these two elements of it do not live in any clear concepts, but in the tone, in the enthusiasm, in the very rhythm of the whole exposition. And it is at them that the whole passage aims. In them lie both God's justification and Job's appeasement and the stilling of his soul. For the bare "mystery" alone would be merely the one named above, that of sheer "absolute inconceivability." That, however, could at most shut Job's mouth; it could not inwardly convince him. What makes itself felt, rather, is an inexpressible, positive value of the incomprehensible—both a value in itself and a value in relation to us. The *mirum* is at the same time an *admirandum* and an *adorandum* [something to be marveled at and something to be adored]. This value is not reconciled with the thoughts of the human, intelligible search for purpose or meaning, nor assimilated to them. It remains in its secret. But in becoming felt, it nonetheless at once justifies Elohim and stills Job's soul.—

11.17 [We find an entirely genuine counterpart to this experience of Job in a thoroughly modern writer, embedded in a piece of fiction, but deeply impressive. In his novella "Berufstragik" (A tragedy of vocation), in the collection *Hinter Pflug und Schraubstock* (Behind plow and vise), Max Eyth tells of the building of the mighty bridge over the arm of the sea at Enno Bay. The most profound intellectual labor and the most devoted professional diligence had created this structure, a marvel of meaningful, purposeful human achievement. It is finished, despite endless difficulties and the most gigantic obstacles. It stands and defies wind and waves. Then a hurricane rages and—hurls structure and builder into the depths. What is utterly meaningless seems to triumph over what is most meaningful, just as "fate" seems to

5 OTTO'S NOTE. It cannot be denied that the crocodile and the hippopotamus, these *monstra* of nature, still have a certain gruesome power to edify, even for us. At the very least they are true devil's beasts.

stride indifferently over virtue and merit. The narrator tells how he visits the scene of dread and returns:[6]

11.18 "When we had reached the end of the bridge, it was almost windless. High above us the sky was blue-green and of an uncanny brightness. Behind us, like a great open grave, lay Enno Bay.
The Lord of life and death hovered over the waters in silent majesty.
We felt him, as one feels his hand. And the old man and I knelt down before the open grave and before him."

11.19 Why did they kneel? Why did they have to kneel? One does not kneel before a hurricane and blind natural force, nor even before the merely almighty. But before the wholly uncomprehended mystery, revealed and yet unrevealed, one kneels, with a soul at peace, *sensing* its how—and in that, its right.]

11.20 Many other features of numinous feeling could be pointed out in the Old Testament. But another writer, who sixteen hundred years ago wrote "on the non-rational" in the same sense, has already collected them admirably. That is Chrysostom. We shall meet him in the "Essays," and do not want to anticipate him here.[7]

6 Max Eyth (1836–1906), German engineer and writer; the story draws on the Tay Bridge disaster of 1879.

7 Chrysostom's sermons "On the Incomprehensible Nature of God" are discussed in Otto's *Aufsätze das Numinose betreffend* (Essays Concerning the Numinous, 1923).

Chapter 12: The Numinous in the New Testament

Kapitel 12. Das Numinose im Neuen Testamente
The kingdom, Gethsemane, Paul, predestination and John's light and life.

KAPITEL 12. DAS NUMINOSE IM NEUEN TESTAMENTE.

12.1 In the gospel of Jesus, the tendency toward the rationalization, moralization and humanization of the idea of God reached its completion. This tendency had been alive from the earliest times of the tradition of ancient Israel, above all in the prophets and psalms, and there it permeated the numinous ever more richly and fully with the predicates of clear and deep rational values of feeling. And so there arose that form of "faith in God the Father," unsurpassable by anything else, which Christianity possesses. Only here too it would be a mistake to think that this rationalization is an *elimination* of the numinous. That is a misunderstanding to which today's all-too-plausible portrait of "Jesus's faith in God the Father" leads—a portrait that certainly does not correspond to the mood of the first community. One can only fail to see this if one takes away from Christ's preaching what it wants to be wholly and entirely, from beginning to end: namely, the "gospel of the kingdom." But the "kingdom" is—as the most recent research, against all rationalistic softenings, points out to us with all decisiveness—the *wondrous magnitude* pure and simple, the opposite of everything present and here below, the "wholly other," the "heavenly," veiled in twilight and woven about with all the most genuine motifs of "religious awe":

the "fearful" and the "alluring" and the "august" of the mysterious itself. And from it and its very nature, color, mood and tone fall on every relation to it: on those who proclaim it, on those who prepare it, on the life and conduct that are its preconditions, on the word about it, on the community that awaits it and attains it. Everything is "mystified"—that is, everything becomes numinous. This shows most drastically in the name the circle of its adherents gave themselves: they call themselves and one another by the numinous technical term (*terminus technicus*) "the saints" [literally, "the holy ones"]. That this does not mean the morally perfect is surely obvious. Rather, they are the people who belong within the mystery of the "end time." It is the clear, wholly unambiguous contrast with the "profane" that we met earlier. That is why they can later even call themselves a "priestly people"—a designation for a "consecrated," sacral company. But the precondition for all this was given with the gospel itself and its claim to be the preaching of the coming kingdom.

12.2 But the Lord of this kingdom is the "heavenly Father." Being its Lord, he is not less "holy," numinous, mysterious, *qadosh*, *hagios*, *sacer* and *sanctus* than his kingdom, but far more, and all this in absolute measure. In this respect he is the heightening and fulfillment of everything the old covenant ever possessed of "creature-feeling," of "holy awe" and the like. To fail to see this is to rewrite the gospel of Jesus as an idyll. That these elements do not appear in Jesus specifically in the form of particular "teachings" is due to circumstances that have been stated more than once. And besides, why should he have come to "teach" what was, for every Jew and especially for every believer in the kingdom, the very first and self-evident thing: namely, that God was "the *Holy One* in Israel"! What he had to teach and proclaim was what was *not* self-evident, but his very own discovery and revelation: that this very Holy One was a heavenly "Father." This point of view had to be everything in his "teaching," all the more because the opposition in which he placed himself was bound to push precisely this point sharply into the foreground. For the historical opposition that drove forth the

gospel as its counterstroke was Pharisaism with its slavery to the law, and John with his stern, ascetic understanding of the concept of God.[1] Against both, the gospel of sonship and fatherhood was found to be the gentle yoke and the light burden. And this necessarily fills Jesus's parables, discourses and proclamations. But in such a way that it always remains the boldest, mightiest *paradox*, most worthy of adoration, that "Our Father" is the one "who is in heaven." That this mysterious, awe-inspiring being of wonder "in heaven" should at the same time itself be eternal will of grace: only this resolved contrast makes up the harmony of the genuine basic Christian feeling. And whoever does not hear this resolved *discord* always echoing in it hears it falsely.

12.3 It is telling, and yet again entirely self-evident, that the very first petition of the Christian community's prayer begins: "*Hallowed* be your name." What this means in the context of biblical understanding is clear from what was set out earlier. Indeed, at times tones can still be heard even in Jesus's preaching that let something be felt of that strange shuddering and *dread* before the mysteries of the supramundane of which we spoke earlier. One such passage is Matt. 10:28:

12.4 But fear him who is *able to destroy* both body and soul in *hell*.

12.5 The dark, shuddering sound of this saying makes itself felt of its own accord, and it is already a rationalization to try to relate it simply to the Judge and his judgment on the Last Day. It is the same sound that echoes fully in the saying of the Letter to the Hebrews, 10:31:

12.6 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the *living* God.

12.7 And in the other one, Heb. 12:29:

12.8 Our God is a consuming fire. (This transformation of Deut. 4:24, "The Lord is a consuming fire," into "Our God is a consuming fire" produces a contrast that strikes one as gruesomely shrill and cutting.) And when the occasion demands, the Old

1 John the Baptist.

Testament God "of vengeance" returns quite unveiled and genuine even in Jesus himself, as in Matt. 21:41:

12.9 He will *put* those wretches *to a miserable death*. It is in the light and against the background of this numinous, with its *mysterium* and its *tremendum*, that one must finally also see Jesus's struggle in the night of Gethsemane, in order to understand and relive what was at stake here. What causes this trembling and quailing to the very ground of the soul, this sorrow to the point of death, this sweat that falls to the ground like drops of blood? Ordinary fear of death? In one who had looked death in the eye for weeks, and who had just, with a clear mind, held his farewell meal with his disciples? No, here is more than fear of death. Here is the shuddering of the creature before the *tremendum mysterium*, before the riddle full of dread. And the old legends of Yahweh who "falls upon" Moses, his servant, by night, and of Jacob who wrestles with God until morning, come to mind as an interpretive parallel and prophecy. "He has striven with God and prevailed"—with the God of "wrath" and "fury," with the *numen* that is nonetheless itself "MY FATHER."—Truly, whoever thinks he cannot otherwise find the "Holy One of Israel" again in the God of the gospel must discover him here, if he is able to see at all.

PAUL AND PREDESTINATION

Paul's numinous piety, the wrath of God, and predestination as the creature-feeling put into concepts.

12.10 Of the cloud of numinous mood in *Paul* there is no need even to speak. "God dwells in a light that no one can approach." The overabounding in his concept and feeling of God leads him to the vocabulary and the particular experiences of mysticism.[2]

2 OTTO'S NOTE. As a provisional definition of mysticism I would propose that it is what religion also is, but with its non-rational elements one-sidedly predominating and at the same time overstrained into the overabounding.—A religiosity acquires a "mystical coloring" when it has a leaning toward mysticism. In this sense Christianity since Paul and John is not mysticism, but religion with a mystical coloring. And rightly so.

But it lives in him quite generally in the feelings of enthusiastic exaltation and in his pneumatic vocabulary, both of which lie far beyond the merely rational side of Christian piety. His "dualistic" devaluation of the "flesh" as the creaturely as such is an extreme intensification of that numinous self-devaluation spoken of on pp. 65ff. These catastrophes and reversals of emotional life, this tragedy of sin and guilt, this glow of blissful experience, are possible and intelligible only on numinous ground. And just as the *orgē theou* [wrath of God] in him is more than the mere reaction of punitive justice, being permeated by the *tremendum* of the numinous, so on the other hand the *fascinans* of the experienced love of God, which drives the spirit beyond its bounds and into the third heaven, is more than the mere absolute of *human*, natural filial feeling.—The *orgē theou* lives mightily in the grandiose passage Rom. 1:18ff. Here we immediately recognize again the wrathful, jealous Yahweh of the Old Testament, but now as the terribly mighty God of worlds and of history, who pours out his blazing wrath over all the world. Genuinely non-rational, indeed dreadfully sublime, is the vision that the wrathful one punishes sin *with sinning*. Three times over Paul repeats this thought, wholly unbearable for a merely rational view:

12.11 Therefore God gave them up in impurity to the
dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.
For this reason God gave them up to degrading
passions.
So God gave them up to a debased mind, to do
what is improper, filled with all unrighteousness.

12.12 To feel the force of these visions, one must try to forget the mood of our dogmatic textbooks and well-tempered catechisms, and to feel again the shudders that the Jew could feel before the fury of Yahweh, the Hellenist before the dread of *Heimarmene* [Fate], and the people of antiquity in general before the *ira deorum* [wrath of the gods].—

12.13 One more thing in Paul should be expressly pointed out, since it also belongs here: his doctrine of predestination. That

with the idea of predestination we find ourselves in utterly non-rational territory is felt most immediately by the "rationalist" in particular. It is the thing he can least bring himself to accept. And quite rightly. From the standpoint of the rational it is the *absurdum* and *skandalon* [absurdity and stumbling block] pure and simple. He may perhaps put up with all the paradoxes of the Trinity and Christology: predestination itself will always be for him the hardest stumbling block.

12.14 Not, however, in the form in which it has sometimes been presented from Schleiermacher, following Leibniz and Spinoza, down to the present day. Here one simply capitulates before natural law and the "causae secundae" [secondary causes], and concedes to modern psychology its claim that all human decisions and actions are subject to the compulsion of motives, so that the human being is unfree and predetermined by them. This predetermination by nature is then equated with divine all-efficacy, so that in the end the purely religious, profound vision of divine foreordination, which knows nothing whatever of natural laws, comes down to the trivial, natural-scientific idea of universally valid causal connection. There can be no more apocryphal speculation, no more thoroughgoing falsification of religious conceptions. The rationalist is *not* at all set against it. It is itself thoroughly and roundly rationalistic—but in truth it is at the same time the complete elimination of the religious idea of predestination itself.

12.15 This idea, however, springs from two sources; it is itself twofold, and inwardly quite diverse. It should also be designated by names kept firmly apart. The one idea is that of "election"; the other, of an essentially different tone, is that of predestination proper.

12.16 The idea of "election"—of being chosen and foreordained by God for salvation—arises immediately as the pure expression of the religious experience of grace itself. In ever-growing measure the person who has received grace, looking back on himself, recognizes and feels that it was not by his own working or striving that he became what he is, but that grace came to him

without his willing or his ability, and seized him, drove him and led him. And even his very own, freest decisions and assents become for him, without thereby losing the element of freedom, something that he *experienced* rather than something he did. Prior to all his own doing he sees the seeking and choosing of saving love at work, and acknowledges an eternal decree of grace over himself, which is precisely foreordination. This foreordination is purely one to salvation. In itself it has nothing to do with the "praedestinatio ambigua" [double predestination], with the predetermination of all human beings *either* to salvation or to perdition. The rational-logical inference—that if God chooses him but not others, one must surely conclude that He destines some to bliss and others to damnation—is not drawn here, and must not be drawn. For what is at issue is a religious vision, which as such always stands alone and holds good on its own, but is quite incapable of systematization and logical consequence-mongering, and which is violated wherever anything of the kind is attempted. In this respect Schleiermacher rightly says in his *Speeches on Religion*:[3]

12.17 Every (religious) intuition is a work that exists for itself … it knows nothing of derivation and connection.

12.18 To be distinguished from election, next, is predestination in the form in which it appears in Paul in Rom. 9:18:

12.19 He has mercy on whom he wills, and whom he wills he hardens.

12.20 The ideas of "election," which are also strong in Paul, do indeed resonate here too. But the reflection in v. 20 is plainly tuned to a quite different key from that of election:

12.21 Who are you, a human being, to argue with God! Shall the thing formed say to the one who formed it: Why have you made me like this?

12.22 That is a consideration that does not fit at all into the line of thought of "election." Still less does it spring from an abstract theoretical "doctrine" of God's all-causality, as it appears in

3 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. Schleiermacher's *Reden über die Religion*, ed. R. Otto, 4th edition, pp. 37–38. Göttingen 1920.

Zwingli. That doctrine does then produce a "doctrine of predestination" too—but one that is an artifact of philosophical speculation, not the product of immediate religious feeling. Such a feeling, however, does in fact exist as well. And it undoubtedly lies at the root in Paul. We easily recognize it again as the numinous feeling in the face of the "*tremendum mysterium*"; and its peculiar character, as we met it above in the story of Abraham, recurs here, only in enormously heightened form. For the idea of predestination, *religiously* filled, is nothing other than the self-utterance of that "creature-feeling," that sinking and "becoming nothing," with one's own strength, claims and achievement, in the face of the supramundane as such. The *numen*, experienced as overpowering, becomes all in all. The creature is brought to nothing with its being, its doing, its running and striving, its planning and resolving. The interpretive expression for this sinking and becoming nothing in feeling before the *numen* is then the confession of impotence here and omnipotence there, of the futility of one's own choosing here and of all-determining and disposing there.

12.23 Predestination too, being identical in content with the absolute overpoweringness of the *numen*, then has at first nothing whatever to do with the "unfree will." On the contrary, it very often has the creature's "free will" as its very counterpart, and only thereby gains its relief. "Will what you will and as you can; plan, choose: everything must still come as it ought and is determined"—that is the first, more genuine expression of the matter. *Together with* his free choosing and acting, the human being is brought to nothing before the eternal power. And this power grows beyond all measure precisely by carrying out its decrees *in spite of* the freedom of the human will. It is precisely this side of the matter that some Islamic stories meant to illustrate the inflexibility of Allah's decrees deliberately bring out. Here people *can* plan, choose and reject: but however they choose and act, Allah's eternal will prevails, to the day and hour, as was foreordained. What is meant here first of all is precisely not all-efficacy or sole efficacy, but the absolute overreaching

and determining of the eternal choosing and working over the creature's working, however strong and free it may be. Thus the Qur'an commentator Baidawi tells: *When* Azrael, the angel of death, once passed by Solomon, he fixed his gaze on one of Solomon's companions. "Who is this?" the man asked. "The angel of death," Solomon answered. "He seems to have his eye on me," the other went on. "Command the wind to carry me away and set me down in India." Solomon did so.[4] Then the angel said: "I looked at him so long out of astonishment, for I had been commanded to fetch his soul from India, while he was here with you in Canaan."

12.24 That is predestination that presupposes free will precisely as its foil. However freely a person may plan, Allah has always laid his countermine. And so the verses of the Masnavi say:

12.25 Many a one falls into distress by fleeing from distress,
Runs into the dragon while fleeing from the snake.
One sets a net, and it entangles him himself.
What he took for life drinks his heart's blood.
Another shuts the door when the enemy is already inside.
When Pharaoh, to escape misfortune,
Shed the innocent blood of countless baby boys,
What he was seeking[5] was in his own palace.[6]

12.26 Only when that creature-feeling intensifies still further and is surpassed (and then often combines with theoretical considerations) do the ideas of the absolute all-efficacy and sole efficacy of the Godhead arise. And so they then lead to "mysticism," and it is only one further step of inference when mysticism at once goes on to attach its peculiar speculations about being. Not only activity but also real actuality, full being itself, is then denied to the creature, and all being, all fullness of essence, is ascribed to that which is, absolutely. It alone is real.

4 Al-Baydawi (d. c. 1286), Persian scholar, author of a widely used commentary on the Qur'an.

5 OTTO'S NOTE. Namely, the infant Moses.

6 OTTO'S NOTE. For both passages cf. G. Rosen, *Mesnevi des Dschelal eddin Rumi*, Munich 1913, pp. 166 and 171.

And all the being of the creature is either merely a function of its being—It "essences" them—or mere appearance altogether. These connections can be seen with special clarity in the mysticism of Geulincx and the Occasionalists.[7] "Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis" [Where you have no power, there you should will nothing]—such a mystical culmination also sounds occasionally in Paul, in his mysterious saying about the final outcome of all things, when "God will be all in all." The passage in Romans, however, leads only as far as the idea of predestination itself. And that is nothing other than intensified "creature-feeling" and its conceptual expression, and is rooted entirely in the numinous.

12.27 That the latter must be so can be made clear by yet another consideration. If the feeling of the numinous, namely as "creature-feeling," really is the actual root of predestination, then we should expect that the religiosity determined most one-sidedly and most strongly by the non-rational elements in the idea of God would also be the most inclined toward predestination. And that is evidently the case. No religion is so inclined toward predestination as Islam. But what is peculiar to Islam is precisely that in it the rational, and more exactly the moral, side of the idea of God could not from the start attain the firm and clear stamp that it did in Christianity or Judaism, for example. The numinous in Allah simply preponderates. Islam is reproached with the charge that in it the moral demand bears the character of the "contingent" and is valid only through the "contingent will" of the Godhead. The charge is correct, only the matter has nothing to do with "contingency." It is explained rather by the fact that the numinous, indeed the almost uncannily daemonic in Allah, still far too much outweighs the rational in him; that it is not yet, as in Christianity, sufficiently schematized and tempered by the rational—in this case by the moral. And it is precisely from this that what is usually called the "fanatical" streak of this religion is also explained. A strongly

7 Arnold Geulincx (1624–1669), Flemish Cartesian philosopher and a leading Occasionalist, who held that God alone is the true cause of all events.

aroused feeling of the *numen*, running wild, without the tempering of the rational elements: that is everywhere precisely the essence of fanaticism.

12.28 With the foregoing, the value judgment on the idea of predestination is also given. As such it is the attempt at a conceptual expression for something that at bottom cannot be explicated in concepts. As a mysterious interpretive name it is quite indispensable and has its full right. But this right becomes *summa injuria* [the height of injustice] when one fails to recognize that it merely hints by way of analogies, and takes it not as an ideogram but as a proper concept of the thing, and even as capable of theory. Then it becomes positively ruinous and intolerable for a rational religion such as Christianity, however much one may try to render it harmless by arts of evasion.

12.29 Like the idea of predestination, yet another element of Paul's conception is rooted in the numinous: namely, a complete devaluation of the "flesh." For him the "flesh" is nothing other than creaturely existence as such. And this, as we saw on p. 21 and p. 61, numinous feeling devalues in the face of the supramundane, both with respect to being and with respect to value. In the first respect, that is, as "dust and ashes," as "nothing," as the dependent, the weak, the transient and the dying; in the second respect as the profane, the unclean, that which is incapable of the value of the holy and of its nearness. We find both devaluations exactly again in Paul's conceptions. And what is specifically Pauline in them is only the *strength*, the completeness of this devaluation. Where Paul got this degree of strength in his devaluations—whether from the stimuli of a "dualistic" environment or from within himself—is a question in its own right. Derivations by historical origins and connections determine nothing about the nature and value of a thing. And at the very least it can be asserted that the most genuine stirrings of numinous piety, already in the Old Testament, offered strong points of contact for such stimuli. "*Basar*," the "flesh," is here too already the principle both of being "dust and ashes" and of creaturely "uncleanness" before the holy.

12.30 As in Paul, so in John too the strand of the numinous is strong. The element of the *tremendum*, it is true, fades in him, as so often in mysticism (without disappearing entirely, for in John too "*menei hē orgē*" [the wrath remains], despite Ritschl). All the stronger here are the *mysteriosum* and the *fascinans*, precisely in mystical form. In John, Christianity draws "*phōs*" and "*zōē*" [light and life] out of the religions competing with it and into itself[8]: rightly so, for only in him do they come home. But what are these! Whoever does not *feel* it is made of wood. But no one is able to *say* it. They are something overabounding in the non-rational.

12.31 And the same holds precisely for the statement of John to which rationalists like best to appeal, John 4:24: "God is spirit." For the sake of this saying Hegel held Christianity to be the highest religion, because it is the truly "spiritual" one, in which God is recognized and proclaimed as "spirit," that is, as absolute reason itself. But when John speaks of "spirit," of *pneuma*, he is not thinking of "absolute reason," but of what is wholly opposed to all "world" and all "flesh": of heavenly being and wondrous being pure and simple, of what is utterly enigmatic and mysterious, above all the understanding and reason of the "natural" man. He is thinking of the Spirit that

12.32 "blows where it wills. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes," and that is *therefore* not bound to Gerizim or Zion, and that is to be worshiped only by those who are themselves "in spirit and in truth." Precisely this apparently quite rational statement points most strongly to the non-rational in the biblical idea of God.

