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Religious Transcendence: Some Criteria

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RELIGIOUS TRANSCENDENCE: SOME CRITERIA

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
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the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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1970



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: A PROSPECTUS FOR THE WHOLE PROJECT

This chapter is introductory. It serves as a prospectus for the entire study. In it will be given an overview of the basic problem for which an answer is sought as well as the overall purpose and general procedures to be followed in this study. Each of the succeeding chapters will be an elaboration of the basic direction indicated in this chapter. But before the procedure is outlined it is necessary to state clearly the problem for which an answer is sought.

The Problem this Study Seeks to Answer

The basic problem for which this study seeks an answer is this: how can one discover adequate criteria for testing the reality of the transcendent object of religious experience? That is, can sufficient tests be devised by which one can determine if there is a basis in reality for the ultimate object of his religious experience? This study does not attempt to come to a conclusion as to whether or not there is a transcendent reality. Rather, it seeks to discover some criteria by which an individual may determine whether or not there is a basis in reality for the ultimate object of his religious experience.

But in order to more fully understand what is implied in this basic problem it will be helpful to have a better understanding of the meaning of some key terms like experience, religious, and reality.

Meaning of Experience

Experience is not easy to define. But in general experience may be described as consciousness or awareness such as individuals have. Experience is something which subjects have, and it is in this sense that experience may be said to be subjective.¹ This is not meant to imply, of course, that all experience is merely subjective, i.e., that there are no objective referents for at least some experiences. Experience is the state of consciousness of an individual who may be aware of something as other whether or not it is really other. Of course experience may be an awareness of one's self or self awareness. But even here there is at least a psychological distinction between the self which is the subject of the awareness and the self of which it is aware.

Experience may be viewed in two ways, generally and specifically. Experience in general is the totality of consciousness like that of being alive. A specific experience is a focusing

¹Paul Van Buren seems to overstate the point when he says, "Every experience is subjective by definition. We use the word with a person as its subject 'I' have an experience. A stone does not" The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 84. There is no good reason why we can't speak of animals and even plants having awareness or consciousness in our sense of the word experience. In this way it makes more sense to speak of overlapping levels of consciousness.

on a given aspect of moment within the whole of one's consciousness like a certain event in one's life. Or, the difference respectively is like that of the awareness of being in a state of marriage (i.e., the consciousness of being a married man) and that of getting married (i.e., the consciousness of taking a wife in the ceremony of marriage). In this study we will be concerned primarily with religious experience in general rather than with specific religious experiences for the following reasons.² First, because experience in general is the backdrop and basis for particular experiences like vision is the general field which makes it possible to focus on this or that particular object. Secondly, religious experience in general is more readily available to men in general. Not everyone has had a special religious experience like a mystical experience. But as shall be argued subsequently, religious experience in the general sense is both more readily available and understood by men in general. This will be made more explicit once religion is defined. First, however, we must distinguish different levels of experience.

The most basic level of experience may be called primary awareness. It is the basic unreflective consciousness an individual has. Secondary awareness is the consciousness of being conscious; it is being aware of the fact that one has awareness.³

²For a further discussion of this see chapter 3.

³Michael Novak makes a similar distinction between primary and secondary awareness. See Belief and Unbelief (New York:

Within this secondary awareness there are many activities such as remembering, reflecting, relating, and reasoning. All of these presuppose or build upon primary awareness.

The study of religious experience undertaken here will treat both kinds of experience. It will recognize, however, that primary awareness is fundamental to secondary awareness, even though secondary awareness may be necessary for getting at primary awareness. Furthermore, it is recognized that in order to get at the religious awareness of other people one does not have direct access to either their primary or their secondary awarenesses. In order to understand the religious experiences of others one must depend on their expressions of these experiences. In brief, expressions of experience will be studied to understand the experiences behind these expressions, and secondary experience must be studied in order to understand the primary experience behind it. And primary religious experience in general (as opposed to special religious experience) will be the primary center of concern. Special religious experiences may be used to illustrate a focusing or intensifying of the experience which is more generally available for men in general. But precisely what is meant by a religious experience?

Meaning of Religion

Attempts to define religion have been notoriously unsuccessful.

ful at gaining universal acclaim.⁴ And yet the vast majority of these definitions of religion have at least one common element--that religion involves awareness of the transcendent. They differ, of course, in what kind of awareness is involved and what is meant by the transcendent. We will begin with what appears to be common to most definitions, and then attempt to discover what must be characteristic of an awareness of the transcendent to make it qualify as a distinctive experience to which we may give the title of religious.

There are at least two senses in which religious experience may involve transcendence. First, transcendence may refer to the process of overcoming the conditions of one's finitude, frustrations, etc. This may also be called self-transcendence.⁵ Transcendence is also used in the sense of the object of religious experience, viz., the transcendent. It is in this latter sense that we are primarily concerned with religious transcendence in this study.