8 OTTO'S NOTE. and thereby drains them dry: by the right of the stronger. And from then on these elements belong to it inseparably as its own. For "When strong spiritual power has gathered the elements to itself, no angel could separate the united double nature of the intimate two"—and still less could philological criticism.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. The verse is from the final scene of Goethe's *Faust II*, sung by the "more perfect angels."

Chapter 13: The Numinous in Luther

Kapitel 13. Das Numinose bei Luther
Luther's hidden, wrathful God, the mysterium in his faith, and the numinous in the mystics and Jakob Böhme.

KAPITEL 13. DAS NUMINOSE BEI LUTHER.

13.1 In Catholicism the feeling of the numinous lives with extraordinary vigor: in its cult, in its sacramental symbolism, in the apocryphal form of belief in miracles and legend, in the paradoxes and mysteries of its dogma, in the Platonic-Plotinian and Dionysian strands of its formation of ideas, in the solemnity of its churches and rites, and especially in the close contact of its piety with mysticism. Here too, and for reasons already given, it lives far less in its official doctrinal systems. Especially since the great "Moderni" [moderns] combined Aristotle and Aristotelian school teaching with church doctrine and replaced "Platonism" with it, a strong rationalization took place here—one that practice and the life of feeling itself, however, never kept pace with or corresponded to. What struggles with each other here as "Platonism" and "Aristotelianism," and the long-lasting opposition to the Moderni in general, is to a good extent itself nothing other than the wrestling of the rational and the non-rational elements of the Christian religion with one another. In Luther's protests against Aristotle and the *theologos modernos* [modern theologians], too, the same opposition is clearly at work.

13.2 Plato himself was known only very inadequately, and was interpreted through Augustine, Plotinus, Proclus, the Arabic philosophers and Dionysius. And yet a right feeling was at work

when the opposition of moods chose "Plato" and "Aristotle" as its watchwords. Plato himself, it is true, had contributed powerfully to rationalizing religion. According to his *philosophy* the Godhead had become identical with the Idea of the Good, and thus something wholly rational and conceptual. But the most characteristic thing about Plato's way of thinking is really that for him philosophy and science are too narrow to comprehend the *whole* of the life of the human mind. Strictly speaking he has no "philosophy" of religion at all. He grasps the religious by quite other means than those of conceptual thought: namely, with the ideograms of myth, through enthusiasm, through eros and through *mania* [divine madness]. And he renounces the attempt to bring the religious object into one system of knowledge with the objects of *epistēmē*, that is, of *ratio*. This does not make that object smaller for him, but rather greater. And at the same time the wholly non-rational character of the object comes, in just this way, most vividly to feeling in him. And not only to feeling, but also to expression. That God is above all reason—and not only as the one who is beyond our grasp, but as the one who is beyond comprehension—no one has stated more definitely than this master of thought:

13.3 It is hard to find the Maker ... and impossible, having found him, to declare him to all—

13.4 he says (*Timaeus* 28C). And in his great letter he writes these profound words:

13.5 I have not written about it and never shall. For it cannot be treated like the objects of scientific inquiry. To science it is inexpressible. After long labor, when one has lived one's way into it, suddenly, as when a spark strikes, a fire kindles in the soul. It then feeds itself. An attempt at written communication would be intelligible only to very few. And for them a gentle hint is enough to help them find it themselves.—Aristotle is far more theological than Plato, but in mood far less religious, and at the same time essentially rationalistic in his theology. And this

opposition repeats itself among those who profess allegiance to the one or the other.[1]

13.6 Another, dampening influence on church doctrine with respect to the non-rational came, already from the days of the earliest Church Fathers, through the adoption of the ancient doctrine of the *apatheia* [impassibility] of the Godhead. The God of Greek, and especially Stoic, teaching about God was constructed on the ideal of the "sage" who overcomes his "passions" and his "affects" and becomes *apathēs* [free of passion]. People tried to assimilate this God to the "living God" of Scripture. And, as already indicated above, the opposition of the rational and the non-rational elements in the divine unconsciously plays into this struggle too. Lactantius above all, in his treatise *De ira dei* [On the wrath of God], fights against this God of the *philosophi* [philosophers]. He does so in the terms of human emotional life, themselves wholly rational, by heightening them. He makes of God, so to speak, a colossal heart, in excitable and excited vitality. But whoever fights in this way for the "living God" also fights, without noticing it, for the divine in God that is not exhausted by idea, world order, moral order, principle of being or purposive will. And some of his expressions themselves reach higher and point higher. He says, quoting Plato:

13.7 What God is, we are not to inquire at all, since it can neither be found out nor put into words.

13.8 He likes, in general, to stress God's *incomprehensibilitas* (incomprehensibility):

13.9 whom the human mind cannot gauge by sense, nor mortal tongue express. For he is too sublime and too great to be grasped either by human thought or by human speech. He loves the expression *majestas dei* (the majesty of God), and he rebukes the philosophers for judging wrongly of God's "singular majesty." And he feels the *tremendum* of the *majestas* when he maintains

1 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon* I, 418 and 643.—Cf. Plato, Ep. II, p. 312D; *314B, C*.

that God is "angry," and he demands "awe" as a fundamental feature of religion when he says:[2]

13.10 Thus it comes about that religion, majesty and honor consist in fear. But there is no fear where no one is angry.

13.11 He says that a God who could not be angry could not love either. A God who could do neither would be *immobilis*, unmoved, and not the *living* God, the deus *vivus*, of Scripture.

13.12 The non-rational in Chrysostom and Augustine we shall treat more fully in the "Essays," nos.[3] and 5. But Lactantius' old struggle against the *deus philosophorum* (the God of the philosophers) revives in the Middle Ages in the struggle of Duns Scotus for the God of "will," and for the validity of "will" itself in religion, over against the God of "being" and over against "knowledge." And the non-rational elements still dormant here then break out fully in certain peculiar trains of thought in *Luther*.

LUTHER'S HIDDEN GOD

Luther's dread of the unrevealed majesty of God forms the dark background of his faith in grace.

13.13 This element in Luther was later tacitly eliminated, and today it is readily treated as "apocryphal," as a "scholastic remnant of nominalist speculation." It is strange, then, that this "scholastic remnant" should have held such power in Luther's own emotional life, as it palpably did. In truth, what we have in him are not "remnants" but, beyond all doubt, the mysterious, dark and uncanny background of his piety. Only against this background does the clear bliss and joyfulness of his faith in grace properly stand out, and it is against it that they must be seen if one wants to appreciate them in their full force and depth. Wherever the impulses may have come to him from, whether from "nominalism" or from the traditions of his order's

2 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf., for example, the frosty statement in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 2.15, 72.1 ff.—Works, ed. Fritsche, p. 227; p. 116.
3 OTTO'S NOTE. p. 218.

teaching, what we have in him are wholly original stirrings of numinous feeling itself, in its essential elements as we have come to know them. This is confirmed by the fact that these elements appear in him in their full number, and so point back to their common, unified ground.

13.14 1. We leave aside here the many threads that bind his piety to mysticism—strongly at first, more weakly later, never vanishing entirely. We also leave aside the after-life of the numinous element of Catholic worship in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper (—this cannot be fully derived either from his doctrine of the forgiveness of sins or from his submission to the "It is written"). But let us attend to his *mirae speculationes* (wondrous speculations) about "the unrevealed" in God as distinct from the *facies Dei revelata* (the revealed face of God), about the *divina majestas* (divine majesty) and about the *omnipotentia Dei* (omnipotence of God) as opposed to his *gratia* (grace), as he sets them out in *De servo arbitrio*. There is little to be gained by investigating how far he took these "doctrines" over from Scotus. They are closely bound up with his innermost and most personal religious life; they break forth from it quite genuinely and primordially, and must be examined as such. He himself emphatically assures us that he teaches such things not merely as an academic dispute or as a philosophical inference, but because they belong to the very piety of the Christian, who must know them for the sake of faith and life. He rejects the clever caution of Erasmus, who thought they should at least be kept from ordinary people; he preaches them himself in public sermons (on the second book of Moses, on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart), and he writes of them in his letter to the Christians of Antwerp. And shortly before his death he still stands by his work *De servo arbitrio*, in which they are found, as the one he acknowledges as most truly his own.

13.15 "To have a God is nothing other than to trust him from the heart," he says, it is true, in the Large Catechism. And God for him is the one who "pours himself out in pure goodness." But the same Luther knows abysses and depths of the Godhead that

make his heart quail, and from them he takes refuge in the "Word" like a hare in the clefts of the rock—in the sacrament, in absolution, in the comforting official proclamation of Dr. Pomeranus, but also in every word of comfort and promise whatever, in every *promissio* in the Psalms and the Prophets. Yet this fearful thing from which he flees, in often recurring states of anxious shuddering in his soul, is not merely the stern judge who demands righteousness. For that judge is quite as much a "revealed God."[4] It is always, at the same time, God in his "unrevealedness," in the shudder-inspiring majesty of his very Godhead: the one before whom not only the transgressor of the law trembles, but the creature as such, in its "uncovered" creatureliness. Luther even ventures to call this shudder-inspiring non-rational element in God the *deus ipse* (God himself), as he is in his nature and majesty (—indeed a dangerous and false assumption, for the non-rational side of the Godhead is by no means so distinct from the rational as if the latter belonged to it less essentially than the former[5]).

13.16 The relevant passages from his *De servo arbitrio* have been cited often enough. But let the reader allow the following passage in particular, from the sermon on Exodus 20, to work upon him, in order to become aware of the almost daemonic quality of this numinous feeling. Luther cannot do enough to paint the gruesomeness of his text and make it tell:

13.17 Yes, to the world it looks as though God were a mere gaper who only stands with his mouth hanging open, or a cuckold, or a good-natured fellow who lets another man

13.18 sleep with his wife and pretends he does *not* see it... But he swallows a man up, and takes *such pleasure* in it that his jealousy and wrath drive him to *devour* the wicked. Once this begins, he does *not let up*... Then we shall learn how God is a consuming fire that *makes an end of all* and is *jealous* on both sides—That is the consuming, *devouring* fire[1]—And if you sin, he will

4 Dr. Pomeranus: Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558), Wittenberg pastor and Luther's confessor.

5 OTTO'S NOTE. Luther's Works, Erlangen ed. 36, pp. 210 ff.

eat you up—For God is a fire that consumes, *devours* and is *jealous*; that is, he *kills you*, as fire consumes a house and turns it to ashes and dust.[6]

13.19 And elsewhere:

13.20 Although nature must be horrified before such divine majesty.—Yes, he is more terrible and more dreadful than the devil. For he deals with us and treats us with violence, torments and tortures us, and does *not* care about us[7]—In his majesty he is a consuming fire—For no one on earth can help it: when he truly thinks of God, his heart is terrified within his body and would gladly run right out of the world. Yes, as soon as he hears God named, he becomes fearful and timid.

13.21 It is the *numen* pure and simple, here felt one-sidedly in its aspect of *tremendum* and *majestas*. And when, above, I introduced *tremendum* and *majestas* to designate one side of the numinous, I did so in fact directly from a recollection of Luther's own *termini*: I borrowed them from his *divina majestas* (divine majesty) and its *metuenda voluntas* (will to be feared), which had stayed in my ear since my first study of Luther. Indeed, it was in Luther's *De servo arbitrio* that my understanding of the numinous and of its difference from the rational was formed, long before I found it again in the *qadosh* of the Old Testament and in the elements of "religious awe" in the history of religion generally.[8]

13.22 But one must have seen *these* depths and abysses in order to understand properly what it means that the same man, on the

6 OTTO'S NOTE. p. 292. *p. 231. p. 237*. Br. edition, 1891, vol. 5, p. 50.

7 OTTO'S NOTE. Erlangen ed. 35, 167; 47, 145; 50, 200.

8 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. R. Otto, *Die Anschauung vom heiligen Geiste bei Luther* (Luther's View of the Holy Spirit), Göttingen 1898, pp. 85 ff.: "And faith in God is not a simple ..., of the basic feeling, definable only through itself, toward the superhuman and eternal."—This work was written still wholly under the influence of Ritschl, as is easy to see from its stance toward mysticism. But the non-rational, numinous strands in Luther's concept of God, and in every genuine concept of God, were clear to me. And from there, in time, a different estimate of mysticism was bound to follow, as well as the recognition that the problem of the "Spirit" was really contained in the sentences on page 86: "For this something else is needed: every 'Word' ... and of balanced feeling hovering in calm oscillation."

other hand, tries to place the whole of Christianity in trusting faith. What we have said about the piety of the gospel and the *paradox* of faith in God as Father returns in Luther's religious experience, only intensified beyond all measure. That the *unapproachable* becomes approachable, that the *Holy One* is pure goodness, that the *majestas* makes itself intimate—that is the heart of the matter. And this heart finds only very unclear expression in the later school doctrine, when the mystical element of the *orgē*, which is nothing other than holiness itself formed by the good, is shifted one-sidedly onto God's righteousness.

13.23 2. Once numinous feeling is astir, then, since it is a unity, we shall readily expect its other elements along with any one of them. And they are indeed found in Luther—first of all, further, in what I should like to call his "Job-like" train of thought. We saw above that in the book of Job what matters is less the *tremenda majestas* of the *numen* than the *mysteriosa majestas*: that is, the non-rational in the narrower sense, the *mirum*, the incomprehensible, the paradoxical, what runs counter to the "reasonable" and to what one would reasonably expect, what goes against the grain of reason and finally intensifies into inner antinomies. Here belong, in general, Luther's fierce attacks on "that prostitute, reason," which must seem grotesque if one has not grasped the problem of the non-rational in the concept of God. More particularly, however, there are certain formulations that recur quite typically in Luther. They show his strong feeling for the non-rational element of the Godhead in general. And the most significant passages here are those in which he does not spend this feeling in the small change of popular edification, which contents itself with the thought that God's ways are simply too high for us human beings, but in which he reaches for strong paradoxes. He can, it is true, speak quite simply and generally of how "our God is a *strange* Lord," and relate this in general to the fact that he does not reckon and value as the world reckons, that he sides with the lowly and the humble, that he tests us through the strange ways by which he leads us. But

such expressions grow stronger. God is for him altogether unsearchable in his mysteries and judgments; he shows—as in Job—his *vera majestas*, his true majesty, in his fearful wonders and his incomprehensible judgments; he is in his essence simply hidden from all reason, is without measure, law and goal, and acts in what is wholly paradoxical:

13.24 So that there may be room for faith, then, it is necessary that everything that is believed be hidden.

13.25 And this incomprehensible paradox is not merely to be noticed, recognized and bowed to; one must see that such a thing belongs to the divine and is indeed its very mark:

13.26 For if his righteousness were such that human understanding could judge it to be righteous, it would *plainly not be divine* and would differ in nothing from human righteousness. But since he is the true and only God, and moreover wholly incomprehensible and inaccessible to human reason, it is fitting, indeed necessary, that his righteousness too should be incomprehensible[9].

13.27 The theological expression of the perplexity of finding a name for the elements of the non-rational and the mysterious is the repugnant doctrine that God is *exlex* (above the law), that the good is good because God wills it, not that God wills the good because it is good—the doctrine of an absolutely arbitrary will in God, which would indeed make him a "capricious despot." These doctrines appear with particular force in Islamic theology; and that is immediately understandable if our claim that they are makeshift expressions for the non-rational, numinous element in the Godhead, and our other claim that this element is precisely what predominates in Islam, are correct. But in this connection we find them again at once in Luther as well[10]. At the same time, however, this circumstance offers the excuse for such *horrenda* (horrors), which are in themselves indeed blasphemous: it was a lack of keener introspection and a misjudg-

9 OTTO'S NOTE. Weimar ed. 18, 784. Cf. the long discussion in Erlangen ed. 35, 166.
10 OTTO'S NOTE. Cf. Erlangen ed. 35, 166.

ment of the means of expression, not contempt for the absoluteness of the ethical, that led to these caricatures.

13.28 3. With such basic feelings the doctrine of predestination *had* necessarily to appear in due course, for the reasons already set out; and here, unlike with Paul, we do not need merely to infer the inner connection in mood between it and them: it lies palpably open in *De servo arbitrio*. Here one thing quite clearly hangs on the other, and with so tangible an inner coherence that this work becomes for us the very psychological key to kindred phenomena.—Only occasionally do these purely numinous elements of his religious feeling press into the light as strongly as in the *treatise De servo arbitrio*. But in the struggles with *desperatio* (despair) and Satan, in the frequently recurring catastrophes and melancholies, in the ever-renewed wrestling for grace that can bring him to the edge of mental illness, more than merely rational depths of the soul are stirring. And *these* are the dark foil for Luther's whole life of faith. This foil becomes visible in countless passages of his sermons, letters and table talk. And only against it does one understand his valuation of the "Word," his almost convulsive clinging to the Word and to the God "revealed" in the Word, and his constantly repeated warnings not to try presumptuously to penetrate this darkness and shuddering. Compare especially the passage in his Table Talk, Weimar ed. 6, 6561, "Of God's unsearchable majesty, from Dr. Martin Luther's letter to Aquila, pastor at Mansfeld":

13.29 I have been assailed by this (not just) once, to the point of mortal danger. Why is it, then, that we poor miserable people brood (over it), when we cannot (even) yet grasp with faith the rays of the divine promise? And yet we who are weak and uncertain are dragged (to it) and want to search out and understand the incomprehensible majesty of the incomprehensible light of God's wonders! Do we not know, then, that he dwells in a light that no one can approach? And nevertheless we go toward it, indeed presume to go to it! .... What wonder is it, then, that the glory falls upon us and overwhelms us, since we pry into the majesty.

13.30 One should indeed *teach* about God's unsearchable and incomprehensible will. But to presume to comprehend it is very dangerous, and one breaks one's neck over it.

13.31 And Luther knows of something far more terrible than what this passage attests: namely, that "the glory can fall upon and overwhelm" quite independently of presumption and human approach, in the anxious hours when the *tremendum* assails a person as if it were the devil himself. And yet he holds fast, as to something self-evident, to the view that one certainly "*should teach* about it"! Certainly. For without this God would simply not be God; without the *deus absconditus* (the hidden God), the *revelatus* (the revealed) would be only a "gaper"; and without the *tremenda majestas* grace would not be so sweet. (And one can teach about it even though it cannot be "comprehended." For where we do not comprehend, we still feel.) And even where he speaks only in the rational terms of judgment, punishment and God's wrath, we must, if we want to hear these as Luther meant them, hear the deeply non-rational elements of "religious awe" resonating with them. This wrath of God too often—perhaps always—has something of the fury of Yahweh about it, of that *orgē* of the numinous.

13.32 4. This circumstance leads us further still. In the expressions about the unrevealed God and about the *tremenda majestas*, evidently only those elements of the numinous were repeated that we first found in it on page 12, and especially the *tremendum*, the *repelling* element of the numinous. But what about the *fascinans* in Luther? Is it missing, and do only the rational predicates of trustworthiness and love stand in its place, together with the element of feeling corresponding to them, namely faith as trust? Certainly not. It is only that here the *fascinans* is wholly *woven into* these, so that it is expressed and sounds along with them. One feels this strongly in the downright Dionysian, almost unbridled bliss of his experience of God:

13.33 Christians are a blessed people; they can rejoice in

13.34 their hearts and boast, exult, dance and leap. It pleases God well and does our hearts good when, relying on
13.35 God, we are defiant, proud and joyful. Such a gift
should surely kindle pure fire and light in our hearts,
so that we would never cease to dance for joy
and to leap.
Who can praise and express it enough?[11] For it is
not to be spoken nor grasped.
If you truly feel it in your heart, it will be
so great a thing to you that you will much rather keep silent
than say anything about it.

13.36 Compare with this what was said earlier, on page 73, about the interweaving of the non-rational with the rational and about the deepened sense of rational expressions. Just as what makes the supramundane shudder-inspiring is comprised in the God of severity, punishment and righteousness, so what makes it beatifying is included in the God who "pours himself out in pure goodness." Indeed, it lies in Luther's very concept of faith, namely in what is overabounding and mystical in it. For here too Luther's connection with mysticism cannot be mistaken. True, in place of "knowing" and "love of God" there steps for Luther, to an ever greater degree, "believing." And that means a tremendous qualitative change in the whole world of religious mood, compared with the mood of mysticism. But for all the change, it is evident that Luther's faith bears quite definite features that set it alongside those mystical functions of the soul and clearly distinguish it from the rational definiteness and well-temperedness of the *fides* (faith) of Lutheran school doctrine. Like "knowing" and "love," faith for Luther always remains, to the very end, the mysterious power of the soul of *adhaesio Dei* (cleaving to God), which unites the human being with God. But union is the hallmark of the mystical. And when Luther says that faith makes a person "one cake" with God, or grasps him as a ring holds its jewel, he is not speaking in images

11 OTTO'S NOTE. Erlangen ed. 11, 194.

—or at least no more in images than when Tauler says the same of love.[12] For Luther too, faith is something that cannot be exhausted in rational concepts, so that one needs just such "images" to designate it. Faith for him is the center of the soul, which for the mystics was the ground of the soul, and in which union takes place. It is at the same time an independent power of knowledge, a mystical *a priori* in the human spirit for receiving and acknowledging supersensible truth, and in this respect itself one with the *spiritus sanctus in corde* (the Holy Spirit in the heart). Faith is, further, the "active, mighty, busy thing" in us; it is the strongest *affect*, most closely akin to *enthousiazesthai* (being filled with the god). It takes over directly the very functions that all the *enthousiastai* (enthusiasts), from Paul onward, have always ascribed to the *pneuma* (spirit). For it is faith that "inwardly transforms us and gives us new birth." In this respect it is wholly of a kind with the *amor mysticus* (mystical love), however different from it in its inner tone. And in the bliss of the *certitudo salutis* (certainty of salvation) that it lays hold of, and in the exalted mood of Luther's faith as a child of God, there return, more subdued, Paul's feelings of sonship, which are more than mere comfort of soul, calming of conscience, or a mere mood of being safe and sheltered. All the later "mystics," from Johann Arndt on to Spener and Arnold, felt these sides of Luther's emotional life, with kindred sympathy, again and again to be akin to their own; and they carefully collected the relevant passages of the blessed Luther in order to shield themselves with them against the attacks of the rationalized Lutheran school doctrine.[13]

13.37 For over against the rationalizations of school doctrine, the non-rational elements remain alive in the late flowering of Western mysticism, in Catholic and Protestant territory alike. In it, and in Christian mysticism generally from its first stirrings,

12 Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1361), German Dominican preacher and mystic, much read by Luther.

13 Johann Arndt (1555–1621), Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) and Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714): devotional writers of Lutheran piety and Pietism.

the elements of the non-rational that we have set out are easy to recognize—especially the elements of the *mysteriosum*, the *fascinans*, the *augustum* and the *majestas*, while that of the *tremendum* recedes and is muted. For a mysticism of "dread," as in some forms of Indian mysticism—in the Bhagavad Gita, chapter 11, in some forms of the mysticism of Shiva and Durga, in the gruesome form of Tantrism in Buddhist and Hindu territory—has not existed in the West. Yet the element of the *tremendum*, though muted, is by no means wholly absent from Christian mysticism. It remains alive in the *caligo* (darkness), the *altum silentium* (deep silence), the abyss, the night, the desert of the Godhead into which the soul must descend; in the torment, the forsakenness, the dryness, the tedium in which it must stand; in the shudder and shuddering of self-loss, of the horror that sets one outside oneself (*Ent-setzung*), and of *annihilatio*. Thus Suso says: In this incomprehensible mountain range of the supradivine Where (the "supersubstantial height of the divine *majesty*") there is a playful abysmal depth that all pure spirits can feel. And there (the soul) comes into the hidden namelessness and into the wondrous estrangement. And there is the bottomless, deep abyss for all creatures … there the spirit dies—*wholly alive* in the wonders of the Godhead[14]. And he can at times pray: O woe, your wrathful countenance is so very grim. Your displeased turning away is so utterly unbearable. Woe is me! And your hostile words are so fiery that they cut through heart and soul. The later mystics too know these tones well. Thus John of the Cross says: Because this divine contemplation assails the soul with force in order to subdue it, the soul in its weakness feels such pain that all its strength and breath, as it were, forsake it, while sense and spirit, as though under an immeasurable and dark weight, suffer so and are pressed as if by mortal anguish that the soul would choose death as a relief and refreshment. And further: The fourth kind of pain is caused in the soul … by the majesty and glory of God. And finally:

14 OTTO'S NOTE. *Die deutschen Schriften* (The German Writings), ed. Denifle, pp. 289 ff.

Therefore he annihilates, crushes and sinks it into so deep a darkness that it feels itself melted away and, in view of its wretchedness, annihilated by a cruel death of the spirit.[15][16][17]

13.38 Just as if it felt itself swallowed by a very wild beast and chewed in its dark stomach[18].

JAKOB BÖHME AND THEOSOPHY

Böhme's fiery wrath of God is a genuine intuition of the tremendum, mistaken for speculative science.

13.39 But the non-rational, fearful, indeed daemonic side of the numinous becomes most vividly alive in our own mysticism too, in Jakob Böhme. However much Böhme takes up the motifs of the older mysticism, he differs greatly from it in his speculation and theosophy. By means of these he wants to construct and understand God himself, and from God the world: Eckhart wanted that too; and for Böhme too the first point of departure for speculation is the primal ground—or rather the *Ungrund*, the groundless—that which is beyond concepts and unutterable. But for him this is not being and super-being but urge and will; not the good and the super-good, but a non-rational indifference and identity of good-and-evil, in which the possibilities of both are supposed to be found, of good as of evil, and with them at the same time of the twofold form of the Godhead itself, as good-

15 OTTO'S NOTE. p. 358.
16 OTTO'S NOTE. Joannes a Cruce (John of the Cross), *Aufsteigung des Berges Carmel* (The Ascent of Mount Carmel; German translation by Modestus, 1671), p. 461.
17 OTTO'S NOTE. p. 465.
18 OTTO'S NOTE. p. 462.

ness and love and as fury and wrath[19]. Highly droll are the constructions and analogies by which a chemical-physical novel of God is composed here; but highly significant are the strange visions of religious feeling that lie behind them. They are intuitions of the numinous, and are akin to Luther's. Here too the nonrational "livingness" and *majestas* is grasped and given sensible form as "will." Here too its *tremendum*. And this too is here, at bottom, independent of concepts of *moral* loftiness or righteousness, and at first undetermined with regard to good or evil action. It is rather a "fierceness," a "fire-wrath"—one does not know about what, or rather not about anything at all: a wrath in itself, a natural determinacy that, taken seriously in the sense of real anger, conceptual and comprehensible, would be quite meaningless. Who does not see at once that it is simply the nonrational element of the *tremendum*, for which "wrath," "fire," "fury" is an excellent ideogram[20]? If such an ideogram is taken for an adequate concept, the result is the anthropomorphism of

19 OTTO'S NOTE. For him Lucifer "arises" (*urständet*) from the fierceness, and in Lucifer the mere potency of evil then becomes act. One could say he is the "fury," that is, the *orgē*, as hypostasis: the *mysterium tremendum* detaching itself and at the same time intensifying into the *mysterium horrendum*. And this has at least its roots in the Bible and the early church. Atonement, ransom, *apolytrōsis* (redemption) relate both to the divine wrath and to Satan. The rationalism of the myth of the "fallen angel" does not do justice to the dread of Satan, to the *bathea tou satana* (the "deep things of Satan") in Revelation 2:24, and to the *mystērion tēs anomias* (the "mystery of lawlessness") in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. Rather, this dread itself has something numinous about it, and its object would have to be called the negatively numinous. This holds not only for biblical religion. For the devilish plays its part in all religions whatever. Its essence lies in being what is opposed to God as something in some way akin to God; as the counterpart to the *numen* it undoubtedly belongs to the "essence of religion." It would need an investigation of its own, which, as an analysis of feeling that seeks the essence, would have to be something very different from a mere narrative of the "development of ideas of the devil."

20 OTTO'S NOTE. Jakob Böhme's disciple John Pordage has a sense of this when he writes (*Göttliche und wahre Metaphysica* 1, 166): So I hope you will not be angry with me when you find in what follows that I attribute astringency, bitterness, anguish, wrath, fire … and the like to God. For Jakob Böhme too found no other words to express his lofty divine *feeling*. You must, then, take all (such) expressions in a lofty divine sense, far from all imperfection.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. John Pordage (1607–1681), English clergyman and follower of Böhme; his *Divine and True Metaphysics* appeared in German translation.

Lactantius and of myth. If one then speculates from such concepts, the result is the pseudo-science of theosophy. For precisely this is the hallmark of all theosophy: that in it the merely analogical expressions of feeling are mistaken for rational concepts, these are then systematized, and out of them a monster of *science of God* is spun, which remains equally monstrous whether it is produced with the *termini* of scholastic school doctrine, as in Eckhart, or with the alchemical substances and mixtures of Paracelsus, as in Böhme, or with the categories of an animistic logic, as in Hegel, or with Indian flourishes, as in Mrs. Besant. Böhme is significant for the history of religion not because of his theosophy but because, behind it, a lively feeling of the numinous stirred in him as a valuable element, and in this respect he preserved a heritage of Luther himself that was lost in Luther's school.[21]

13.40 For that school itself did not do justice to the numinous in the Christian concept of God. It made holiness and the "wrath of God" one-sided through moralistic interpretation. From Johann Gerhard on, it took up the doctrine of *apatheia* again. From worship it withdrew more and more the truly contemplative, specifically "devotional" elements. The conceptual and the doctrinaire, the ideal of doctrine, outweighed the unutterable in the devout mood, which lives only in feeling. The church became a school, and what it had to communicate reached the mind, as Tyrrell put it, more and more only "through the narrow slit of the understanding."[22]

13.41 It was Schleiermacher who first attempted to overcome this rationalism—most boldly and brashly in the rhapsody of his *Speeches*, more coolly and in a lower key in his *Glaubenslehre* (The Christian Faith) and in his theory of the feeling of absolute dependence, which indeed, as set out above, represents a first stirring of the feeling of the numinous. It will be the task of

21 Annie Besant (1847–1933), British leader of the Theosophical Society, which drew heavily on Indian religious ideas.

22 Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) was the leading dogmatician of Lutheran orthodoxy; George Tyrrell (1861–1909), an Irish Jesuit and Catholic modernist.

present-day dogmatics to follow in his footsteps and to permeate the rational in the Christian concept of God once more with its non-rational elements, so as to give it its depth[23].[24][25]

23 OTTO'S NOTE. On the remarks about Luther, cf. R. Otto, *Die Anschauung vom heiligen Geiste bei Luther*, pp. 85–89.

24 OTTO'S NOTE. Bergson's "fluid concepts," too, are really ideograms of aesthetic and religious feelings and intuitions. Because he confuses them with scientific concepts, the result in him is the same mixture of "idea" and "experience" for which Schiller criticized Goethe.—Cf. R. Otto, *Goethe und Darwin*, Göttingen 1909.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. An allusion to Schiller's famous remark to Goethe in 1794 about the "primal plant": "That is not an experience, that is an idea."

25 Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799) and *The Christian Faith* (1821–22).

Chapter 14: Developments

Kapitel 14. Entwicklungen
How the numinous grows richer in itself and is rationalized and moralized into the holy.

KAPITEL 14. ENTWICKLUNGEN.

14.1 Its depth—which must not become its clouding or diminishing. For without the rational elements, and especially without the clear moral elements that Protestantism above all emphasizes in the concept of God, the holy would not be the holy of Christianity. In the full resonance of the word "holy," as we find it above all in the New Testament and as it is now fixed exclusively for our religious feeling for language, the holy is never again merely the numinous as such, not even at its highest stage, but always what is completely permeated and saturated with rational, purposive, personal and moral elements. And it is in the sense of this combination that we keep to the term in what follows and use it. Only in order to understand the historical development clearly, let us once more make the following clear to ourselves.

14.2 What early religious feeling first grasps in the form of "daemonic dread," and what then unfolds further for it, intensifies and is ennobled, is from the outset not—or not yet—something rational, nor something moral, but something distinctive, precisely something non-rational, to which the mind responds in its own way with the particular reflexes of feeling we have described. And this element, in itself, even apart from the process of its rationalization and moralization that sets in at early stages, goes through a course of development of its own. "Dae-

monic dread," itself passing through many stages[1], rises to the stage of "fear of the gods" and fear of God. The *daimonion* (the daemonic) becomes the *theion* (the divine). Awe becomes devotion. The scattered, confusedly flaring feelings become *religio*. Dread becomes holy shuddering. The relative feelings of dependence on the *numen* and of bliss in it become absolute. The false correspondences and associations are dissolved or pushed aside. The *numen* becomes God and Godhead. To it the predicate *qadosh*, *sanctus*, *hagios*, holy, then belongs in the first and most immediate meaning of these terms, as the numinous pure and simple and absolute.—This development, which takes place at first purely within the sphere of the non-rational itself, is the first main element that it is the task of the history of religion and of the general psychology of religion to trace.

14.3 As a coordinate task, we must then trace how, not quite but almost at the same time as that development, the rationalization and moralization of the numinous now also take place. This process too we can still trace, stage by stage, in the most varied areas of the history of religion. Almost everywhere the numinous draws to itself the ideas of social as well as individual ideals of obligation, justice and the good. These become the "will" of the *numen*, and it becomes their guardian, ordainer and founder. And more and more they enter into its very essence and moralize it. The "holy" becomes "good," and the "good" thereby becomes "holy," becomes "sacrosanct," until an indissoluble fusion of the two elements results, and with it the fuller, complex sense of holy, in which it is good and sacrosanct at once. What distinguishes the religion of ancient Israel, at least from Amos on, is precisely the intimate union of these two elements. No god is like Israel's God. For he is the Holy One pure and simple. But on the other hand, too, no law is like Yahweh's law, for it is not merely good, it is likewise "holy."—The ever clearer, ever more powerful rationalization and moralization of

1 OTTO'S NOTE. Such stages, purely within the numinous itself, we have encountered, for example, in its element of *mysterium*, as the *mirum*, the *paradoxon* and the antinomic.

the numinous is itself the most essential part of what we call "salvation history" and honor as the ever-growing self-revelation of the divine. At the same time, however, it becomes clear to us that the "ethicization of the idea of God," so often presented to us as a main problem and basic feature of the history of religion, is by no means a displacement of the numinous, a replacement of it by something else—what resulted from that would be no God, but a substitute for God—but a *filling* of it with a new content; that is, it takes place within the numinous.

Chapter 15: The Holy as an A Priori Category, Part One

Kapitel 15. Das Heilige als Kategorie a priori. Erster Teil
The holy as a complex category, and the numinous as a pure idea arising from the mind itself.

KAPITEL 15. DAS HEILIGE ALS KATEGORIE A PRIORI. ERSTER TEIL.

15.1 The holy in the full sense of the word is thus, for us, a composite category. The elements that compose it are its rational and its non-rational components. But in respect of both elements it is—and this must be maintained with all rigor against all sensualism and all evolutionism—a purely *a priori* category.

15.2 The rational ideas of absoluteness, perfection, necessity and essence, and likewise the idea of the good as an objective value of objectively binding validity, cannot be "evolved" out of any sense perception whatever. And all "epigenesis," "heterogony" and whatever else the compromise and makeshift terms here may be called merely cover up the problem. Here, as so often, the flight into Greek is only an admission of one's own inadequacy. Here we are turned away entirely from all sense experience and directed back to what, independently of all "perception," is laid down in "pure reason," in the spirit itself, as its most original endowment.

15.3 But the *non-rational* elements of our category of the holy direct us to something deeper still than "pure reason," at least in its usual sense: namely, to what mysticism has rightly called the "ground of the soul." The ideas of the numinous and the feelings

answering to them are, just like the rational ones, absolutely pure ideas and feelings, to which the marks that Kant gives for "pure" concepts and for the "pure" feeling of respect apply with the utmost exactness. The famous opening words of the *Critique of Pure Reason* run:

15.4 That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt at all: for how else should the faculty of knowledge be awakened into exercise, if not through objects that *affect* our senses... But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience.

15.5 And even with regard to empirical knowledge he then distinguishes, from what we receive through impressions, that which our own faculty of knowledge, merely prompted by sense impressions, supplies out of itself.

15.6 Of this kind is the numinous. It breaks forth from the deepest ground of knowledge in the soul itself—certainly not before or without worldly and sensory data and experiences, but in them and among them. But it does not arise out of them; it arises only *through* them. They are the stimulus and the "occasion" for it to stir, and at first, naively and immediately, to weave and entwine itself into the worldly and sensory itself, until, in gradual purification, it thrusts this away and sets itself in sheer opposition to it. The proof that in the numinous we are dealing with elements of knowledge that are purely *a priori* must be furnished by self-reflection and a "critique of reason." We find laid down in it convictions and feelings that differ in kind from anything "natural" sense perception can give us. They are not themselves sense perceptions, but strange *interpretations* and *valuations*, first of what is given in sense perception and then, at a higher stage, positings of objects and entities that no longer belong to the world of sense perception but are thought of as added to it and above it. And just as they are not sense perceptions themselves, neither are they "transformations" of sense perceptions. The only transformation possible with regard to sense perception is the passage from the concrete, intuitive content of perceptions in general to the concept corresponding to

them—never the transformation of *one* class of perceptions into a qualitatively *different* class of reality. Thus they point back—as Kant's "pure concepts of the understanding" and the moral and aesthetic ideas and valuations already do—to a hidden, independent source of the formation of ideas and feelings, lying in the mind itself, independent of sense experience: to a "pure reason" in the deepest sense, which, because of the overabounding character of its contents, must be distinguished as something higher or deeper even from Kant's pure theoretical and pure practical reason.

15.7 The legitimate claim of present-day evolutionary theory, too, lies in its wanting to "explain" the phenomenon called religion. That is indeed the task of the science of religion. But in order to explain, one must have something given at the outset from which to explain. Out of nothing, nothing can be explained. Nature can be explained only from natural fundamental forces given at the outset and from their laws, which have to be sought out. To want to explain these in turn is meaningless. In the realm of the spirit, however, such a first thing from which I explain is the rational spirit itself, with its predispositions, powers and laws, which I must presuppose but which I cannot myself explain. How spirit "is made" cannot be said. But that is basically what the theory of epigenesis would like to attempt. Human history begins with the human being. We presuppose the human being in order to understand history from him. And we presuppose him as a being that corresponds sufficiently to ourselves in predispositions and powers; for to immerse oneself in the emotional life of a *Pithecanthropus* is a hopeless business. Even the stirrings of the animal soul we can interpret only by faint analogy and by working back from the developed mind itself. But to want to understand and derive the developed mind from them would mean making the lock into the key, illuminating the clear from the obscure. The very first flash of conscious life in dead matter is already an inexplicable, simple datum. And even what flashes up here is already a qualified manifold, which we must interpret as an endowment com-

parable to seeds, out of which, with increasing bodily organization, ever more mature faculties break forth. And the whole realm of the subhuman soul receives some light only when we interpret it, once again, as a "predisposition" to the predisposition of the developed mind itself, standing to it as the embryo does to the grown form. But what "predisposition" means is not wholly dark to us. For in our own awakening and growing up to maturity of mind we follow in ourselves, to some extent, the unfolding of the predisposition into maturity, of the seed into the tree—which is neither transformation nor the mere addition of something new[1].

15.8 We call this source a hidden *predisposition* of the human spirit, which awakens when it is stirred by stimuli. That such "predispositions" exist in particular individuals—and with them aptitudes for religion and a predestination toward it, which can also spontaneously become instinctive intimation and seeking, restless groping and yearning desire, a religious *impulse* that comes to rest only once it has become clear about itself and has found its goal—no one can deny who has seriously engaged with the psychology of religion. The states of "prevenient grace" arise from it. Suso describes them masterfully[2]: Lovely, tender Lord! From the days of my childhood my mind has sought something with a hurrying thirst, Lord, and what it is I have not yet fully grasped. Lord, for many years now I have hotly pursued it, and it has never truly become mine, for I do not really know what it is. And yet it is something that draws my heart and my soul after

1 OTTO'S NOTE. In physics, the counterpart to these relations in the life of the spirit is the relation of potential to kinetic energy. Admittedly, the assumption of such a relation in the world of spirit can be asked only of someone who can bring himself to accept, as the ultimate ground of all spirit whatever in the world, absolute spirit as *actus purus* (pure act), of which that spirit is, as Leibniz says, the *ellampatio* (outshining). But does not everything potential, here as elsewhere, presuppose the *actus* as the ground of its possibility, as Aristotle already showed? So spirit developing in the world presupposes absolute spirit as the ground of its possibility. And it is inconsistent to demand, as people do, that in the physical world the starting point be the *actus*, understood as a system of stored energy whose conversion into kinetic energy is supposed to be this whole play of worlds, but not to demand the same in the world of spirit.

2 OTTO'S NOTE. *Werke*, ed. Denifle, p. 311.

it, and without which I can never be brought into true rest. Lord, in the first days of my childhood I wanted to seek it in creatures, as I saw (others) doing before me. And the more I sought, the less I found. And the nearer I went, the farther I moved away from it … Now my heart rages after it, for I would so gladly have it … Alas … what is it, or what is its nature, this thing that plays so secretly within me? And Augustine says, *Confessions* 10.20: How do they all know it, that they long for it so? Where did they see it, that they love it? We have it, I do not know how.—(Compare Book 10 of the *Confessions* as a whole.) These are expressions of a *predisposition* that becomes a seeking, an impulse. But if the "fundamental biogenetic law"—that the stages and elements of an individual's formation point back to those of its species—has ever really held anywhere, it holds here.[3] The *predisposition* that human reason brought with it when the human species entered history also became for it, once upon a time, partly through stimuli from outside and partly through its own pressure from within, an *impulse*—the religious impulse. In groping stirrings, in searching formation of representations, in an ever-advancing production of ideas, this impulse seeks to become clear about itself, and it does become clear through the unfolding of the obscure a priori basis of ideas itself, from which it also sprang[4]. And this stirring, this seeking, this producing and self-unfolding provides the warp for the development of religion in history; the weft added to it we shall discuss later.

3 The "biogenetic law" is Ernst Haeckel's thesis that the development of the individual recapitulates that of its species.

4 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare what Kant says in his lectures on psychology (Leipzig edition, 1889, p. 11) about the "treasure lying in the field of obscure representations, which makes up the deep abyss of human knowledge that we cannot reach." This "deep abyss" is precisely the "ground of the soul" that stirs in Suso.

Chapter 16: Its Manifestation in History

Kapitel 16. Ihr geschichtliches Auftreten
Magic, the cult of the dead, souls, powers, demons and gods: the numinous in the beginnings of religion.

KAPITEL 16. IHR GESCHICHTLICHES AUFTRETEN.

16.1 Only on the basis of such assumptions does the historical emergence and further development of religion become intelligible to us. It must be conceded that at the beginning of the development of the history of religion there stand certain strange things. They precede it like a forecourt and afterward continue to work deep within it: things such as the concepts of clean and unclean, belief in the dead and worship of the dead, belief in souls and the cult of souls, magic, fairy tale and myth, the veneration of natural objects—frightening or strange, harmful or useful—the peculiar idea of "power" (*orenda*), fetishism and totemism, animal and plant cults, daemonism and polydaemonism. In all these things, however different they are from one another, there haunts, perceptibly, a common element that can well be grasped—and it is a numinous one.[1] They did not originally arise from this element; perhaps they all had an earlier stage at which they were nothing but merely "natural" products of the primitive imagination of a naive early age. But these products then receive a weft of a distinctly peculiar kind. Only through it do they become the forecourt of the history of religion; only this weft makes them into distinct formations, and

1 *Orenda*: an Iroquoian word for an impersonal power inherent in persons and things, used in the ethnology of the period.

only it gives them the tremendous power over people's minds that history everywhere proves. Let us try to grasp this weft.

MAGIC, THE DEAD AND SOULS

Magic, the cult of the dead and belief in souls become religious only through the numinous element.

16.2 1. Let us begin with magic. There is at all times, and still today, a "natural" magic: simple make-believe and analogical actions, performed quite unreflectively and according to no theory at all, in order to influence and regulate some event as one wishes, even though the event itself lies entirely outside the reach of these actions. You can observe this at any bowling alley. The bowler throws his ball. He has taken aim, and he wants the ball to come in from the side and sweep away the "wreath" of pins. Tensely he watches the ball's course. He tilts his head and upper body to one side, balances on one leg, and, when the ball reaches the critical point of the lane, swings with a jerk to the other side, pushes after it with hand and foot, and gives one last jerk. And now he has done it. After all its perils, the ball runs in true.—What was the man doing? He was not imitating the ball's course; he wanted to prescribe and determine it for the ball. But he did so obviously without any reflection on his comical behavior, without the "conviction of early peoples that everything is ensouled"—in this case, that the ball is ensouled—or that there is a sympathetic connection between his own "soul" power and the soul of the ball. He was simply performing a naive *analogical action* to fulfill a particular wish. —The antics of many "rainmakers," the weather-makers' naive attempts to influence the course of sun and moon, clouds and winds, are in many cases nothing else—and at the very beginning were perhaps everywhere nothing else—than such naive analogical actions. But it is clear that as long as they are nothing else, they are not magic in the proper sense at all. A new, distinctive weft must be added: the element usually called "supernatural effect." At first, however, the matter has nothing whatever to do with the "super-nat-

ural"; this expression is far too grand and asks far too much of the naive mind. The concept of nature, as a nexus of events governed by laws, is the most difficult and the last thing that abstraction arrives at. And it would have to have been found, or at least dimly sensed, if its negation, "the supernatural," is to come about. Nor is anything whatever explained by "soul" power, as Wundt would have it. For, first, it is now generally recognized that magic is independent of belief in souls and was probably there before it. And second, what matters here is not at all by what *class* of powers—"soul" powers or others—but by what *quality* of powers the magical effect is brought about. This quality, however, can be designated only by the "daemonic," *which* people attribute to certain operations of power, whether these are strong or weak, extraordinary or quite trivial, exercised by a soul or by something that is not a soul. The quality can be indicated only by that peculiar element of feeling, the "uncanny," of which we have spoken, whose positive content cannot be defined conceptually at all and can be designated only by the response in the mind that we have called "dread."