It should be pointed out that the transcendent is not

⁴W. C. Smith wrote: "It is perhaps not presumptuous to hold that no definition of religion so far proposed has proven compelling, no generalization has come anywhere near to adequacy." The Meaning and End of Religion, (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1964), p. 16.

⁵But self-transcendence can be misleading in a religious context if it is taken to mean transcending by one's self or on one's own. For, as shall be seen, one of the characteristics of religious awareness is what Schleiermacher called a "feeling of absolute dependence" (see chapter 3). If a religious experience involves a sense of dependence, then it cannot in the same way involve an attitude of independence.

intended to be a synonym for God; it is not equivalent to a theistic conceptualization. God as defined by western theisms is one (specific) form or way of viewing the transcendent. What is meant by the transcendent is a much broader, more general and less specific notion which is inclusive of pantheistic as well as theistic, personal as well as impersonal religious views. Brahman of Hinduism, Nirvana of Buddhism, the Tao of Taoism, Schleiermacher's All, Otto's Numen, and Tillich's Being beyond being are all ways of viewing the transcendent.

The transcendent not only has many descriptions but it may also have many dimensions.⁶ It need not be viewed as being "above"; it may be thought of as a transcendence in "depth." Then too, it may be the transcendent "origin" or even the "goal" of one's religious experience. In brief, we do not intend in this analysis of religious transcendence to narrow down or limit the meaning of the transcendent to any particular direction or dimension.

By the transcendent we mean simply two things. First, something is transcendent if it goes beyond or is more than one's immediate consciousness. In this sense the subconscious is transcendent, for it goes beyond one's immediate consciousness and yet he is somehow aware that it is there.⁷ The transcenden-

⁶In chapter 3 a detailed analysis is given of the multidimensional possibilities of transcendence.

⁷William James calls the subconscious the "hither side" of the transcendent but it is definitely beyond the individual's

tal ego is also an example,⁸ for we are conscious of it but are conscious that it is beyond our consciousness.⁹ Even other selves are transcendent, for we are conscious of them but conscious of them as being beyond ourselves. Kant's noumenon is transcendent, for he somehow knows that the noumenon is there even though he cannot say what it is.¹⁰ Further, it is more than what is experienced in the way that the whole is greater than its parts (e.g., there is a wholeness, structure, or relationship missing when the parts are scattered). It is more in the way that a word or sentence is more than letters (viz., a unity of meaning not in the parts taken separately),¹¹ or the way

conscious self. See Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Modern Library, 1902), p. 508; cf. p. 232.

⁸Peter Koestenbaum develops this point in an excellent summary of a phenomenological approach to religion, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology" in Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, ed. Clayton Weaver and William Horosz (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1967), pp. 186-193.

⁹We are not here arguing for the existence of the subconscious, the transcendental ego or other minds. We are simply saying that if they exist, they would be real examples of what we mean by transcendent. If they do not exist they would be merely possible examples.

¹⁰See Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1956), p. 273, where he says, ". . . on the contrary, it itself limits sensibility by applying the term noumenon to things in themselves (things not regarded as appearances). But in so doing it at the same time sets limits to itself, recognising that it cannot know these noumena through any of the categories, and that it must therefore think them only under the title of an unknown something."

¹¹It is noteworthy that even Bertrand Russell uses this illustration in An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth, pp. 335-336.

there is more in a painting than the pigment and colors.¹² That is, something is transcendent if there is more in it than 'meets the eye.' If there is a depth or perspective that is more than the empirical experience of it, then it transcends the empirical.¹³

Second, by the transcendent object of religious experience is meant what we are aware of as going beyond or being more in an ultimate way. It is that which is the object of a total commitment; that for which one would make even the supreme sacrifice.¹⁴ The transcendent is the object of ultimate concern because it is thought to be ultimate or final. It is that beyond which one sees no need to go. It is the beyond beyond which one seeks no more beyonds. Examples of such commitment outside of religion are difficult to find but to some degree the patriot's "My country right or wrong," or the moralist's "duty for duty's sake," or the artist's commitment to Beauty are examples.¹⁵

If he were consistent with the implications of this illustration it would indicate the meaningfulness of what we call the transcendent.

¹²Cf. John Wisdom's article "Gods" in Classical and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion, ed. John Hick (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964), pp. 413-428.

¹³See Ian Ramsey, Religious Language (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1957), pp. 42-50 for a detailed discussion (with illustrations) of this point. John E. Smith calls this a "religious dimension" to experience, Experience and God (Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 46 f.

¹⁴For a development of what is meant by "total commitment" see Ramsey, op. cit., pp. 172, 35-41, 55.