16.3 2. It is the same with the cult of the dead. It does not arise from a theory of "ensoulment," according to which early peoples think of the lifeless, and hence also the dead, as alive and capable of acting. This whole doctrine of a supposed universal ensoulment, which on top of that is crudely mixed and welded together with the entirely different "belief in souls," is nothing but a creature of the writing desk. The dead person becomes significant for the mind when, and only when, he becomes something "gruesome" to it. This happens to the naive, and to those who are no longer naive, with such immediate compulsion of feeling that we are used to accepting it as self-evident. And so once again we entirely fail to notice that in valuing something as "gruesome" a quite independent, thoroughly distinctive content of feeling emerges here too, which the mere fact of being dead does not explain. The "naturally" given responses of feeling to the dead are evidently of only two kinds. On the one hand, disgust at what is decaying, stinking, repulsive. On the other, the

disturbance and inhibition of one's own will to live, the fear of death, the horror that sets in immediately at the sight of a dead body, especially one of one's own species. Both reactions are found even in animals. I observed this very vividly when, on a solitary ride, we suddenly came upon a fallen horse, and my excellent Diana recognized her dead fellow creature and showed every sign of the most natural horror. But these two elements of feeling are absolutely not in themselves the "art of shuddering." That is something new and, as our fairy tale rightly says, must be "learned." That is, it is not simply present along with the other, "natural" functions of the mind, disgust or horror, nor can it be obtained from them analytically. It is an "awe" of an entirely distinctive kind. And even with regard to it, we must deny that we are dealing here with a "folk-psychological" element—that is, with something general that could be presupposed everywhere from the outset as a self-evident mass feeling.[2] Rather, beyond doubt, here too it was at first especially gifted individuals who actually possessed such feelings and then, by expressing them, awakened them in others. Even awe of the dead, and then the cult of the dead, are "foundations."

16.4 3. Further, it could perhaps be shown that ideas of "souls" did not need, in order to arise, the imaginative intermediate steps the animists tell us about. But the origin of the representational content of "souls" is not the important thing about the matter at all; again, it is the qualitative element of feeling in relation to them. This does not lie in their being thinner or less easily visible than the body, or even invisible or airy: often they are all of these, and just as often none of them, and mostly they both are and are not. Their essence does not lie at all in their imaginative or conceptual dressing-up, but first and foremost in the fact that they are a "haunting"—and to begin with, on that side of them that arouses "awe," as described above. But haunting, again, is not explained by "natural" feelings. Nor is the further development explained whereby these "somethings,"

2 The Grimms' tale of the youth who went out to learn how to shudder ("das Gruseln").

always regarded with very lively awe (that is the only conceptual core one can really give them), later become beings that are positively venerated and loved, beings that can rise to become heroes, *pitṛs* (ancestral spirits), daemons, saints, gods.

16.5 4. "Power" (*orenda*) may have a very natural preliminary stage. That people observe power in plants, stones and natural objects and appropriate it by possessing them, that they eat the heart or the liver of an animal or a human being in order to appropriate its power and strength—that is not religion but science. Our medicine proceeds by the same recipe. If the power of calves' thyroid glands is good against goiter and mental deficiency, then who knows what we may yet hope for from toads' brains and Jews' livers! Everything here depends on observation, and in this respect our medicine differs from that of the medicine man only in being more precise and having the method of experiment. "Power" enters the forecourt of religion, and its appropriation becomes "communion rites," "sacraments" as people like to say, only when the idea of "magic," of the "magical," settles into it.

16.6 5. Volcanoes, mountain peaks, moon, sun and clouds are held to be alive by the naive, not as a result of a "naive theory of universal ensoulment" or of "panthelism," but by exactly the same criterion that we ourselves apply whenever, besides our own living self—the only living thing we can observe directly—we acknowledge living things outside ourselves: namely, if and insofar as we believe we notice in them—whether rightly or wrongly is, again, merely a matter of more precise observation—living activity and action. By this criterion *those* natural objects can become living things for the naive observer. But even that does not of itself lead to myth or religion at all. Purely as living beings, those entities are still by no means "gods."[3] Indeed, they do not become gods even when people turn to them with wishes and requests. For requesting is not yet praying, and trust need not be religious. They become gods only when the category of

3 "Panthelism" (all-will-ism): Wundt's term for the view that everything is animated by will.

the numinous is applied to them. And this happens only when, first, people try to influence them by numinous means, namely by magic, and when, second, they at the same time take the manner of their operation to be numinous, namely magical.

16.7 6. The "fairy tale" presupposes the "natural" urge to imagine, to tell stories and to entertain, and the products of that urge. But it becomes a fairy tale proper only through the element of the "wonderful"—through miracles and miraculous events and effects, through a numinous weft. And this holds in heightened measure of myth.

THE DAEMON AND THE UNCANNY

The first independent beginning of religion is the daemon, born of the feeling that a place is uncanny.

16.8 7. All the elements named so far are only the forecourt of religious feeling, a first stirring of the numinous, which appears here in mixtures according to laws of the correspondence of feelings that could easily be specified for each individual case. A truly independent beginning is formed only by the emergence of the daemon. Its most genuine form still lies before us in those strange "ancient Arabian" deities, which are really nothing but wandering demonstrative pronouns: neither "shaped by myth," for most of them have none at all, nor "developed out of nature deities," nor grown out of "souls"—and yet at the same time deities of very powerful effect and very lively veneration. They are pure products of religious feeling itself. And with them it is clearest of all that they did not arise from the collective creation of the mass imagination, not from a "folk psyche," but were visions of prophetic natures. To these *numina* there always belongs the *kāhin,* the primitive original form of the prophet. Only he experiences a *numen* at first hand. And where and when it has "revealed" itself through such a person, cult and cultic community arise. A *numen* requires a seer, and without one there is no *numen*.[4]

4 *Kāhin*: the soothsayer of pre-Islamic Arabia, cognate with Hebrew *kohen* (priest).

16.9 8. "Clean" and "unclean" exist already in a natural sense. Unclean is what triggers strong feelings of natural *disgust*: the disgusting. And feelings of disgust have great power over people precisely at early stages. "What the farmer doesn't know, he won't eat." They are probably endowments of natural selection itself, which in such feelings of disgust gave the emerging human being instinctive safeguards for many important vital functions. Culture then "refines" the feelings of disgust by diverting them onto other objects: it takes the disgust away from many things that carry it for people living close to nature, and directs it for the first time onto many objects that are not "disgusting" for them. This refinement is at the same time a weakening in degree of strength. We no longer feel disgust with the robust, vigorous and drastic energy of early peoples. In this respect a clear difference can still be observed today between our more rustic rural population and our urban, more refined one. We are disgusted by many things that are harmless to the countryman. But what the countryman is disgusted by, he is disgusted by more thoroughly than we are.—Now, again, there is a very strong correspondence between strong feelings of disgust and the feeling of the "gruesome." And from this, by the law that corresponding feelings attract one another, it becomes immediately clear to us how the "natural" unclean was bound to grow into the domain of the numinous. Once one holds the key to the problem—namely, that correspondence and this law—one can practically construct the actual course of things here a priori. We ourselves still experience the matter quite directly today in our disgust at blood. At the sight of streaming blood we too react in such a way that it is hard to say which is stronger in our reaction: the element of disgust or that of dread.

16.10 When later the more developed elements of "awe" emerged, and the higher ideas of the daemonic and the divine, of *sacer* and *sanctus* (the sacred and the holy), took shape, things could then become "unclean"—that is, negatively numinous—even where nothing "naturally" unclean was present or served as a starting point. And it is instructive for the relation of the

"correspondence of feelings" that now, conversely, the feeling of the numinous-unclean is also immediately and easily joined by the natural feelings of disgust, so that things become disgusting that were originally not disgusting at all but numinously gruesome. Indeed, such feelings of disgust can persist independently for a long time after the numinous awe that once called them forth has itself long since died away. This occasionally explains social feelings of disgust—caste feelings, for example—which once had a purely daemonic root but persist even when the root has long since withered.

16.11 9. The examples 1–8 may be called "pre-religion," but they are not that in the sense that religion and its possibility could be explained by them. On the contrary, they themselves are possible and explicable only from a fundamental religious element, namely the feeling of the numinous. This, however, is a primary element of the psyche, which must be grasped purely in its distinctiveness and cannot itself be "explained" from others. Like all other primary elements of the psyche, it emerges in its own time in the development of human mental life and is then simply there. It can doubtless emerge only when certain conditions are fulfilled: conditions of the development of the bodily organs, of the other powers of the soul, of the more general life of feeling, of the capacities for irritability and spontaneity, of the capacity to receive impressions from and to experience things outer and inner. But such conditions are conditions, not causes or elements. And to acknowledge this is not to shunt the matter off into mystery or into supernaturalism; it is merely to assert of it the same thing that holds of all the other primary elements of our psyche. Pleasure or pain, love or hate, all the faculties of sense perception such as sensitivity to light, sensitivity to sound, the sense of space and the sense of time, and then further all the higher powers of the soul—these appear, doubtless according to laws and under definite conditions, in the course of development in their own time. But each of them is in itself something new and underivable, and can be "explained" only insofar as we assume, underlying the development, a spiritual

principle rich in potencies, which in them brings forth its own nature ever more richly, to the extent that the conditions of the development of the organs and the brain are given. And so it is with the feeling of the numinous as well.

16.12 10. The purest case of spontaneous arousal of the feeling of the numinous, however, seems to us to be the one named in no. 7. It is so especially significant for the development of religion because here, from the outset, religious feeling does not let itself be diverted (by the stimuli of the association of feelings) onto earthly, this-worldly things by mistakenly taking them for numinous. Instead, it either remains pure feeling, as in "panic terror," or else invents (or better, discovers) the numinous object itself, by unfolding its own obscure germs of representation. And precisely this case is still to some extent accessible to our empathy and insight—as is the transition from mere feeling to its unfolding and to the positing of the numinous object. There is surely no one with a living capacity for feeling who has not at some time or in some place felt truly "uncanny." Anyone capable of closer psychological insight must notice the following about such a state of mind. First, its distinctive and underivable character, which we have already discussed. Second, the very strange circumstance that the external occasions of this state of mind are often quite slight—often so slight that one can hardly account for them—and that they frequently bear no relation at all to the strength of the impression itself. Indeed, one can often hardly speak of an "impression" here, at most of a trigger and an occasion, so far does the experience of feeling itself surpass, in force and gripping power, everything that the particular circumstances of time or place have to impress us. Rather, this shudder, this dread, break out from depths of the soul to which those circumstances do not reach down at all, and the force of their outbreak so far outweighs the mere push from outside that the outbreak is, if not wholly, then almost spontaneous. But this already implies, third, that in this process distinctive, independent contents of representation—even if of a wholly obscure and germinal kind—must have been stimulated or awakened, and

that these are the real ground of the emotion of shuddering. For if such contents are not somehow given beforehand, emotions cannot occur at all.—Now, fourth, this state of mind can remain pure "feeling" and run its course as such, without unfolding its obscure contents of thought. If, still unfolded in this way, it puts itself into words, these are only something like an exclamation: "How uncanny!" or "How awe-inspiring this place is!" But it can also unfold. A first unfolding, even if still in merely negative expression, occurs as soon as one says something like, "Something isn't right here." And a transition to positive expression is the English: "This place is haunted." Here the obscure basis of ideas already emerges more distinctly and begins to become clear as a representation, however vague and fluid, of a something from beyond, of an entity, an operative reality of numinous character. In further development this will then take more concrete shape as a *numen loci* (spirit of the place), as a daemon, as an El, a Baal, or in some other way. Jacob says in Genesis 28:17:

16.13 How awe-inspiring this place is! / Truly, this is the dwelling of Elohim.

16.14 This verse is highly instructive for the psychology of religion: it is an example of what has just been said. Its first sentence clearly gives the impression on the mind itself, in its immediacy, not yet passed through reflection, still without any self-unfolding and self-clarification of the feeling. It contains nothing but the primal numinous shudder itself. In many cases this was doubtless enough to mark out "holy places" and make them sites of awed veneration, and even of developing cults, without people necessarily going on to resolve this impression of the awe-inspiring into the idea of a *numen* dwelling there, or without the *numen* becoming a *nomen* (a name), or without the *nomen* becoming more than a mere *pro-nomen* (a pronoun). Jacob's second sentence, however, no longer states the primal experience itself, but its unfolding and interpretation.

16.15 The German expression *Es spukt hier* (literally, "it haunts here") is also instructive. This expression really has no proper

subject yet; at least it says nothing at all about the "it" that haunts. The concrete ideas of our folk mythology—"ghost," "spirit," spirit of the dead or soul—are not in themselves contained in it at all. The sentence is rather purely an expression of the feeling of the uncanny itself, which is only just on the point of releasing from itself, as a first hint, the idea of a numinous something as such, of an entity from beyond. It is regrettable that for *spuken* we have no nobler and more general word, and that this one immediately diverts us into the realm of the "superstitious," impure offshoots of numinous feeling[5]. Yet even so we can sense the kinship of the feeling of haunting with those elementary numinous experiences through which, once upon a time, in visionary experience, "awe-inspiring," "holy" places possessed by the *numen* were discovered—these starting points of local cult, the birthplaces of the El worshiped there. We have the echo of such primal experiences precisely in Genesis 28:17, and also in Exodus 3. The places that Moses and Jacob mark out here are genuine "haunted places," places where "it haunts," where "something isn't right." Only this feeling of haunting does not then have the impoverished, degraded sense of our present-day feeling about ghosts, but still carries within it the whole wealth of potentialities and possibilities of development of the genuine primal numinous feeling. What is at issue here is a noble and refined haunting. And undoubtedly the slight shudder that can still seize us today in the stillness and half-light of our own present-day sanctuaries has an ultimate kinship not only with what Schiller names in the lines:

5 OTTO'S NOTE. We do have a somewhat artificial word for it: "Es *geistet* hier" ("a spirit is present here"), or "Wie es doch um diese Stätte *geistert*" ("how a spirit hovers about this place"). Such *geistern* is numinous presence without being low haunting. And at a pinch we might venture to translate Habakkuk 2:20: "Yahweh *geistet* [is present as spirit] in his holy temple. Let all the world be silent before him." The English "to haunt" is nobler than our *spuken*. One could say "Yahweh haunts his holy temple" without being downright blasphemous. Such spirit-presence is often what the Hebrew *shakan* means. And we probably bring Psalm 26:8, "the place where your glory dwells," more fully and genuinely home to feeling if we render it: "the place haunted by your majesty." —The *Shekhinah* is quite literally the spirit-presence of Yahweh in the temple at Jerusalem.

16.16 And into Poseidon's grove of pines / he steps with reverent *shudder*,[6]

16.17 but also with quite genuine feelings of haunting. And the faint chill that can accompany those states has an ultimate kinship with "gooseflesh," whose numinous nature we considered earlier.

16.18 When animism strains to derive the daemon and the god forcibly from "souls," it directs our gaze to the wrong place. If it asserted that they are "haunting things," it would at least be on the right track. This is shown in part even now by a few archaic terms that once referred to the original shudder of "noble haunting," and that could therefore later become designations for both the very lowest and the very highest forms of "awe." One such is the enigmatic Sanskrit word *asura*. *Asura* is the awe-inspiring in the sense in which Jacob uses the word: the "uncanny." Later, in Indian usage, it is a technical term for the ghostly, spectral, daemonic of a low order. But at the same time, in very ancient times, it is an epithet of the most exalted of all the gods of the Rig Veda, the uncannily lofty Varuna. And in the Persian "Ahura Mazda" it becomes the name of the one eternal deity itself[7]. And so too with the term *adbhuta*. One experiences an *adbhuta* when one "is in an empty house," as an old definition

6 From Schiller's ballad "The Cranes of Ibycus" (1797).

7 OTTO'S NOTE. Such shifts of meaning did not take place only in hoary antiquity; quite comparable ones have occurred recently in our own language. In the eighteenth century *schauderhaft* still fully means the mysterious-numinous in general, also in the sense of reverent awe. It means much the same as our present-day *schauervoll* (awe-inspiring). Only later does it sink to designating the wicked and abominable, the negatively numinous; at the same time it becomes shallow and trivial, loses its numinous sense and ring altogether, and today hardly designates anything that makes one shudder, only something that annoys one: "Es ist schauderhaftes Wetter" ("The weather is dreadful").

says[8]. It is the experience of what we call the creeps. But on the other hand *adbhuta* is also the name for the wholly supramundane wonder and its *fascinans*—indeed, for the eternal Brahman and its salvation itself, for "the *adbhutam* that surpasses all words"[3]. What holds for *asura* and *adbhuta* perhaps holds also for the Greek *theós*. Its root is perhaps the same as that of *getwās*, which is still found in Middle German and means haunting and ghost. Here too an ancient original word for the numinous-uncanny (for "noble haunting") seems on the one hand to have risen to the dignity of a designation for God, and on the other to have sunk into the merely ghostly.—Indeed, even in Hebrew the development was perhaps once the same. For the "spirit," the ghost of the dead Samuel whom the witch of Endor makes rise up for Saul (1 Samuel 28:13), is called by the same name as the deity itself: Elohim.

HIGH GODS AMONG PEOPLES WITHOUT WRITING

Otto explains Andrew Lang's "high gods" as intimations arising from an a priori predisposition.

16.19 11. On the basis of our assumption of an a priori basis of ideas in feeling, we finally also find the explanation of those interesting phenomena to which Andrew Lang[9] has rightly drawn attention. They do not, it is true, support the assumption of "primitive monotheism"—that brainchild of missionary apologetics, which would like to rescue the second chapter of the

8 OTTO'S NOTE. *A-dbhuta* means *ἄρρητον* (the unutterable), the unsayable, the incomprehensible. It is first of all exactly our *mysterium stupendum* (the stupefying mystery), while *asura* is the *tremendum*. [3] Compare R. Otto, *Dīpikā*, p. 46.—*Adbhuta* (and *āścarya*) would be an exact Sanskrit translation of our "numinous" if it had not long since, like our "wonderful," absorbed a mass of profane trivializations.—Compare, incidentally, the study of the feeling (*rasa*) of *adbhuta*, as distinct from those of the terrible, the heroic, the fearful and the disgusting, in Bharata Muni, in M. Lindenau, *Beiträge zur altindischen Rasa-Lehre*, Leipzig 1913.

9 OTTO'S NOTE. *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, 1899.—*The Making of Religion*, 1902.—*Magic and Religion*, 1901.—Compare also P. W. Schmidt, *Grundlinien einer Vergleichung der Religionen und Mythologien der austronesischen Völker*, Vienna 1910, in *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Vienna, Philosophical-Historical Class, vol. 53.

Bible, yet feels a modern embarrassment at Yahweh's strolling in the garden in the cool of the evening. But they do point to things that remain simply enigmatic from the standpoint of animism, panthelism and other naturalistic accounts of religion, and that are therefore disposed of by forced assumptions.[10] For in numerous mythologies and tales of peoples without writing we find strands woven in that reach far beyond the level of their other religious rites and customs: ideas of great gods, to whom people in practice often refer not at all or hardly at all, and to whom, almost involuntarily, a dignity is nevertheless granted that surpasses that of all other mythical figures and can echo the divine in the highest sense. That they have passed through a mythical past is sometimes recognizable, sometimes not. What is characteristic of them, and enigmatic, is the way they tower above the general level. Where theistic preaching is brought by missions, such supreme deities are easily and often recognized as God, and they offer the missionaries' preaching points of contact. And converts afterward may well confess that they had indeed known God but had not honored him.—It is true that such phenomena are *occasionally* explained by earlier influences of higher theistic religions carried in from elsewhere, and this is sometimes even proved by the name found for those high beings. But even in this form the phenomenon is very strange. What moves people of tribal societies, in an otherwise quite different milieu of crude superstition, to take up and *hold fast* such "carried-in" ideas, unless there were in the minds of these people themselves a disposition for them—one that does not allow them to let these ideas go, that rather compels them at least to take an interest in preserving and passing them on, and very often to feel and acknowledge the testimony for them in their own conscience? On the other hand, the hypothesis that the ideas were carried in is undoubtedly impossible for many of these phenomena and can be brought in only by force. In these cases we are clearly dealing with intimations that run ahead and

10 Andrew Lang (1844–1912), Scottish writer and folklorist, who pointed to "high gods" among early peoples.

with anticipations. Under the pressure of a strongly operative predisposition of ideas within reason, these are not surprising—indeed, as occasional occurrences they are to be expected and natural, as natural as, say, the achievements of Roma music in an otherwise very rudimentary cultural setting, under the pressure of a strong natural gift for music—but without that predisposition they would remain sheer riddles.

16.20 Here and in other cases the naturalistic psychologists overlook or suppress a fact that would at least be of psychological interest, and that they could notice in themselves with sharper self-observation: namely, the *self-testimony* in one's own mind to religious ideas. It is admittedly more robust in the naive than in those who are no longer naive, but many a person would recognize it in himself if he were willing, say, to recall quite calmly and objectively even just his own—confirmation classes. But what the mind bears "witness" to, it can also, under favorable circumstances, bring forth from itself in stirrings of intimation.—The advocates of primitive monotheism, on the other hand, neglect this fact just as much. For if the phenomena mentioned rested on nothing but historical traditions and dimmed memories of a "historical primal revelation," there could no more be this self-testimony from within.

16.21 On the whole of chapter 16, compare the essay by Alfred Vierkandt that has since appeared, "Das Heilige in den primitiven Religionen" (The Holy in Primitive Religions), in the journal *Die Dioskuren*, 1922, pp. 285ff. The arguments of this chapter could not have received a more welcome confirmation than they have in this study.

Chapter 17: The Elements of the “Crude”

Kapitel 17. Die Momente des ‘Rohen’
What remains raw in early religion, and why the numinous cannot be explained away by it.

KAPITEL 17. DIE MOMENTE DES ‘ROHEN’.

17.1 Underivability and apriority, however, hold fully even of those primitive and “crude” first stirrings of “daemonic dread” that stand at the beginning of the history of religion and of its historical development. *Religion begins with itself*, and it is already at work in its own “preliminary stages” of the mythical and the daemonic. What is primitive and crude here lies only in the following circumstances:

17.2 a) In the emergence and awakening of the individual elements of the numinous, which takes place only gradually and one after another. For only gradually, and along a chain of stimuli setting in very slowly one after another, does the numinous unroll *its* full content. But where the whole is not yet present, its initial and partial elements, awakened in isolation, naturally have something bizarre, unintelligible, often even grotesque about them. This holds in particular of the religious element that, it seems, was the very first to awaken in human emotional life: daemonic dread. Taken by itself and in isolation, it must naturally look more like the opposite of religion than like religion itself. Isolated from its accompanying elements, it seems more like a terrible autosuggestion, a kind of “folk-psychological” nightmare, than something that has to do with religion; and the beings to which it refers seem to be mere phantoms of a sick elemental imagination suffering from a kind of persecution

mania. One can understand how some scholars could seriously imagine that "religion" once began with devil worship, and that the devil is at bottom older than God.—It is also because the individual aspects and elements of the numinous awaken step by step, one after another, that classifying religions by *genus* and *species* is so difficult, and turns out differently for everyone who attempts it. For what is to be classified here does not, for the most part, behave at all like distinct species within the same genus—that is, according to the criteria of an *analytic* unity—but like partial elements of a *synthetic* unity. It is as if a great fish were beginning to become visible above the surface of the water only in parts, and one then tried to classify the curve of its back, the tip of its tail and its head spouting jets of water by species and genus, instead of arriving at an understanding of the nature of these appearances by recognizing them, in their place and in their connection, as members of *one* whole—a whole one must oneself have grasped before one grasps its parts.

17.3 b) The "primitive" lies, further, in the as yet merely fitful and occasional character of the first stirring. And then in its indistinctness, which at the same time gives occasion for false confusions and mixtures with "natural" feelings.

17.4 c) It lies, further, in the fact that valuation according to the element of the numinous attaches, at first and quite naturally, to objects, events or entities within the world, which by analogies "occasion" the stirrings of numinous feeling and divert it onto themselves. It is chiefly in this circumstance that what has been called nature worship and the deification of natural objects has its roots. Only gradually, and under the pressure of numinous feeling itself, are such connections then in time "spiritualized" or finally cast off altogether; and only then does the obscure content of the feeling, which is directed at supramundane being as such, come to light independently and purely.

17.5 d) It lies in the uncontrolled, fanaticizing, enthusiastic form in which it first seizes the mind and appears as religious mania, as possession by the *numen*, as frenzy and raving. e) It lies quite essentially in the *false* schematizations of itself, in its

being embedded in things that are similar to it but inwardly do not belong to it, of which examples have been given above.

17.6 f) It lies, finally and above all, in the rationalization, moralization and cultivation still lacking at this stage, which come only gradually.

17.7 In content, however, even the first stirring of daemonic dread is an element purely a priori. In this respect it is entirely comparable to aesthetic judgment and the category of the beautiful. However completely different the experiences of the mind are when an object is recognized as "beautiful" and when one is recognized as "gruesome," both cases nevertheless agree in this: I attribute to the object a predicate—namely, a predicate of significance—which sense experience does not give me, and cannot give me at all, but which I rather ascribe to it spontaneously from my own judging. In perception I grasp in the object only its sensory determinations and its spatial form, nothing more. That in these, and because of them, it possesses that real *significance* which I designate as "beautiful"—or indeed that there is any such significance at all—these elements can in no way tell me or give me. I must have an obscure concept of "the beautiful itself," and in addition a principle of subsumption according to which I attribute it; otherwise even the simplest experience of something beautiful is not possible. And this correspondence goes further still: just as joy in the beautiful has an analogy to mere pleasure in the agreeable, yet stands out from it in distinct qualitative difference and underivability, so it is with the relation of specifically religious awe to merely natural fear.—

17.8 The state of "crudeness" is overcome as the *numen* "reveals" itself ever more strongly and fully—that is, makes itself known to the mind and to feeling. Quite essential to this is also its being filled with rational elements, named under f, through which it at the same time enters the domain of the comprehensible. Yet on its numinous side it preserves all the elements of non-rational "incomprehensibility" mentioned, and only intensifies them the more it "reveals" itself. For "revealing oneself" by no means means passing over into comprehensibility by the

understanding. Something can be, at its deepest, known to feeling, familiar, blissful or shattering, for which the understanding nonetheless has no concept at all. Knowing and conceptual understanding are not the same; indeed, they often stand in mutually exclusive opposition. And the mysterious darkness of the *numen* means anything but that it is unknown. The *Deus absconditus et incomprehensibilis* (the hidden and incomprehensible God) was truly no *deus ignotus* (unknown god) for Luther. He "knew" him only too well, with all the terrors and shudders of the despairing heart. And Paul likewise well "knows" the "peace" that is nonetheless, in its full incomprehensibility, "beyond all understanding."

17.9 "God cannot be comprehended, and yet one feels him," says Luther.[1]

1 OTTO'S NOTE. *Table Talk*, Weimar edition 6, no. 6530.

Chapter 18: The Holy as an A Priori Category, Part Two

Kapitel 18. Das Heilige als Kategorie a priori. Zweiter Teil
How rational and non-rational elements belong together a priori in the complete idea of the holy.

KAPITEL 18. DAS HEILIGE ALS KATEGORIE A PRIORI. ZWEITER TEIL.

18.1 1. Thus both the rational and the non-rational elements of the complex category of the "holy" are a priori elements, and the latter are so to the same degree as the former. Religion holds no fief from anyone, neither from *telos* nor from *ethos*, and it does not live on postulates. The non-rational in it, too, has its own independent roots in the hidden depths of the spirit itself.

18.2 Finally, and thirdly, the same holds of the combination of the rational and non-rational elements in religion, that is, of the inner necessity of their belonging together. Histories of religion do report, with a certain matter-of-factness, how these elements gradually interpenetrate and how the divine becomes moralized. And to feeling this process is indeed something "self-evident," whose inner necessity feeling itself *sees plainly*. But the inward self-evidence of this process is itself a problem. We cannot solve it at all without assuming an obscure a priori knowledge that these elements essentially and necessarily belong together. For *logically* necessary this belonging is by no means. How should it follow *logically* from the still "crude," half-daemonic nature of a moon god or sun god or a local *numen* that it becomes a guardian of oaths, of truthfulness, of the validity of

contracts, of hospitality, of the sanctity of marriage, of the duties owed to tribe and clan? Or that it becomes a god who dispenses good and ill fortune, shares the concerns of the tribe, provides for its welfare, and directs destiny and history? Whence this most surprising fact in the history of religion? Beings that were evidently born, in the beginning, of dread and terror become gods: beings to whom one prays, to whom one entrusts one's sorrow and one's happiness, in whom one sees the origin and sanction of custom, law, right and the canon of law. And this always happens in such a way that, once such ideas have awakened, it is at the same time understood as the simplest, *most evident* matter of course that this is so. At the end of Book 2 of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates says:

18.3 For God is simple, true in deed and word; he does not change himself and deceives no one.

18.4 And Adeimantus answers him:

18.5 Now that you say it, it becomes / quite clear to me too.

18.6 What matters most in this passage is not the loftiness and purity of the concept of God expressed here. Nor is it the high degree of rationalization and moralization this concept has undergone. It is, in Socrates, the apparently "dogmatic" character of his statement, for he does not take the slightest trouble to give grounds for his proposition. And it is, in Adeimantus, the naively surprised yet entirely confident assent to something new to him. His assent comes, moreover, in the manner of being *convinced*. He does not *believe* Socrates; he *sees it for himself*. That is the mark of all a priori knowledge: once a statement has been clearly expressed and understood, such knowledge arrives with the certainty of one's own insight into its truth. And what took place here between Socrates and Adeimantus has been repeated again and again in the history of religion. Amos, too, when he proclaims Yahweh as the God of unbending and universal justice pure and simple, is saying something new. Yet it is something he neither proves nor supports by appeal to authorities. He appeals to a priori judgments, namely to the religious conscience itself. And this conscience does in fact bear witness.

Luther, too, well knows and asserts such an a priori knowledge of the divine. Usually, it is true, his fury at that prostitute, reason, leads him to statements to the contrary: "That is a knowledge a posteriori, where one looks at God from outside, at his works and his rule, as one looks at a castle or a house from outside and thereby senses the lord or master of the house. But a priori, from within, no human wisdom has ever yet been able to see what and how God is in himself or in his inward being. Nor can anyone know or say anything of it, except those to whom it is revealed by the Holy Spirit."[1] (He overlooks here that one either "senses" the "master of the house" a priori, adding him to what one sees, or not at all.) Elsewhere, however, he himself grants universal human reason a great deal of knowledge of precisely what God "is in himself or in his own essential being": "And natural reason itself is compelled to grant it, *convinced by its own judgment* (*proprio suo iudicio convicta*), even if there were no *Scripture*. For all people find this proposition written in their hearts, and *acknowledge* it as proven, though unwillingly, when they *hear* it discussed: first, that God is almighty … then, that he knows and foreknows all things and can neither err nor be deceived. Once these two have been granted in heart and mind …" What is interesting in this statement is the *proprio suo iudicio convicta* ("convinced by its own judgment"). For this distinguishes *knowledge* from mere "innate ideas" or from supernaturally inspired notions, both of which can produce only "thoughts," not "convictions *ex proprio iudicio*" (from one's own judgment). Equally interesting is the *cum audiant eam tractari* ("when they hear it discussed"), which corresponds exactly to

1 OTTO'S NOTE. Erlangen edition 9, 2.

the experience of Adeimantus: "Now that you say it, it becomes quite clear to me too."[2],[3]

18.7 Missionaries have this same experience often enough. Once the ideas of the unity and the goodness of the divine have been expressed and understood, they often take hold astonishingly quickly, provided there is any religious feeling at all in the hearers. The hearers then frequently adapt their own religious tradition to these ideas. Or, where people do resist the new teaching, they often do so under noticeable pressure from their own conscience. Such experiences have been reported to me by missionaries among Tibetans and among Africans. It would be interesting to collect experiences of this kind. They bear on the question in general, and especially on the a priori religious knowledge that the rational elements of the idea of God belong inwardly and essentially together with its non-rational ones. The history of religion itself bears almost unanimous witness to this. For however deficient the moralization of the *numina* may have

2 OTTO'S NOTE. The most instructive passages in Luther in this respect are those on "faith." There faith is described as a distinctive cognitive faculty for grasping divine truth, and as such it is set against the "natural" powers of the understanding, just as "spirit" is elsewhere. "Faith" here is the same as the *synteresis* of the mystics' theory of knowledge and Augustine's "inner teacher." Both are indeed "above reason," yet both are an a priori within ourselves.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. *Synteresis*: in medieval thought, the innate spark of conscience, the soul's inborn grasp of first principles.

3 OTTO'S NOTE. Weimar edition 18, 719. Compare also *Table Talk*, Weimar edition 5, no. 5820: "Knowledge of God has been imprinted by God on the minds of all people. That there is a God, all people know without any acquaintance with the arts and sciences, with nature alone as their guide, and this has been imprinted by God on the minds of all people. There has never been a people so wild and brutal that it did not believe there is some divinity that created all things. Therefore Paul says: The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divinity. Therefore all the pagans knew that there is a God, however much they were Epicureans, however much they contended that there is no God. In denying that there is a God, have they not at the same time confessed that there is a God? For no one can deny what he does not know … Therefore, even though some have spent their whole lives in the most shameful deeds and crimes, and lived exactly as if there were no God, they could never cast out of their minds the conscience that testifies and affirms that there is a God. And although that conscience was for a time suppressed by depraved and perverse opinions, it nevertheless returns and convicts them at their last breath."

been in their various "wild" regions, traces of it are found everywhere. And wherever religion has emerged from its first crudeness and risen to a higher religion, this process of fusion has everywhere set in with the most decided force and has continued. This is all the more remarkable when one considers how different were the data from which the imaginative shaping of divine figures started, and amid what differences of race, natural disposition, and social and political conditions their development took place. All this points to a priori elements that lie universally and necessarily in the human spirit. These are the elements we find again directly in our own religious conscience when we too, like Adeimantus, quite naively and spontaneously assent to Socrates' words as something self-evident, something we have seen for ourselves: "God is simple, true in deed and word."

HOW THE RATIONAL SCHEMATIZES THE NUMINOUS

Wrath schematizes the tremendum, grace the fascinans, and absoluteness the mirum.

18.8 2. As the rational elements join the non-rational ones according to a priori principles in the development of religion, the former schematize the latter. This holds generally of the relation of the rational side of the holy as a whole to its non-rational side as a whole. But it also holds, in detail, of the individual component elements of the two sides. The *tremendum*, the repelling element of the numinous, is schematized by the rational ideas of justice, moral will and the exclusion of what is contrary to morality. Thus schematized, it becomes the holy "wrath of God" that Scripture and Christian preaching proclaim. The *fascinans*, the element of the numinous that draws us irresistibly to it, is schematized by goodness, mercy and love. Thus schematized, it becomes that rich, full essence of "grace," which enters into a harmony of contrast with holy wrath and, like wrath, takes on a mystical coloring from the numinous thread woven into it. The element of the *mirum*, however, is schematized by the *absolute-*

ness of all the rational predicates of the Godhead. At first glance the correspondence between these two elements will probably not be as immediately evident as in the two preceding cases. But it too is a very exact one. God's rational predicates differ from the same predicates of created spirit in that they are not relative, as those are, but absolute. That is, they differ not in content but in form. Human love is relative, a matter of degree, and so are human knowing and goodness. But God's love and knowing, and whatever else can be said of him in concepts, have the form of absoluteness. It is this formal element of the predicates, their content being the same, that marks them out as divine. But the mysterious as such is also a *formal element*. It is, as we saw on page 38, the form belonging to the "wholly other." And to this clear correspondence between the two there is added a further one. Our power of comprehension grasps only the relative. The absolute, which is its opposite, we can indeed think, but we cannot think it through to the end. It falls within the reach of our conceptual faculty, but it exceeds the limits of our power of comprehension. This does not yet make it genuinely mysterious in itself, as was explained on page 29, but it does make it a genuine schema of the mysterious. The absolute is beyond our full grasp; the mysterious is beyond grasp altogether. The absolute is what exceeds the limits of our comprehension not through its quality itself, for that is quite familiar to us, but through the form of that quality. The mysterious, however, is what exceeds all thinkability whatever and is the "wholly other" in form, quality and essence.—So with regard to the element of the mysterious in the numinous, too, the correspondence of its schema is a very exact one, and one that could well be developed further.—

18.9 When the non-rational elements in a religion always remain awake and alive, this preserves it from becoming rationalism. When it is richly saturated with rational elements, this preserves it from sinking into fanaticism or mysticism or remaining stuck in them, and only this makes it capable of becoming a religion of quality, of culture and of humanity. That both elements are present, in sound and beautiful harmony, is

again a standard by which the superiority of a religion can be measured, and a genuinely *religious* standard at that. By this standard, too, Christianity is absolutely superior to its sister religions on earth. On a deeply non-rational foundation rises the luminous edifice of its pure and clear concepts, feelings and experiences. The non-rational is only its ground and border and weft. In this way it always preserves Christianity's mystical depth and gives the *religion* in it the deep tones and heavy shadows of mysticism, without its *religion* tipping over into mysticism itself and running riot. And so Christianity, in the sound relation of its elements, takes on the form of the classical and the noble. This form testifies to feeling all the more vividly, the more honestly and impartially one draws Christianity into the comparison of religions. One then recognizes that in it, in a special, and superior, way, an element of the life of the human spirit has come to maturity that nonetheless has its analogues elsewhere as well.

Chapter 19: The Holy as It Appears: The Faculty of Divination

Kapitel 19. Das Heilige in der Erscheinung
Recognizing the holy in events and persons; Schleiermacher and Goethe on divination.

KAPITEL 19. DAS HEILIGE IN DER ERSCHEINUNG.

19.1 It is one thing merely to believe in something beyond the senses, and another to experience it as well. It is one thing to have ideas about the holy, and another to become aware of it and perceive it as something at work, holding sway, entering into manifestation through its working. That the second is possible too is a fundamental conviction of all religions and of religion itself. It is not only the inner voice, the religious conscience, the softly whispering spirit in the heart, feeling, intimation and longing that bear witness to the holy. One can also encounter it in particular occurrences, events, persons, in active manifestations of self-revelation: besides inner revelation from the spirit, there is an outer revelation of the divine. Such active manifestations, such appearances of the holy in perceptible self-revelation, are what the language of religion calls "signs." From the time of the most primitive religion onward, anything has counted as a sign that was capable of stirring the feeling of the holy in human beings, of arousing it and making it break forth. It included all those elements and circumstances discussed above: the fearful, the sublime, the overpowering, the startling and striking, and above all the uncomprehended and mysterious, which became the *portentum* (portent) and the *miraculum*

(miracle). All these circumstances, however, as we saw, were not signs in the true sense. They were merely occasions for religious feeling to stir of its own accord. And what caused this lay in an element of mere similarity between all these circumstances and the holy. That they were interpreted as real manifestations of the holy itself was a confusion of the category of the holy with something that only outwardly corresponded to it. It was not yet a genuine "anamnesis," a genuine recognition of the holy itself in its manifestation. That is why, at stages of high development and pure religious judgment, they are thrust aside again and rejected, wholly or partly, as inadequate or as downright unworthy.—There is an exactly parallel process in another domain of judgment, namely in the domain of taste. In crude taste, too, a feeling or presentiment of the beautiful already stirs. It must come from an obscure concept of the beautiful already possessed a priori, for otherwise it could not occur at all. Taste that is still crude likewise applies the obscure concept of the beautiful at first only by way of "confusion," not yet from genuine, correct anamnesis, and so takes things for beautiful that are not beautiful at all. Here too the principle of this still false application lies in certain elements of the thing wrongly judged beautiful, elements that form nearer or more distant analogies to the beautiful itself. Once taste has been trained, it here too later thrusts away, with strong aversion, what is merely analogous but not itself beautiful. It becomes able to see and judge correctly. That is, it recognizes as beautiful the outward thing in which there really "appears" that of which taste inwardly has an idea, namely a standard.

THE FACULTY OF DIVINATION

Otto asks whether people can genuinely recognize the holy when it appears in events and persons.

19.2 The possible faculty of genuinely recognizing and acknowledging the holy in its manifestation we shall call divination. Is there such a thing, and of what kind is it?

19.3 For the supernaturalist theory the matter is simple enough. Here divination consists in coming upon an occurrence that *cannot* be explained "naturally," that is, by the laws of nature. Yet it takes place. It cannot take place without a cause, and it has no natural one; so, it is said, it must have a supernatural one.—This theory of divination and of the "sign" is genuine theory in massive concepts, a strict proof and strictly meant as such. It is massively rationalistic. And the *understanding*, the faculty of reflecting in concepts and proofs, is here claimed as the faculty of divination. The supramundane is proved as stiffly and strictly as one proves anything else logically from data.

19.4 It is almost superfluous to argue at length against this view that we have no means whatever of establishing that an occurrence did not arise from natural causes, that is, that it was against the laws of nature. Religious feeling itself rebels against this stiffening and materializing of the most delicate thing in religion: the very encountering and finding of God. For there is one place where compulsion by proofs, and confusion with logical or legal procedure, is excluded if it is excluded anywhere. There is one place where there is freedom, acknowledgment and heartfelt assent, springing from the freest stirring of the innermost depths, without theory and concept, if there is such a place anywhere. It is where a person becomes aware of the holy at work, in what happens to himself or to others, in nature or in history. It is not "natural science" or "metaphysics" but mature religious feeling itself that thrusts away such massive constructions. Born of rationalism, they beget rationalism; they not only hinder genuine divination but cast suspicion on it as enthusiasm, mysticism or romanticism. Genuine divination has nothing whatever to do with natural law, or with whether or not something relates to it. It does not ask at all how an occurrence, be it event, person or thing, *came about*. It asks about its significance: namely, its significance as a "sign" of the holy.

19.5 In devotional and dogmatic language the faculty of divination hides under the beautiful name of the *testimonium spiritus*

sancti internum, the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit (which is there restricted to acknowledging *Scripture* as holy). And this name is the only correct one, and correct in no merely figurative sense, if one grasps and judges the capacity for divination itself by divination, that is, according to religious ideas of eternal truth itself. In plain psychological terms, however, we are speaking here of a "faculty," and we must discuss it psychologically.

19.6 As such, it was discovered on the theological side, and made intelligible *against* supernaturalism and rationalism, by three men. Schleiermacher did so in his *Speeches on Religion* of 1799. Jakob Friedrich Fries did so in his doctrine of *Ahndung* (intimation). And de Wette, Schleiermacher's colleague and Fries's pupil, did so with particular reference to the divination of the divine in history, as an "intimation of the divine government of the world." In my edition, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*,[1] I discussed Schleiermacher's discovery in more detail at the end, on pp. xviii f. And in my book *The Kantian-Friesian Philosophy of Religion and Its Application to Theology*[2] I set out the more precise form of the doctrine of *Ahndung* as it appears in Fries and de Wette.[3] For a fuller account I therefore refer the reader to these two works. Here I will only briefly sum up the following elements to characterize this doctrine.

19.7 What Schleiermacher has in mind is, quite properly, the faculty of absorbed *contemplation* before the great life of the whole and before reality in nature and history. Where a mind opens itself, in devotion and depth, to the impressions of the "universe," it becomes capable, so he teaches, of experiencing intuitions and feelings of something that is, as it were, a peculiar, "free" surplus over empirical reality. This surplus is not captured by theoretical knowledge of the world and its connections, as that knowledge takes shape in science. Yet it is

1 OTTO'S NOTE. Fourth edition, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1920.
2 OTTO'S NOTE. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909.
3 Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849), theologian and biblical critic. *Ahndung* is an older form of *Ahnung*, "intimation."

supremely real, tangible and livable for intuition, and it takes form itself in individual intuitions, which Schleiermacher himself calls "intuitions" (*Anschauungen*). These intuitions also take shape as definite, formulable statements and propositions that resemble theoretical statements. But they are clearly distinguished from these by their free, purely feeling-based character. They are themselves only tentative, interpretive and analogical. They cannot be used as "doctrinal statements" in the strict sense, and they can neither be systematized nor serve as major premises for theoretical deductions. They are analogical, not adequate, in nature. Within this limitation, however, they are undoubtedly *true* in nature, and despite Schleiermacher's resistance to the term they would have to be called "knowledge," though knowledge of an intuitive, feeling-based kind, not of a reflective kind. Their content, however, is this: in and through the temporal an eternal that shines through it is apprehended, and in and through the empirical a supra-empirical ground and meaning of things. They are *impressions* of something mysterious and rich in intimation. And it is significant that Schleiermacher himself occasionally uses, alongside his main concepts of intuition and feeling, the term "intimating" (*Ahnden*) as well. He also expressly brings in prophetic divination and the recognition of "miracle" in the religious sense, that is, of the "sign."

19.8 When, in his discussions, he tries to make his object clear to feeling through examples, he mostly arrives at impressions of a higher *telos*, of an ultimate, mysterious purposiveness of the world, of which an intimation dawns on us. In this respect he agrees entirely with Fries's account, which defines the faculty of intimation outright as a faculty for divining the "objective teleology of the world." And de Wette then does this still more decidedly. But in Schleiermacher this rational element is clearly embedded in a ground of eternal mystery, of the *non-rational* in the ground of the world. This shows in his interpretations of the experience, which are always only tentative and never wholly satisfying even to himself. And it stirs especially powerfully when Schleiermacher, in the face of nature, experiences such

impressions less through the rational, intelligible, universal lawfulness of the world, which can be interpreted by ideas of purpose, than through what appears to us as a puzzling "exception" to it, and thereby points to a meaning and value of the thing that eludes our understanding.[4]

19.9 An intellectual, dialectical exposition and justification of such intuition is not possible at all. Indeed, it must not even be attempted, since it would destroy its very essence. Rather, intuition of this kind has its clearest counterpart in aesthetic judgments. And the faculty of judgment Schleiermacher presupposes here evidently belongs to the "power of judgment" that Kant analyzes in his third *Critique*. Kant sets it, as aesthetic judgment, over against logical judgment. But one must not infer from this that the judgments it makes are judgments of "taste" in their *content*. Kant's distinction, too, is primarily and in general *not* meant to say that the faculty of aesthetic judgment is a judging about "aesthetic" things in the special sense of our aesthetics. With this predicate he first of all simply distinguishes, quite generally, the faculty of judging by feeling as such from the faculty of the understanding, that is, from discursive conceptual thinking, inferring and concluding. And he names as its peculiarity precisely this: unlike logical judgment, it proceeds not according to clear principles of the understanding but according to "obscure" ones, which cannot be unfolded into major premises but are only "felt." For such obscure principles of judgments from pure feeling he occasionally also uses the term "unexplicated concepts," and by this he means exactly what the poet means with the words:

19.10 "You awaken the power of *dark feelings* / that slept wondrously in the heart."[5]

19.11 or:

4 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare the work cited, p. 53 d.

5 Schiller, "The Power of Song" ("Die Macht des Gesanges").

19.12 "What, unknown to people
or not considered,
through the labyrinth of the breast
wanders in the night."[6]

19.13 On the other hand, such judgments from pure contemplation and feeling again resemble judgments of taste in that they too definitely claim to be objectively valid, and in that with them too one can arrive at universal validity and necessity. The seemingly subjective, purely individual character of the judgment of taste is expressed in the maxim "*De gustibus non disputandum*" (there is no disputing about tastes). But it exists only because stages of taste at different levels of cultivation and maturity are compared with one another, then quarrel and cannot agree. To the degree that taste matures and is exercised, however, here too the judgment of taste grows more unanimous. Indeed, here too there arises the possibility of discussion, of instruction, of ever more correct insight, of persuasion and conviction. And it is just the same with judgments from contemplation. Where contemplation itself deepens and becomes more inward, is practiced with skill and rests on a genuine gift for it, one can "discuss." One can "bring to feeling" what one feels oneself and how one feels it; one can train oneself in genuine and true feeling and guide others to it. And in this domain, that is the counterpart of argument and persuasion in the domain of logical proof.

19.14 Schleiermacher's great discovery suffers from two defects. The first is that he presupposes, without examination and naively, that this faculty of divination is universal. It is not universal even in the sense that it could necessarily be presupposed in everyone who holds religious convictions. Schleiermacher is quite right, to be sure, to count it among the faculties of rational spirit as such, and even to regard it as the deepest and most distinctive of them. And in this sense it may also be called a "universally human" element, since we define the human being by "rational spirit." But what is universally human

6 Goethe, "To the Moon" ("An den Mond").

is by no means possessed universally and by every person *in actu* (in actuality). Very often it comes to light only in the form of the outstanding gifts and endowment of individuals, of those especially graced. And in his account of the nature and task of "the mediators" in his first speech,[7] Schleiermacher himself admirably points to this true state of affairs. (This passage in fact contains a theory of prophecy and of the gift of the prophetic calling, even if it is shaped in a thoroughly romantic and absurdly metaphysical way.) Only divinatory natures possess this faculty of divination *in actu*. It is not humanity in general, as rationalism thinks, nor the undifferentiated mass of similar subjects interacting with one another, as modern folk psychology imagines, that receive and carry the impressions of the supramundane.[8][9]

GOETHE AND THE DAEMONIC

Goethe's talk of the daemonic is genuine divination of the numinous, though at a pre-religious level.

19.15 It is questionable whether Schleiermacher himself, despite his discovery of divination, was a genuinely divinatory nature, although he claims this for himself in his first speech. At any rate, another man of his time was decidedly his superior in this gift: Goethe. In Goethe's life, divination, vividly exercised, plays a significant part. Its curious expression is his view of the daemonic, which he sets out with such emphasis in *Poetry and Truth*, Book 20, and in his conversations with Eckermann. Let us examine it briefly.—What is most distinctive in his notion of the daemonic is that it goes beyond every "concept," beyond "under-

7 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare *On Religion*, in my edition, p. 3.

8 OTTO'S NOTE. And this undoubtedly holds even of the lowest stages of the first primitive stirring of "religious awe" and its imaginative products. To derive them from an original group and mass fantasy working communally is itself fantasy. And this fantasy in part produces results that differ little in drollery and bizarreness from those of the other.

9 "Folk psychology" (*Völkerpsychologie*), the psychology of peoples, was associated above all with Wilhelm Wundt, who derived myth and religion from the collective imagination of the group.

standing and reason," and is therefore not really expressible but "incomprehensible":[10]

19.16 The daemonic is that which cannot be resolved by understanding and reason.—It likes to choose somewhat dark times. In a clear, prosaic city like Berlin it would hardly find occasion to manifest itself.—In poetry there is decidedly something daemonic, and especially in unconscious poetry, where understanding and reason all fall short, and which therefore works so far beyond all *concepts*. It likewise works in music in the highest degree, for music stands so high that no *understanding* can reach it. An effect goes out from it that masters everything, and of which (yet) no one is able to give an *account*. Religious worship therefore cannot do without it either. It is one of the foremost means of acting on people *wondrously*.

19.17 "Does not the daemonic," asks Eckermann, "also appear in events?"

19.18 "Very much so," said Goethe, "and indeed in all those that we cannot resolve by understanding and reason. In general it manifests itself in the most varied ways throughout nature, in the visible as in the invisible. Some creatures are wholly daemonic in kind; in some, parts of it are at work." One sees how the elements of the numinous that we have found recur here in pure form: the wholly non-rational, what cannot be grasped by concepts, the mysterious, and the *fascinans*, the *tremendum*, the *energicum*. And its echo in the "creatures" recalls Job![11] ([1] Compare Job's hippopotamus!) On the other hand, Goethe's intuition of the mystery does not come remotely near Job's. For despite the warning of the book of Job, he nevertheless measures it by the rational, by understanding and reason, by concepts, namely by the concepts of human laws of purpose. And so for him the non-rational becomes a contradictory mixture of sense and nonsense, of what furthers and what destroys. At times he brings it

10 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare the Cotta edition of Goethe's *Complete Works*, vol. 25, pp. 124 ff.; and Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, ed. A. v. d. Linden, 1896, part II, pp. 140 ff.

11 OTTO'S NOTE. So only numinous, not "holy," people.

close to *wisdom*, for example when he says: "Thus there was decidedly something daemonic at work in my acquaintance with Schiller. We could have been brought together earlier, we could have been brought together later. But that we were brought together precisely at the period when I had my Italian journey behind me and Schiller was beginning to tire of philosophical speculation was significant, and of the greatest consequence for us both." And even close to the divine: "Things of this kind have often happened to me in my life. And in such cases one comes to believe in a higher influence, in something daemonic that one *worships* without presuming to want to explain it further." (E. II, 132). In any case, and always, it is "energy" and "overpoweringness," and it stamps itself on driven, overpowering people:—"Napoleon," I said, "seems to have been of a daemonic kind."—"He was so absolutely," said Goethe, "in the highest degree, so that hardly anyone else can be compared with him. The late Grand Duke, too, was a daemonic nature, full of boundless energy and *restlessness*."—"Does not Mephistopheles also have daemonic traits?"—"No, he is far too negative a being. The daemonic expresses itself in a thoroughly positive *energy*." And Goethe describes the impression such numinous persons make even better in *Poetry and Truth*, page 126. Here in particular our *tremendum* stands out as at once the "fearful" and the "overpowering": "But this daemonic appears *most fearful* when it emerges predominantly in some *human being*. These are not always the most outstanding people, either in intellect or in talents, and they seldom commend themselves by goodness of heart;[1] but an incredible power[12] goes out from them, and they exercise an incredible force over all creatures, indeed even over the elements. And who can say how far such an effect will extend?" But its effect is disconcerting even where it is beneficent. It is more restless urge than action, and in any case absolutely non-rational, as Goethe tries to describe in that chain of oppositions in *Poetry and Truth*, page 124: "something that manifested itself only in contradictions and therefore could be

12 OTTO'S NOTE. Compare below, on "impression."

brought under no concept, still less under a word. It was not divine, for it seemed without reason; not human, for it had no understanding; not devilish, for it was beneficent; not angelic, for it often showed malicious glee. It resembled chance, for it showed no consistency; it was like providence, for it pointed to connection. Everything that limits us seemed penetrable to it. It seemed to deal arbitrarily with the necessary elements of our existence; it contracted time and expanded space. It seemed to take pleasure only in the impossible and to thrust the possible away from itself with contempt."

19.19 Although this daemonic can manifest itself in everything corporeal and incorporeal, and indeed expresses itself most remarkably in animals, it stands above all in the most wondrous connection with human beings. It forms a power which, if not opposed to the moral order of the world, at least cuts across it, so that one could take the one for the warp and the other for the weft.

19.20 One could not express more vividly than this that one has performed a divination of the numinous with an immensely strong impression on the mind, and evidently not once but repeatedly, almost as a matter of routine. But it is a divination that does not grasp the numinous as the prophet grasps it. Nor does it stand at the height of Job's experience, where the non-rational and mysterious is at the same time experienced and praised as the deepest value and as holy *right in its own right*. It is the divination of a mind that was, after all, not deep enough for these depths. For such a mind, therefore, the counterpoint of the non-rational to the melody of life could sound only as a confused accompaniment, not as a harmony that, though indefinable, is palpably genuine. It is genuine divination, but the divination of the "pagan" Goethe, as he himself was occasionally wont to regard and call himself. Indeed, it moves only at the preliminary stage of the daemonic, not at the stage of the divine and holy itself. And the kind of daemonic that, as such, can occur in the emotional life of a more highly cultivated mind only in confusing reflections, more dazzling than illuminating

or warming, is described here in a way one can readily feel along with. He was unable to reconcile it with his own higher concepts of the divine, and when Eckermann brings the conversation round to this, he answers evasively:

19.21 —"Into the idea of the divine," I said, sounding him out,
"the active power we call the daemonic
does not seem to enter."
—"My dear child," said Goethe, "what do we really know of
the idea of the divine, and what can our
narrow concepts of the highest being tell us! Were I,
like a Turk, to call it by a hundred names,
I would still fall short and, compared with such
boundless attributes, would still have said nothing."

19.22 Leaving aside this much lower level, however, we then have precisely what Schleiermacher had in view: "intuitions and feelings," not indeed of something divine but of something numinous in nature and in events, and experienced most vividly by a divinatory nature. Here, though, divination does indeed take place as we indicated above, namely according to a principle that cannot be stated at all. For however many examples Goethe gives, he cannot say what the daemonic really is, by what he feels it, or by what he recognizes it again as the same in these motley and self-contradictory forms of its expression. It is evident that he is guided in this by "mere feeling," that is, by an *obscure* a priori principle.—

Chapter 20: Divination in Early Christianity

Kapitel 20. Divination im Urchristentume
The impression Jesus made on his circle, and why Christianity rests on that divination.

KAPITEL 20. DIVINATION IM URCHRISTENTUME.

20.1 We spoke above of one defect in Schleiermacher's doctrine of divination and set it out. The other defect is this. Schleiermacher knows how to describe divination in the face of world and history very warmly and vividly. But only in brief hints, not in detail and clearly, does he give it and leave it the object most worthy of it and most favorable to it: the history of religion itself, above all that of biblical religion, and its highest object and content, Christ himself. His final speech, it is true, introduces Christianity and Christ emphatically and significantly. But there Christ is only a subject of divination, not its real object. And so it remains in his later *Glaubenslehre* (*The Christian Faith*). Here too Christ's significance consists essentially in his "taking us up into the potency and bliss of his God-consciousness." This is a highly valuable thought, but it does not reach the chief value that Christ's community rightly attaches to him: namely, that he is himself "the holy made manifest." That is, he is the one in whose being, life and life's purpose we ourselves spontaneously "intuit and feel" the self-revealing working of the Godhead. For to the Christian the question matters whether a divination arises from the person and life's work of Christ: an immediate and direct apprehension of the holy in its manifesta-

tion, an "intuition and feeling" of it. That is, can the holy be experienced in him independently, so that he *is* a real revelation of it?

20.2 In this respect we are obviously not helped by the agonizing and, at bottom, impossible investigations into the "self-consciousness of Jesus" that have so often been undertaken. They are impossible if only because the statements in the Gospel accounts are neither sufficient nor even suitable material for this purpose. Jesus makes the "kingdom," its bliss and its righteousness, the content of his proclamation and his statements, not himself. And "gospel," in its first and simple sense, is the message of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom of God. Whatever statements about himself occur in Jesus's sayings are only occasional and fragmentary. But even if they were not, indeed even if we could find in him a detailed theory about himself, what would that prove! Religious enthusiasts have not infrequently resorted to the most exalted forms of self-description, often enough, no doubt, in full good faith in themselves. And if anything is, it is precisely such statements made by prophets of all ages about themselves that are, in their form, most dependent on the ideas of the time, on milieu, on the mythological or dogmatic apparatus of their surroundings. And when the prophet, inspired one or master in question applies them to himself, this proves only his sense of himself in general, his mission, his superiority and his claim to faith and obedience. These are all things that go without saying from the outset wherever someone rises up from an inner calling. Moreover, it is precisely what we are speaking of here that would *not* follow from any self-description. It may well awaken faith on authority, but it cannot bring about one's own experience, the spontaneous *insight* and acknowledgment that something holy is appearing here. "Now we *ourselves have come to know* that you are the Christ."

20.3 That such acknowledgment, arising from a spontaneous divination of their own, or at least a supposed one, was in any case accorded him by his own first community cannot be

doubted. Without it, the rise of the community would not be intelligible at all. Mere proclamation, mere authoritative self-description, does not produce such massive certainties, such strong impulses, such drive and power of self-assertion as were required for the Christian community to come into being, and as can be recognized directly as its essential feature.

20.4 One can fail to see this only if one tries, one-sidedly, to approach the event of the rise of the Christian community solely with philological means and reconstructions, and with the dulled feelings and capacities for feeling of our present-day culture and mentality, which has lost its naivety. It would be useful to add to these means and procedures an attempt to gain a more concrete picture, from living examples still to be found today, of how original and genuine religious conventicles and communities arise. For this one would have to seek out places and occasions where religion is still alive today as an elemental, instinctive and naive stirring and drive. In remote corners of the Islamic world, and of the Indian world too, this could probably still be studied today. And in the squares and streets of Mogador and Marrakesh one can still find scenes today that bear strange resemblances to those reported in the Synoptic Gospels. "Saints," mostly very odd ones, appear from time to time with bands of disciples around them. The people come and go around them to hear their sayings, to see their miracles, to observe their life and doings. Looser or firmer circles of followers form; "logia" (sayings), stories and legends take shape and are collected. Brotherhoods arise, or existing ones expand by a new circle. But the center is always the man himself, a "saint" in his own lifetime. And the kind and power of his personal being and of the impression he makes are always what carries the movement.[1] Experts assure us that ninety-eight percent of these "saints" are frauds. Well then, two percent are not: an astonishingly high percentage in a matter that, like this one, so strongly invites and facilitates fraud. And this remaining percentage

1 Mogador: the Moroccan port now called Essaouira. Otto traveled in North Africa in 1911.

would remain highly instructive for the phenomenon itself. Even the "saint," and the prophet, is for the experience of his circle more than a *psilos anthropos*, a "mere man." He is the mysterious wonder-being, who belongs somehow to the higher order of things and to the side of the *numen* itself. He does not teach that he is such; he is experienced as such. And only from such experiences, which may be crude and often enough self-deceptions but must be strong and deep, do religious communities arise.[2]

20.5 Such analogies are infinitely meager, and far removed from what once took place in Palestine. But if even they are possible only because the holy itself is experienced, really or supposedly, in individual personalities, how infinitely more must this have been the case there. That it was the case is attested, directly and as a whole, by the entire mood and conviction of the first community, as far as we can still trace it in its own modest documents. And individual smaller features in the synoptic picture of Jesus expressly confirm it in detail. Here belong, for example, the stories cited above of Peter's catch of fish and of the centurion of Capernaum, which point to spontaneous reflexes of feeling in the presence of the holy as experienced. Here belongs especially the passage Mark 10:32:

20.6 And Jesus went on ahead of them, and they were *amazed*; and those who followed were afraid.

20.7 Simply yet powerfully, it conveys the impression of the numinous that went out directly from this man. No art of psychological portrayal could do so more movingly than these mas-

2 OTTO'S NOTE. It is surprising that the main problem of Gospel criticism, the origin of the collection of sayings (*logia*), is not studied in this milieu, which is still alive today. It is more surprising still that no one has long since drawn on the chains of sayings from the closely corresponding milieu of the *apophthegmata tōn paterōn* [sayings of the Fathers], from the Hadith of Muhammad, or from the Franciscan legend. One might also draw on the collection of the sayings of Ramakrishna, which has taken shape before our own eyes, and on the circle around a George Fox or a Cyprien Vignes,

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. The *Apophthegmata Patrum* are the collected sayings of the early Christian desert monks of Egypt. Ramakrishna (1836–1886) was a Bengali mystic; George Fox (1624–1691) founded the Quakers.

terfully concise words. What was said later in John 20:28 may strike us as the expression of an age that reached too far and too high, already far removed from the simplicity of the first experience. Mark 10:32 will be dearer to us precisely because here feeling still disdains every formula. Yet the true root of all that came later is to be found here. Such hints occur in the narratives only incidentally, as it were; they hardly interest the narrator. His concern is the miracle story. All the more interesting are they for us. And how many similar experiences there must have been whose trace has vanished, because there was no miracle to tell, while the matter itself was all too self-evident to the narrator.—Here belongs, further, the belief in Jesus's superiority over the daemonic, and the tendency toward legend that set in at once. Here belongs the fact that his own relatives think him "possessed," an involuntary acknowledgment of the "numinous" impression he made. And here belongs, quite especially, the belief that he was "the Messiah," the numinous being as such for this circle: a belief that broke forth spontaneously and was gained by impression, not by teaching but by experience. The impressional, experiential character of this belief still emerges very vividly from Peter's first confession of the Messiah and Jesus's answer to it:

20.8 "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven."

20.9 Jesus himself is astonished at the confession. This proves that Peter's knowledge was not something learned on authority but something he found for himself, a *discovery*. It arose from the impression and from the testimony of that depth of the mind where it is not flesh and blood, and not the "word" either, that teaches, but "my Father in heaven" himself, without any intermediary.

20.10 For this latter must indeed be added. Without it every "impression" is ineffective; or rather, no impression can come about at all. That is why all theories of the "impression made by Christ" are inadequate if they fail to take account of this second element. In truth it is nothing other than the necessary predis-

position for experiencing the holy: the category of the holy itself, latent in the spirit, as an obscure a priori knowledge. "Impression" presupposes something that can be impressed. But the mind is no such thing if in itself it is only a "blank wax tablet." For by impression in the sense meant here we do not mean the mere *impressio* that, according to the doctrine of the sensationalists, perception makes on the soul and leaves behind as its trace. Rather, to receive an impression of someone means here to recognize and acknowledge in him a peculiar *significance*, to be gripped by it and to bow before it. That is possible only through an element of knowing, understanding and valuing that comes to meet it from one's own inner being: through the "Spirit from within." According to Schleiermacher, "revelation" requires an answering "intimation." Music is understood only by the musical, and only they receive its "impression." And to every distinct class of real impression there belongs a distinct and special kind of *congeniality*, akin to what makes the impression. Only one who is "conformed to the Word" (*verbo conformis*) —as Luther once says—understands the Word. Or: no one hears the Word unless the Spirit teaches within. Or, as Augustine says in *Confessions* 10.6:

20.11 But only those understand their speech who compare it with the judging truth that speaks within them.

20.12 (This is also the faculty of "judgment" of which we speak on page 199.)

20.13 Let us recall once more our example of the beautiful. A beautiful thing can make an impression in its significance as beautiful only if, and insofar as, a person has within them an a priori standard of their own valuing, namely aesthetic valuing. We can understand such a predisposition only as an original, obscure knowledge of the value of the beautiful itself. Because this is in a person, or better, because they are capable of it and of developing it, they are able to recognize beauty in a particular beautiful thing when they meet it, and to feel how this object corresponds to their hidden "standard." And that, precisely, is the "impression."

Chapter 21: Divination in Christianity Today

Kapitel 21. Divination im heutigen Christentume
Whether we can still recognize the holy in the figure of Christ, especially in the cross.

KAPITEL 21. DIVINATION IM HEUTIGEN CHRISTENTUME.

21.1 More important to us than the question whether the first community experienced, and could experience, the holy in and through Christ is another question: whether we too can still do so. That is, does the picture of his achievement, life and action, handed down to us in and through the community, have revelatory value and power for us ourselves? Or are we merely living off the inheritance of the first community, believing on the strength of authority and the testimony of others? The question would be quite hopeless if we could not share that understanding and interpreting from within, full of intimation: that testimony of the Spirit which is possible only on the basis of a predisposition for the category of the holy in the mind itself. If without this no understanding and no impression of Christ was possible even then, when he was directly present, how could any mediated tradition achieve it? But the case is quite different if we may make that assumption. Then the fragmentary state of the tradition, its frequent uncertainty, the admixture of legend and the overpainting with "Hellenistic" elements do us no harm. For the spirit recognizes what is of the spirit.

21.2 On this assisting, interpreting, intuitively responsive working of a principle from within—which in religious terms we

must regard as the "Spirit that bears witness with us"—I learned much from what a perceptive missionary in a very remote mission field told me. He said that it never ceased to astonish him how the proclamation of the Word could at times be grasped so astonishingly deeply and inwardly, although it was so inadequate, possible only in hints in a difficult foreign language, and worked with entirely alien concepts. Here too, he said, the best work was always done by the intuitive understanding that came to meet it from the hearer's own heart. And beyond doubt this alone gives us a key to understanding the problem of Paul. Only in shreds, fragments and caricatures could intimations of the nature and significance of Christ and his gospel reach this persecutor of the community. But the Spirit from within forced upon him the recognition to which he succumbed before Damascus. And it taught him that infinitely deep understanding of the appearance of Christ which leads us to admit, with Wellhausen, that at bottom no one understood Christ himself as fully and as deeply as Paul did.[1]

21.3 If an experience of the holy in and through Christ is to be possible and to support our faith, the first and self-evident condition is, to be sure, that his own first and most immediate achievement should still be directly intelligible to us and its value open to our experience, so that from it the impression of his "holiness" itself arises directly. But here a difficulty seems to arise which, unless it is removed, would cut the whole problem off from the start. It is the question whether what we today believe we possess in Christ and in Christianity is at bottom still the same at all as what he really meant to signify and achieve, and as what his first community experienced of his influence. The question is the same as whether Christianity really possesses a "principle" of its own which, though capable of development in history, has remained one with itself in essence, and so makes the Christianity of today and the faith of the first disciples commensurable magnitudes, alike in essence.

1 Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), German biblical scholar and orientalist.

IS CHRISTIANITY THE RELIGION OF JESUS?

Otto argues that Jesus's gospel of the kingdom was already, in germ, a religion of redemption.

21.4 Is Christianity at all, and in the strict sense, the religion of Jesus? That means, first: consider the religion we know today as Christianity, with its distinctive content of faith and feeling, as it stands before us as a historical magnitude, as it stands out from other religions and measures itself against them, as it uplifts, moves, accuses or blesses, attracts or repels human hearts and consciences today. Is it, in its essence and inner meaning, still the "so simple," modest religion and piety that Jesus himself had, and himself awakened and founded among those small, excited bands in that remote corner of the world, Galilee?—That it has changed very significantly in color and form since then, that it has undergone enormous changes and transformations, is surely generally admitted. But is there any enduring essence at all amid the flux of its appearances? Is there one and the same "principle" which, though capable of development, has remained one in itself? Is there development, or rather transformation, alteration, an inflow of something wholly foreign—lamented by some as corruption, admired by others as a welcome replacement, and recorded by still others as a simple historical fact?

21.5 Christianity as it stands before us today, as a great world religion actually in existence, is without doubt, in its claim and its promise, a "religion of redemption" in the most proper and primary sense. Salvation, and overabounding salvation; liberation from and overcoming of the "world," of existence bound to the world, indeed of creatureliness as such; overcoming of remoteness from God and enmity against God; redemption from bondage to sin and from the guilt of sin; reconciliation and expiation, and therefore grace and the doctrine of grace; the Spirit and the imparting of the Spirit; rebirth and the new creature: these are the concepts characteristic of it today, common to it

despite its manifold divisions into churches, confessions and sects. They characterize it, with all sharpness and definiteness, as the "religion of redemption" par excellence. In this respect it is fully comparable with the great religions of the East, with their sharply dualistic opposition of salvation and perdition. And it claims not to fall short of them in the need for redemption and the bestowal of salvation, but to surpass them both in the importance of these concepts and in their qualitative content. In these elements the Christianity of today undoubtedly has its "principle" and essence. The question now is whether these mighty contents of mood and feeling were really already the "principle" of that simple religion of Jesus whose founding must be called Christ's first and most immediate achievement.

21.6 We answer this question in the affirmative, but in doing so we point to the parable that is meant of the kingdom of God yet fits the principle of Christianity itself just as well: the parable of the mustard seed and the tree that grew from it. The parable points to change, for the tree is something other than the seed. But it is a change that is not transformation but passage from potency to act: genuine development, not "transmutation" or "epigenesis."

21.7 The religion of Jesus does not gradually turn into a religion of redemption. It is one by predisposition from the very beginning of its appearance—indeed in the most extreme sense, and, although it still almost entirely lacks the later terms for it, with all clarity. If we try, with the greatest possible historical sobriety and simplicity, to determine what is really characteristic of Jesus's preaching, two elements emerge. 1. From the outset and throughout, the preaching of the kingdom of God, not as an accompanying element but as the basic meaning of the whole. 2. The reaction against Pharisaism that characterizes Jesus's gospel, and, bound up with it, the ideal of his piety as the disposition and temper of a child, grounded in guilt forgiven. With these two, however, everything is posited in principle that later unfolds in the "redemptive character" of Christianity, and even in its most specific doctrines of grace, election, the Spirit and

renewal through the Spirit. And these things were experienced and possessed by that very first circle too, in folded-up form.—Let us make this clearer.

21.8 To speak of a "religion of redemption" is really a pleonasm, at least if we have in view the higher, developed forms of religion. For all higher, developed religion that has become independent and detached itself from its heteronomous ties to political or private worldly well-being develops within itself peculiar, overabounding ideals of bliss, which can be designated by the general term "salvation." It is toward a "salvation" of this form that the religious developments of India strive, with ever greater and more conscious effort, from the resonant ideas of deification in Upanishadic theopantism to the only apparently negative blisses of Buddhist nirvana. The religions of redemption specifically so called, which pressed into the civilized world from Egypt, Syria and Western Asia at the turn of the era, also aim at a "salvation." To a view sharpened by comparison it is further evident that in the Persian religion too, in the guise and form of hope for the end, the same religious impulse toward a "salvation" is at work and takes shape, just as it does in the longing for moksha and nirvana. Islam, too, is longing for and experience of "salvation." And not only "in hope," that is, hope of the delights of paradise. Rather, the most important thing in Islam is precisely *islam* itself: this surrender to Allah, which is not only a yielding of the will but is itself the desired and sought-for attunement to Allah. It is a mood that is in itself already a "salvation," that can be possessed and enjoyed like a kind of intoxication, and that, heightened, can itself become the mystical rapture of bliss.

21.9 What is thus the basic feature of all higher religion expresses itself quite unmistakably, most powerfully and at the same time in a qualitatively superior way, in Christianity's belief in the kingdom of God, its longing for it and its inheriting of it. It makes no difference here whether the origins of this idea in Israel were once purely political, only gradually detaching themselves from the ground of reality and finally rising into the

overabounding, or whether properly religious motives were at work in producing it from the start. The materials the religious impulse seizes on are, after all, very often of an earthly, worldly kind at first. The restlessness of the impulse, its constant pressing forward, its detaching and raising of itself, are precisely its characteristic expressions. They make plain its inner nature, which is nothing other than a genuine *urge for redemption*, an intimation and anticipation of a divined, overabounding, "wholly other" good. As a "salvation," this good is comparable to the goods of salvation sought in other religions, *and* at the same time it is superior to them: as superior as the Lord of the kingdom, then himself found and possessed in this "kingdom," is qualitatively superior to Brahmā, Vishnu, Ormazd and Allah, and to the Absolute in the form of nirvana, kaivalya, Tao, or whatever else one may name. The gospel is wholly directed toward redemption, one day to be accomplished by God and yet already experienced from him now. The former, as the assurance of the kingdom of God. The latter, through the immediate, already present experiences of the heart as children of God, which it poured into the souls of its community as their most immediate possession. That the community was most clearly aware of this as something qualitatively entirely new, unheard of and overabounding is mirrored in the saying that the law and the prophets extend until John, but that now the kingdom is coming with power—and that even John, who after all also preached the kingdom of God, is counted only *among* "the law and the prophets."

21.10 But if we wanted to describe this new thing in the briefest words and according to what is most genuine in it, we would have to *invent* the verse Romans 8:15, if it were not already there:

21.11 You have not received a spirit of bondage, so that you must fear again, but you have received the spirit of a child, through which we cry: "Abba, dear Father."

21.12 Paul here understood the aim and the center. He grasped with hair-fine precision the break with the old, the *new religion*, its principle and essence. And this "principle and essence" is

that of the first fishermen by the Sea of Galilee, one and the same throughout the whole history of Christianity. With it is given the new relation to sin and guilt, to law and freedom; with it, in *principle*, "justification," "rebirth," "renewal," the bestowal of the Spirit, the new creation and the blessed freedom of the children of God. These or similar expressions, doctrines, bodies of doctrine and the profound speculation attached to them *had* to come about once the word called forth the "Spirit" that corresponds to it[2]. —So Christ's first, immediate achievement, as we can still understand it clearly and luminously today, is the working and bestowal of salvation, in hope and in possession, through the awakening of faith in his God and in God's kingdom. And how, then, can "divination," religious intuition, awaken in us too, remote as we are, in the presence of this achievement of Christ's life? How can we too come, in him, to the *experience* of the "holy in manifestation"?

21.13 Clearly not *demonstratively*, by proof, according to a rule or according to concepts. We cannot state any conceptual marks in the form: "If the elements x + y are present, a revelation is at hand." That is exactly why we speak of "divination," of "intuitive apprehension." Rather, purely *contemplatively*, through a devoted opening of the mind to the object, for pure impression. And then by holding together the content and gift of Jesus's preaching and founding achievement with the picture of his person and life itself, and beholding the whole in the context of the long, wonderful preparation in the religious history of Israel and Judah. There one sees the play of the manifold lines of development that, converging and diverging, still run toward him; the elements of the "fullness of time"; the stimuli and pressures of contrast and parallel in his surroundings. At the same time one attends to the strange underlying ground and inter-

2 OTTO'S NOTE. From here we can grasp at least the possibility of the joining of "dualistic," even "gnostic" currents. A man like Marcion is not only an extreme Paulinist but also an extreme follower of Jesus.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Marcion (2nd century AD), Christian teacher who rejected the Old Testament and its God in favor of a purified Paul and Gospel.

woven thread of the non-rational itself, which can be felt nowhere as it can here: to this rising and receding of his influence, to this ever more luminous emergence of his spiritual content, on which the salvation of the world depends. And at the same time one attends to this mysterious growth of the opposing powers, to this thousandfold intensified problem of Job: the suffering and defeat not only of the personally righteous man but of what, for the highest interest of the individual and of *humanity*, is important, indeed most important; and finally to this heavy cloud of non-rational mysticism that hangs over Golgotha. Anyone who, capable of contemplative absorption, opens themselves to the impression in this way with an open heart must find the "recognition" of the holy, the "intuition of the eternal in the temporal," arising in pure feeling, according to standards from within whose rule cannot be expressed. If there is an eternal, a holy, in the mingling and interpenetration of the elements of the rational and the non-rational, the teleological and the indefinable, as we have tried to grasp and describe it, then it has here entered into its most powerful, most palpable manifestation.

21.14 And in a certain sense we who come later are not worse off but better placed to apprehend it in its manifestation. For apprehending it as an "intimation of the divine government of the world" depends here essentially on two elements. One is a survey of the whole interconnection of Israel's wonderful spiritual history, its prophecy and its religion, and of the appearance of Christ within this interconnection. The other is the totality of Christ's own whole conduct of life and achievement. In both cases this comprehensive survey is possible for us far more completely, at a greater distance and with sharpened historical insight, than it was for that age. Anyone who contemplatively immerses themselves in that great interconnection we call "the old covenant up to Christ" must feel, almost irresistibly, the intimation awakening that something eternal is here coming into manifestation, governing and founding, and pressing toward a consummation. And whoever then beholds in this

interconnection the fulfillment and conclusion—this great situation, this mighty figure, this personality unshakably grounded in God, this unerringness, this security and certainty of conviction and action springing from mysterious depths, this spiritual, blissful content, this struggle, this faithfulness and devotion, this suffering and finally this victor's death—must judge: this is godlike, this is the holy. If there is a God and he wished to reveal himself, it is just so that he had to do it.

21.15 Must judge—not from logical compulsion, not according to a conceptually clear major premise, but in immediate judgments of pure acknowledgment, not derivable from premises, according to an inexplicable major premise, from a pure, irreducible feeling of truth. But that is precisely the way of genuine divination as religious intuition.

21.16 From such intuition there then necessarily spring for us too, independently of exegesis or of the authority of the first community, a series of further intuitions about the person, work and word of Christ, which the doctrine of faith must unfold further. There is the intuition of "salvation history" in general, and that of prophetic preparation and fulfillment. There is the intuition of the "messiahship" of Jesus: as the one in whom all the predispositions of the piety of prophets and psalms, all the strivings and expectant anticipations of the "old covenant," become pure act; as the one who was the culmination and at the same time the consummated higher stage of all earlier development, the real meaning and goal of this tribal and national development, in bringing forth whom it completed its own span of existence and exhausted its historical task. And further: the intuition that God is imaged and represented in him, for in his struggling and conquering, in his seeking and loving as savior, the character of the one who sends and appoints him is "intimated." The intuition of "sonship": as the chosen, called and empowered one of the Godhead absolutely, and, heightened, as the one who, intelligible and possible only from God, at the same time repeats and represents the divine nature in human fashion. The intuition of the "founding of the covenant," of

adoption and of reconciliation through him, of the validity of his life's work as sacrifice and offering to God, which has God's good pleasure and brings it about.

21.17 And not least, the intuition of the "covering" and "atoning" mediator. For the gulf between creature and creator, between *profanum* and *sanctum*, between sinner and the Holy One, does not grow smaller through the higher knowledge that comes from Christ's gospel, but greater. And from a spontaneous stirring of the corresponding feeling, precisely that in which the holy itself is revealed is here, as always, seized at the same time as the means and refuge for approaching it. This urge could stir spontaneously and seek its expression even where it was not prepared and sustained, as in Judah and in antiquity, by traditions of the mysticism of sacrificial cult. It is a natural religious impulse and a necessity of numinous experience itself. What is to be faulted is not that such intuitions occur in Christian doctrine at all—it cannot do otherwise—but that their character as free intuitions arising from divination is misunderstood. They are dogmatized, theorized and deduced from (always doubtful) exegetical or dogmatic necessities; they are not recognized for what they are, free-floating utterances of feeling and attempts at expressing it; and they are given an emphasis that wrongly moves them into the center of religious interest, a place only one thing may occupy: the experience of God itself.

21.18 [But where genuine divination of the "holy in manifestation" has taken place, an element also gains significance that may be called "the signs following." It is not the real supporting ground of divination but its confirmation: namely those elements of heightened spiritual life and heightened spiritual power over nature and surroundings that are found in the historical picture of Jesus. They have their analogies in the general history of the spirit and in the history of religion. They show themselves in the vocational gifts of the great prophets of Israel as visionary intuition and mantic presentiment, and in the life of Christ as heightened "gifts of the Spirit." These things are not "miracles" at all. As powers of the spirit they are, like our own

will that commands our body, precisely "natural," indeed the highest natural thing. But they evidently occur only where the spirit itself is present in heightened form and vitality. They are most to be expected where it is closest to its eternal ground and most inwardly united with it, where it rests wholly in that ground and thereby becomes free for its own highest achievement. That is exactly why their presence and occurrence can be a "sign following" for this latter circumstance, and thus for the result of pure divination itself.]

THE CROSS

The suffering of the righteous, prefigured in Job, makes the cross the deepest intuition of the holy.

21.19 Finally, it is also clear that the suffering and death of Christ in particular must become the object of especially strong valuation by feeling, and of intuition. If his mission into the world as a whole, and then his own conduct of life, are regarded as the mirror and self-revelation of an "eternal will of love," then this supreme act of faithfulness and love in *passio* and *passio magna* [suffering, and great suffering] is so above all. The cross becomes the *speculum aeterni patris* [mirror of the eternal Father] par excellence. But not only of the *patris* [Father], not only of the highest rational element of the holy, but of the holy as a whole. For Christ is the summation and conclusion of the developments before him chiefly also in this: that the most mystical problem of the old covenant, which rolls mysteriously on from Second Isaiah and Jeremiah through Job and the Psalms, is classically repeated in Jesus's life, suffering and death and is here heightened to the absolute—the mystery of the *innocent suffering of the righteous*. Job 38 is a prophecy of Golgotha. And on Golgotha the intuition of the mysticism of the cross repeats and surpasses the solution of the "problem" that was already granted to Job. That solution lay, as we saw, wholly in the non-rational, and yet it was a solution. Already there the suffering of the righteous acquired the meaning of the classic special case of the revela-

tion of the mysterious beyond, in the most immediate reality, nearness and palpability. Of this, however, the cross of Christ, this monogram of the eternal mystery, is the "fulfillment." In the cross of Christ the rational elements of its meaning are intertwined with these non-rational ones; the revealed is mingled with the unrevealed, full of intimation; the highest love with the *orgē* of the *numen*, full of shuddering. And here Christian feeling has made the most vivid application of the "category of the holy," and thereby brought forth the deepest religious intuition ever to be found in the whole field of the history of religion.

21.20 But this is what we must ask about if we want to measure religions against one another and determine which of them is the most perfect. Not their achievement for culture, not their relation to the "limits of reason" and "of humanity," which people believe they can draw in advance and without religion, not their outward features, can in the last analysis be the standard for the value of a religion as religion. Only what is its own innermost essence, the idea of the holy itself, and how perfectly a given particular religion does justice to it or not, can supply the standard here.—

21.21 About the value *and validity* of such religious intuitions from pure feeling we naturally *cannot* argue with people who do not engage with religious feeling itself. General argument, or moral proofs either, achieve nothing here; indeed, for understandable reasons they are not even possible. On the other hand, criticisms or refutations from that side are equally void from the outset. Their weapons are far too short and cannot strike, since the attacker always stands outside the arena itself. Nor, equally, are we, with such intuitions, dependent on the chance fluctuations of exegetical results and the torment of historical justifications. For these intuitions are nothing other than independent effects of the impressions made by the gospel history and its central figure, according to the category of the holy itself. For they are possible for us even without these, *by our own divination*.

Chapter 22: The Religious A Priori and History

Kapitel 22. Religiöses Apriori und Geschichte
Why history presupposes principles a priori: the prophet, and one who is more than a prophet.

KAPITEL 22. RELIGIÖSES APRIORI UND GESCHICHTE.

22.1 The distinction between the holy as an a priori category of the rational mind and the holy in manifestation leads us, finally, to the familiar distinction between inner and outer, general and special revelation, with which it is wholly one, and to the relation between "reason" and "history." (That is, if we are willing to adopt here the usage by which all knowledge that comes to the mind from its own native principles is comprised under *ratio* [reason] and set against knowledge that relates to and rests on historical facts.)

22.2 Every religion that wants to be more than faith in tradition and authority—that aims instead, as Christianity does above all other religions, at conviction, at being inwardly and personally convinced, that is, at one's own inner knowledge of its truth—must presuppose principles in the mind by which it can be independently recognized as true[1]. These principles, *however*, must be a priori principles, which no experience and no "history" can

1 OTTO'S NOTE. The testimony from such principles is the *testimonium spiritus sancti internum* [inner testimony of the Holy Spirit] of which we spoke. And it is this directly itself. If it were not, one would need yet another *testimonium spiritus sancti* in order to recognize the *testimonium spiritus sancti* as true, and so on to infinity.

give. It sounds edifying, to be sure, to say that they are written on the heart "in *history*" by the stylus of the Holy Spirit, but it makes little sense. For how does the one who says this know that it was the stylus of the *Holy Spirit* that wrote so, and not that of a spirit of deceit, or that of "folk-psychological fantasy"! He presumes, after all, to be able to pick out the stroke of this stylus, the handwriting of the Spirit, from other handwritings: that is, to have, independently of "history," an a priori idea of what is of the Spirit.

22.3 Further, history, which here is supposed to be the history of the spirit, itself presupposes something of which it can be the history: a qualified something with a potency of its own, which can become, and the meaning of whose becoming is chiefly that it should become what it was predisposed and destined to be. An oak can *become*; it can have an analogue of history. A heap of stones cannot. Chance additions or losses, mere shifting or grouping of merely aggregated elements, can indeed be followed in a narrative too, but that is not historical narrative in the deeper sense. We have history in a people to the extent that it enters on its course with predispositions and destiny, talents and first beginnings, already being something in order now to become something. And biography is a painful and improper undertaking in the case of a person who from the outset has nothing of their own, nothing predisposed, and who is therefore only a point through which chance external chains of causes pass. Biography is a real description of real life only where, in the interplay of stimulus and experience on the one hand and predisposition on the other, something distinctive comes into being. It is neither the result of a "mere unfolding of oneself" nor the sum of mere traces and impressions written by changing elements from outside onto a *tabula rasa* [blank slate]. Whoever wants a history of the spirit must want a qualified spirit; whoever means the history of religion means the history of a spirit qualified for religion.

22.4 Religion comes to be in history, first, in that in the historical development of the human spirit, in the interplay of stimu-

lus and predisposition, the latter itself becomes act, shaped and determined in part by that interplay. Second, in that, by virtue of the predisposition itself, particular parts of history are recognized, by intimation, as manifestation of the holy, and this recognition influences the kind and degree of the first element. And third, in that, on the basis of the first and second elements, communion with the holy is established in knowledge, feeling and will. So religion is indeed wholly a product of history, insofar as history on the one hand develops the *predisposition* for knowledge of the holy and on the other hand is itself, in parts, manifestation of the holy. There is no "natural" religion, as opposed to historical religion; still less is there innate religion.

THE PROPHET AND THE SON

Receptivity, the prophet's gift, and one who is himself the object of divination.

22.5 A priori cognitions are not those that every rational being has (those would be "innate"), but those that everyone *can have*. Higher a priori cognitions are those that everyone *can* have, but, as experience shows, not by themselves: they are "awakened" by others more highly gifted. Even in relation to these, the general "predisposition" is only a capacity for *receptivity* and a *principle of judgment*, not a capacity for producing the cognitions in question independently. Such production takes place only in the "gifted." But "giftedness" is a higher stage, a raising of the general predisposition to a higher power, which differs from it not only in degree but also in kind. This can be seen clearly in the field of art. What in the multitude is only receptivity, re-experiencing and judgment by cultivated taste reappears at the level of the artist as invention, creation, composition, as the spontaneous production of genius. And this higher stage and potency of the musical predisposition, which in the one case is only a capacity for musical experience but in the other a capacity for musical production and revelation, is evidently not something that differs merely in degree. It is similar in the field of religious feel-

ing, religious production and revelation. Here too, in the mass of people, the "predisposition" is present only as receptivity, as susceptibility to religion and to one's own free acknowledgment and judgment. The "Spirit" is a *universal* predisposition only in the form of the "inner *testimony* of the Spirit" (*testimonium spiritus internum*) (and even this only "where it pleases him"). The higher potency and stage here, not derivable from the first stage of mere receptivity, is the prophet: the one who possesses the Spirit as the capacity for the "voice from within" and for divination, and, through both, as a power of religious production.—Above this stage of the prophet, however, a still higher, third stage can be conceived and expected, again not derivable from the second, just as the second was not from the first. It is that of the one who on the one hand has the Spirit in fullness and on the other hand himself becomes, in his person and achievement, the *object* of divination of the holy in manifestation.[2]

22.6 Such a one is more than a prophet.—He is the Son.

2 OTTO'S NOTE. On the difference between the innate and the a priori, see R. Otto, *Kantisch-Fries'sche Religionsphilosophie*, p. 42.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Otto's 1909 book, translated as *The Philosophy of Religion Based on Kant and Fries* (1931).

Appendices

Beilagen
Numinous poetry (from the Bhagavad Gita, Vondel's song of the angels, the Hebrew hymn Melek Eljon, each in Otto's German) and shorter additions.

BEILAGEN. I. NUMINOSE DICHTUNGEN. 1. AUS BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ, KAP. 11.

B1.1 In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna, the embodiment of Vishnu, indeed Vishnu himself in human form, instructs Arjuna in the deepest mysteries of his religion[1]. Then Arjuna longs to behold God himself in his own form. His request is granted. And now, in the 11th chapter, comes the grandly terrible theophany, which tries, with the natural human means of the fearful and the majestically sublime, to give a feeling of the unapproachableness of the divine, before which the creature trembles and perishes. Arjuna stands on his war chariot, just about to go into the bloody battle against the enemies of his brother Yudhishthira, the sons of Dhritarashtra. Krishna is his charioteer. To him Arjuna voices his request: Show me yourself, the imperishable. Then Krishna-Vishnu answers him: 8. Your bodily eye is too weak to behold me, O Arjuna. A *heavenly eye* I give you. So behold my divine power.

B1.2 9–14. And when he had spoken thus, Hari[2], the

1 OTTO'S NOTE. See R. Otto, *Vischnu-Nārāyana: Texte zur indischen Gottesmystik* [Vishnu-Nārāyana: Texts on Indian Mysticism of God], 2nd ed., Jena, 1922. [2] That is, Vishnu.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. Otto's *Vischnu-Nārāyana* (1917) is a collection of Indian devotional texts in his own German translation.

B1.3 Lord of great wonder-working power, at once revealed himself to the son of Pritha in the form of his highest majesty: with manifold mouths and eyes, many and wondrous to behold, bearing many heavenly ornaments and weapons, in heavenly garlands and garments, anointed with heavenly fragrances, his face turned every way—a god, all-wondrous and without measure. And the radiance of the mighty one was as if a thousand suns blazed out in the sky at once.

B1.4 Then Arjuna was filled with amazement. His hair stood on end. He folded his hands, bowed his head before the god and said: I see you bearing crown, mace and discus, a sea of radiance, blazing on every side like a sun's lightning in an immense blaze all around. I can barely bear the sight. You who span earth and heaven, you fill all distances with yourself, you fill all breadths. Beholding you thus, you of wondrous and dreadful form, the three worlds stand full of awe, O mighty one. Here hosts of gods draw near in humility; others stand in fear with folded hands; the holy ones and the sages cry hail to you and sing songs to praise you gloriously. Whatever lives of spirits and gods in heaven, earth, clouds and winds, in air and waters—demons, spirits of the dead, holy ones, wondrous beings—they behold you and stand rigid with amazement. In giant form, with many eyes and mouths, with countless arms, thighs, feet and bodies, bristling with dreadful teeth: so the world beholds you and stands full of shuddering, Lord! I too shudder. As you stand there, towering up to heaven, glowing in the blaze of colors, jaws gaping, rolling your great eyes!—— Dread seizes me. My courage sinks, I am shaken, O Vishnu. Your mouths bristle with dreadful teeth, like the flames that will one day devour the universe. Where shall I flee? I find no place. Mercy, lord of the gods, you support of the worlds! They are sucking into themselves Dhritarashtra's sons, together with the hosts of their royal warriors, Bhishma, Drona and Karna from among the enemy, and from our side too the foremost heroes, in swift procession!—How the teeth bristle! How dreadfully the mouths move! Some are already seen with their heads crushed, hanging caught

between tooth and tooth. As rivers in their rushing outpouring are swept toward the ocean, so the heroes of the world of men flood into the mouths ringed all round with fire. As moths swarm eagerly into the hot flame of the light and perish in it, so the multitude of men presses into your jaws and perishes there all together. You lick and lick them with your flaming mouths from every side, then swallow them down. Your fearful glare scorches into every distance and fills the universe with blazing heat, Vishnu! Oh, tell me who you are, you of fearful form! Your conduct is wholly incomprehensible to me. I worship you, O prince of gods! Mercy! I would comprehend you, you first of all. Vishnu changes back into his friendly form. Arjuna's request to comprehend the incomprehensible is not granted. To "flutter up into the high majesty" is, as Luther says, denied to human beings; they are to hold to the word of gracious promise. And such a word is granted to Arjuna too. The mighty chapter closes with the words that commentators call the sum and essence of the whole Gita:

B1.5 Whoever does what he does for me alone,
thinking only of me and faithful to me,
free of clinging to the world, free of ill will—
he comes to me, O Pandava![2]

VONDEL'S SONG OF THE ANGELS

The Dutch poet's angel chorus from Lucifer, followed by Otto's German version.

B2.1 In his review of the first edition of this book (Theologisch Tijdschrift, 1917), the Dutch scholar Groenenwege kindly drew my attention to the "Song of the Angels" that the great Dutch poet of the *17*th century, Joost van den Vondel, includes in his magnificent tragedy *Lucifer*. It is indeed a song that *sings* what cannot be *said*, perhaps even more resonantly than Lange's! (Why do we not find this song in our hymnbooks?) Let it stand

2 Bhagavad Gita 11.55. "Pandava" (son of Pandu) is Arjuna.

here in the sinewy strength of its own language. An attempt at a translation follows.[3]

B2.2 Chorus of Angels:
Strophe
Who is it that, seated so high,
So deep in the fathomless light,
Measured by neither time nor eternity,
Nor by revolutions, without counterweight,
Exists by himself, borrows no support
From outside, but rests upon himself,
And can enclose within his being
What, around him and within him, knowing nothing
Of wavering, turns and is driven
Around the one and only center,
The sun of suns, the spirit, the life,
The soul of all that you can
Fathom, or never can fathom,
The heart, the wellspring, the ocean,
And source of all the good things
That flow from him and subsist
By his grace and omnipotence
And wisdom, which gave them their being
Out of nothing, before *this* palace, completed to its summit,
The heaven of heavens, shone;

B2.3 See J. van den Vondel, *Treurspelen* (Tragedies), vol. 1, Amsterdam 1661.

3 Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679), the leading poet of the Dutch Golden Age. His *Lucifer* (1654) dramatizes the rebellion of the angels.

B2.4 There where we cover our eyes with our wings
Before the majesty of all splendors,
While we awaken heaven's echoing praise
And fall, out of reverence,
Out of fear, swooning down upon our faces?
Who is it? Name him, describe him to us
With a seraph's quill.
Or do understanding and voice fall short?

B2.5 Antistrophe:
That is GOD. Infinite, eternal Being
Of every thing that has being,
Forgive us, O you never fully praised
By all that lives or does not live.
Never uttered, nor to be uttered,
Forgive us, and absolve us,
That no image, tongue or sign
Can declare you. You were, you are,
You remain the same. All angels' knowledge
And speech, weak and inadequate,
Is only profanation and violation:
For each thing bears its own name
Except you. Who can call you
By your name? Who is consecrated
To be your oracle? Who dares to boast?

/ You alone, then, are who you are,
Known to yourself and to no one more closely,
To know you thus, as you were
The splendor and wellspring of the eternities:
To whom is that light revealed?
To whom has the splendor of splendors appeared?
That sight is a higher salvation still
Than we receive from your grace;
It surpasses the bounds and measure
Of our power. We grow old
In our duration; you never.
Your being must sustain us.
Exalt the Godhead: sing its honor.

B2.6 Epode:
Holy, holy, once more holy,
Thrice holy: glory be to God.
Outside God nowhere is safe.
Holy is the great commandment.
Let his mystery be binding.
Let his command be worshiped,
So that it is proclaimed everywhere:

B2.7 All that pleases God is well.

B2.8 Chorus of Angels:
Strophe
Who is it that sits so high,
So deep in the fathomless light,
Unmeasured by eternities!
He bears, but is not borne.
He holds, held by no thing,
The universe of things that hovers, circling
Around him, in him, and, firmly held,
Strives toward him, the one center,
The sun of suns, spirit and life,
The self-reposing resting place
Of all that are and live and move,
What has a name and what has none.

/ He is the heart, he is the wellspring,
He is an inexhaustible sea
Of the fairest and best, conceived
And flowing forth from him,
Gloriously called into being
By his goodness, his might,
Even before, above the tiers of earth,
The radiant splendor of heaven arose.
With wings we cover our eyes
Before the glory of all splendor.

B2.9 We awaken heaven's resounding praise
And fall, swooning away
In reverence, down upon our faces.
Who is it! Name him, describe him to me
With a seraph's quill,
For word and name fail here.

B2.10 Antistrophe

It is GOD!—— Infinite, eternal Being
Of all that is and lives and moves,
You, whom none has fully praised
Of all that ever lived or never lived,
Whom spirit and senses cannot reach,
Forgive, since no word can measure you,
That neither image nor tongue nor sign
Can declare you.—You were, you are,
You remain yourself. Even angels' speech
And knowledge, weak and unskilled,
Only profanes and is too dull:
For every thing is given a name—
You never and nowhere! Who may dare
To name you! And who presumes
To be the oracle that speaks you!

/ You alone are who you are,
Known to yourself, knowable to yourself
And to no one else. For who perceives
The splendor of the eternities, infinite?
To whom was such light revealed!
To whom has the radiant splendor appeared
Whose sight bestows a higher salvation still
Than gifts of grace can earn,
Which surpasses all the limits
Of our powers?—We grow old
In our being; you never.
Your being must sustain us.
Exalt the Godhead, sing its honor!

B2.11 Epode
Holy, holy, once again holy,
Thrice holy, glory be to God!
Apart from God nothing prospers.
Holy is his exalted command.
May his mystery bind us together.
What he wills, let it come to pass,
So that all proclaim everywhere:
Holy is the counsel of the Most High.

MELEK ELYON

Otto's German version of a medieval Hebrew hymn for the New Year, "Supreme King."

B3.1 I have attempted to translate the following hymn from the Hebrew. It is part of the Jewish liturgy of the New Year festival, a medieval *piyyut*. The extraordinary art of the stanza, the rhyme and the verbal echoes of the original can be rendered only imperfectly in German. See *Gebetbuch für das Neujahrsfest* (Prayer Book for the New Year Festival), edited by Wolf Heidenheim, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 62ff. The translation appeared earlier in *Christliche Welt*, 1922, no. 11.—JHVH is the holy Tetragrammaton, the sacred four letters of the name of God in the Old Testament. The Jews do not pronounce it but usually paraphrase it as Adonai ("Lord"). Luther translates it as "der Herr" (the Lord). It used to be wrongly pronounced "Jehovah." Its correct pronunciation[4]

4 A *piyyut* is a Hebrew liturgical poem.

B3.2 is: Yahweh.—
To you, O King, we will pay homage
SUPREME KING—
Strong and exalted,
He is rampart and moat,
His saying is doing,
High and exalting,
Bestowing thrones,
Hovering above all—
reigns in time and in eternity.

B3.3 SUPREME KING—
He performs mighty deeds,
He calls forth the generations,
He breaks open the seals,
Pure in word above all,
Knows the number of the stars,
All their paths and orbits—
reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
Praised by all,
Mighty over all,
The Gracious One to all,
Gives food to all,
Hidden from all,
Yet watching over all—
reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
He does not forget the forgotten,
He fathoms what is within,
He is clear of sight,
He reads the strivings of the heart,
A God of spirits,
Master of the true word—
reigns in time and in eternity.

/ SUPREME KING—
In his castle, in purity,
In his palaces full of wonder,
He is beyond all compare
In all his working,
He who sets the sand as the sea's boundary

B3.4 And for Behemoth and his defiance—
B3.5 reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
He gathers the waters in the sea,
Stirs up the waves like armies,

B3.6 So that they roar terribly,
Fill the world with tumult.
Yet their mighty swelling

B3.7 He, the almighty, forces into stillness—
B3.8 reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
Reigning in majesty,
He goes in storm and tempest.
Radiance wraps him like a garment.
Night stands before him like day.
Darkness closely hides him.
Yet he himself dwells in light—
reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
Clouds cover him,
Flames lick all around,
Cherubim bear him,
Lightnings glow as his servants.
Fixed star and wandering star

B3.9 Shout for joy into every distance:

B3.10 He reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
Opens his hand and lets all partake,
Gathers the rain and lets it pour down,
To flow over three lands and four,
Onto the parched meadow, and makes it sprout.
Day shouts for joy to day:
You too, shout for joy to the Lord:
He reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
Holy and fearsome,
Mighty and full of wonder,
Measures out the earth,
Sets its cornerstone,

B3.11 Creates great and small alike
For his glory—
reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
Heeds misery,
Turns toward pleading,
Prolongs his mercy,
Restrains his wrath,
Begins every beginning,
End of every end—
reigns in time and in eternity.
SUPREME KING—
Judges with truth,
His works are truth,
Shows grace and truth,
Is himself grace and truth,
His ways are in truth,
His seal is truth—
reigns in time and in eternity.

B3.12 We will pay homage to you
B3.13 JHVH is King, JHVH was King, JHVH will be King

B3.14 to all eternity.

B3.15 All that dwells in heaven's tent
Extols with sounds of praise:
JHVH is King.
All that dwells on the fields of earth
Blesses with songs of blessing:
JHVH was King.
One joins in with the other,
Rejoicing, vying together:
JHVH will be King
To all eternity.

B3.16 All his holy ones
B3.17 Hallow him in all humility:
B3.18 All the *host* of his people / *Give* him this true testimony:
B3.19 One joins in with the other, / Sweetly vying together:
B3.20 Flashing cherubim, / Mighty seraphim:
B3.21 New every morning, / Say it in whispering awe:
B3.22 One *joins in* with the other, / Three times, vying together:

SHORTER ADDITIONS

Notes on Dante, Plotinus, Augustine, Söderblom, the English translator on "holy," and a sultan's herald.

B4.1 1. Addition to the Dante quotation on p. 43: It must be admitted, incidentally, that Dante does not quite succeed in passing his own rapture on to the reader. He assures us that he has it, rather than kindling it in the reader himself—despite the art of his verse and despite the profundity of his speculation. Perhaps precisely because of both. An Indian describer of the heavenly journey succeeds better: the childlike, naive Śrīnivāsa, in his *Dīpikā*, p. 63. Here, in this boundless relative clause, in these opening clauses that pump the lungs empty and rush forward like waves of an assault—Who—, who—, who—, who—— and finally in the almost breathless, blissful outcry of the very shortest concluding clause, "*Sa muktaḥ—He is set free*!," the glow of the *fascinans* burns with truly contagious force. —Incidentally,

Dante's three circles lose something of their abstractness when one sees how the age knew how to represent them pictorially: for instance, in the miniatures to the *Scivias* of Hildegard of Bingen, or in their depiction in the Campo Santo at Pisa. These bear throughout the character of the "magical," of which, and of whose power to express the numinous, we spoke above. And in this, as in their visionary quality, indeed even in their form, they bear a striking resemblance to Buddhist mandalas. 2. On p. 155.—Plotinus says likewise: How are we to speak of it if we do not grasp it? Well, if it eludes our (conceptual) knowledge, it need not therefore elude us altogether. We grasp it in such a way that we can speak about it, yet cannot name it. But nothing prevents us from possessing it, even if we cannot utter it. We are like those who are inspired and enraptured, who know that they bear something higher within them without "knowing" what it is. From what has stirred them and moved them to utterance, they draw a (felt) impression of that which stirs them. Our relation to the One is much the same. When we rise to it with the help of pure mind, we *feel*, and so on.—(Kiefer, Plotinus, *Enneads*, Jena 1905, vol. 1, p. 54.)

B4.2 3. On p. 33. *Mirum*, paradox, antinomy. These elements of the numinous already stand out in early mythological form, before speculation proper, in the feeling of the sheer wonderfulness of the divine, and they try to find expression there. On this, compare the section "Nārāyaṇa's Wondrous Nature" in my book *Vischnu-Nārāyana*, p. 36. Here the *āścaryam* (the wonderful) of the divine is to be brought home to feeling in groping, symbolic form. Augustine, however, says at one point:

B4.3 God may not even be called the unutterable. For in this very word a statement about him is already made (in J. Bernhart, *Augustin*, Munich 1922, p. 146).

B4.4 4. On the quotations on p. 22, compare also the saying of the Carmelite mystic Isabella Daurella:

B4.5 Then I felt the presence of the Holy Trinity, and became aware of my own *nothingness* (in C. Butler, *Western Mysticism*, London 1922, p. 16).

B4.6 5. On our chapter 16 as a whole, compare the excellent section in N. Söderblom, *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens* (The Genesis of Belief in God), p. 193:

B4.7 There can be real piety without a developed belief in God and without a cult. But there is no piety worthy of the name without the idea of the holy.—However important belief in God, together with the worship of God, may be for religion, there is nevertheless, as I have often emphasized, an even more significant criterion of the essence of religion: namely, the distinction between holy and profane. 6. On the arguments of this book as a whole, I refer to the remarks its English translator makes in his introduction, and especially to his own contribution in Appendix X, "The Expression of the Numinous in English." He says there, on p. 222 of his translation: German philosophical vocabulary is, in general, both richer and more precise in expression.[5] But with regard to the subjects this book deals with, our language is at no disadvantage compared with German. Indeed, for the translation the wealth of synonyms in English was positively an *embarras de richesse* [an embarrassment of riches]. For the one German "heilig" and its derivatives as noun and verb, we have "sacred" and "holy," "sacredness," "holiness" and "sanctity." For "Gottheit" we even have three synonyms: "deity," "divinity," "Godhead." Each of these synonyms would be a correct rendering in some particular instance in the text. And whenever we choose one of them, we must often sacrifice fine shades of meaning that the others carry and that are contained in the one German expression. That we chose "holy" rather than "sacred" for "heilig" was because it is the biblical term, found especially in those great passages of Scripture that the book repeatedly uses as examples and that are central to its argument, such as Isaiah 6. I also believe that our feeling for the language will sense "holy" as a more numinous term than "sacred." For us it has the numinous atmosphere about it more distinctly than "sacred" does. It is perhaps even more true of it than of the German "heilig" that it refers chiefly to the higher stages of reli-

5 What follows is Otto's German rendering of Harvey's English.

gious experience, in which the numinous is already saturated with rational and moral elements and is therefore almost synonymous for us with "good." And yet "holy" is found precisely also in statements where this higher and deeper meaning is not yet present, and where it is still purely the numinous *in* its early and still "raw" form. For example, *in* the well-known lines from Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*:

B4.8 A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

B4.9 That is a genuinely "numinous" quotation. But here the numinous is at the early, "pre-religious" stage of its development. It carries nothing yet of "sanctity." The bold use of the word "holy" may, it *seems* to me, just barely be allowed the poet here, whereas we evidently reserve "sanctity" for a narrower and higher meaning.

B4.10 Apart from the terms already mentioned, our English seems rich in numinous terms. R. Otto himself pointed out, on p. 13, our "awe" and "to haunt," neither of which has an exact equivalent in German. And for "uncanny," as a fairly exact translation of "unheimlich," I have occasionally used "weird" and "eerie" myself, which clearly have the numinous atmosphere about them. The archaic word "fey" also *belongs* here (a mysterious intimation from the world *of* the beyond). Perhaps the now obsolete verb "to ug," from which our present-day "ugly" comes, originally meant intimidating or instilling awe by means of something unnatural and uncanny.[1] At the same time it should be noted that all these terms, except "awe," refer to the numinous in its "raw" form. For one thing, they are evidently not yet religious terms in the higher sense, although they too—unlike, say, "grue," "grisly," "ghastly"—can carry a nobler as well as a lower and more primitive shade of meaning. Finally, it is especially noteworthy that these terms are all, or almost all, of North British, that is, Celtic origin. A special receptiveness to numinous impressions in particular seems indeed to have been the distinctive trait of the Celtic temperament. Their clairvoyance

and their second sight also point to this. [1] Compare our German "gräsen" and "gräßlich," "grauen" and "greulich."

B4.11 Apart from examples of individual terms in our language, it would be easy to collect passages from English poetry and prose that, like the one already quoted from Coleridge, convey numinous elements and moods. I will give at least three samples.

B4.12 On p. 34, R. Otto cited two hymns (by Gellert and by Lange) that show the difference between a rational and a numinously determined attitude of mind. This difference could hardly be better illustrated than by two poems familiar to every English reader: Addison's hymn on Psalm 19 and Blake's poem on the tiger ("The Tyger"). Both poets set out to sing of the Creator as he reveals himself in his creatures. But the difference in their mood is quite unmistakable. In Addison we find the same mood as in Gellert: calm confidence, grateful and understanding praise, calm dignity. In Blake we find the mood of trembling, of awe, of the mysterious felt as such—and yet with a strange rapture in it. Addison sings:

B4.13 The spacious firmament on high with all the blue ethereal sky
And spangled heavens, a shining frame, their great original proclaim,
The unwearied sun from day to day does his Creator's powers display.
And publishes to every land the work of an almighty hand.
Soon as the evening shades prevail, the moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth repeats the story of her birth.
While all the stars, that round her burn, and all the planets in their turn

B4.14 Confirm the tidings, as they roll, and spread the truth from pole to pole. What though in solemn silence all move round the dark terrestrial ball, What though no real voice or sound amid their radiant orbs be found: In reason's ear they all

rejoice and utter forth a glorious voice, For ever singing, as they shine: 'The hand, that made us, is divine.' This is consciously rational piety. It is "reason" that listens here to *the hymn of praise of* nature. And that was the characteristic not merely of an individual temperament but of a whole age—Addison's own. How *utterly different, however, is the character of Blake's lines*: Tyger, tyger, burning bright in the forests of the night. What immortal hand or eye could frame thy fearful symmetry! In what distant deeps or skies burnt the fire of thine eyes! On what wings dare He aspire? What the hand dare seize the fire? When the stars threw down their spears and watered heaven with their tears, Did He smile, His work to see? Did He, who made the lamb, make thee? Tyger, tyger, burning bright in the forests of the night, What immortal hand or eye dare frame thy fearful symmetry! Finally, in connection with the example on p. 94, I would point to Wordsworth's *Prelude X, 437–469. Wordsworth, too, tells us here how precisely the terribleness of that* time and its catastrophes, how what was "monstrous" in it, became for him the revelation of a "presence" of the Holy and *the Divine, just as* was the case in Max Eyth's experience. 7. On p. 84, end. The "ceremonial" of Isaiah 6 has also survived in Eastern court ceremonial. We witnessed it in this form on the birthday of the Caliph, the Shadow of Allah, in 1916, in Constantinople. The great dignitaries of the Ottoman Empire—the judges, ministers, scholars, patriarchs and generals—were assembled and awaited the approach of the Sultan, who was preceded by a singing servant. "Do you know what he is singing?" asked Talaat Bey. "He is singing: O Caliph, know that you are a man, and Allah is greater than you."[6] When the Sultan had taken his place, the individual dignitaries approached in order of rank and station, amid the deepest silence of all. Bowing, they offered their wishes and their homage in the softest, barely audible whisper.

6 Mehmed Talaat (1874–1921), Ottoman minister of the interior and, from 1917, grand vizier.