¹⁵A further and clear elaboration of what we mean by this

To restate the problem in view of these clarifications: we seek to discover adequate criteria for testing the reality of that object of consciousness which is more than and goes beyond one's consciousness and to which he makes a total commitment or by which he is grasped with an ultimate concern. Or to put it another way, how does one know that beyond to which a man will commit himself without reserve is real? How can one tell if there is a basis in reality for the object of a man's ultimate concern? Is the goal or ideal to which men are willing to dedicate their whole life, and for which they are willing even to die, real? But, before determining whether the transcendent is real the word real must be defined.

Meaning of Reality

First there are several things that are not meant by reality. For it would be easy to conclude that the transcendent is real if the word is used in a very broad sense. Only after one sees clearly what is not meant by the word reality (first four points below) can he fully appreciate the problem of trying to determine the reality of the transcendent. The last two points attempt to provide a more positive characterization of the meaning of reality.

1. Reality is More Than a Subjective Condition of Human Experience.--That men have experiences which they feel are ultimate and religious no one can reasonably doubt; it is not the kind of concern or commitment will be found in Paul Tillich's Ultimate Concern, ed. D. Mackenzie Brown (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1965), pp. 7, 8, 11, 30, 106 and below in chapter 2.

experiences but their reality basis which is in question. The problem is compounded by the fact that in many religious and mystical experiences there seems to be no sure way to separate the hallucinatory from the real. As Henri Bergson noted, even the great mystics have recognized this fact and have warned their disciples about it.¹⁶ There is always the possibility that one's religious experience can be explained on a purely psychological level.¹⁷ There is no question that religious experience is subjective; if it were not, it would not be an experience. The important question is: is it more than subjective. As even religious men admit, ". . . there cannot be any important sense in which God is for me unless there is some real and objective sense in which God is, irrespective of my belief or my lack of belief."¹⁸ Religious transcendence must be more than a subjective condition in religious experience before we are willing to call it real.

2. Reality Is More Than a Projection of Human Imagination.

In brief, religious transcendence is not real if Ludwig Feuerbach is right that it is nothing but a projection of human nature

¹⁶ Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, trans. R. Ashley Audra, C. Brereton, W. H. Carter (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1935), p. 229.

¹⁷ See William Sargant's Battle for the Mind (William Heinemann Ltd., 1957), where he explains religious experience like brain washing in a behavioristic way along the line of Pavlov's conditioned response.

¹⁸ David E. Trueblood, Philosophy of Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 34.

which is commonly called God. He wrote, ". . . the nature of God is nothing else than an expression of the nature of feeling" for "the object of any subject is nothing else than the subject's own nature taken objectively." That is, the object of religion is not real if man makes it. If what man thinks is God be nothing but an unconsciously worshipped projection of the best in his own human nature, then it is misleading to call it real. If consciousness of God be no more than unwitting self-consciousness; if while adoring God one is worshipping nothing but his own nature;¹⁹ if every advance in religious thinking is nothing but an advance in self-knowledge, then certainly it is a meaningless use of words to call it real. As Karl Marx wrote, "Man, who looked for a superman in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the reflexion of himself, will no longer be disposed to find but the semblance of himself, the non-human [Unmensch] where he seeks and must seek his true reality."²⁰

That is, if man is a reality seeker and should discover religion is but a projection of his own imagination, he will turn to the human reality instead of worshipping the mirror which reflects it.

3. Reality Is More Than an Object of Wish-Fulfillment.---

Freud contended that religion was an illusion, not in the sense that it is necessarily untrue, but that it is suspect because it

¹⁹Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 9-12, 13, 29.

²⁰Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, On Religion (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 41.

resulted from a wish that there be a God, etc. "An illusion," he said, "is not the same as an error, it is indeed not necessarily an error. . . . It is characteristic of the illusion that it is derived from men's wishes." He differentiates an illusion from a delusion which is necessarily false, whereas "The illusion need not be necessarily false, that is to say, unrealizable or incompatible with reality." However, the religious illusion is highly suspect of not being true for several reasons. First, because of the primitive (ignorant) period in which it arose, then because of the specious, inauthentic grounds upon which men would justify it. Furthermore, it is suspect because of its very nature as an illusion, viz., that human wishes play a dominant role in its motivation. "We say to ourselves: it would indeed be very nice if there were a God who was both creator and a benevolent providence, if there were a moral world order and a future life, but at the same time it is very odd that this is all just as we should wish it ourselves."²¹ In view of this, we hold as minimal to the definition of real that it be more than an illusion in Freud's sense. That is, it must be more than something men wish, or even deeply wish, to be so; it must actually be so apart from their wishes.

4. Reality Is More Than a Subconscious Force in Human Experience.--William James somewhat side-stepped the basic issue

²¹Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1957), pp. 52-53, 40-50, 54, 57-58.

when he defined the "hither" side of the transcendent in terms of the subconscious. He wrote, ". . . whatever it may be on the farther side [that is the crucial question], the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life."²² The "farther" side is a matter of what James called "over-beliefs" which he personally justified on pragmatic grounds.²³ But the concern here is not with how James justified the "farther" side of transcendence but whether or not there is a "farther" side. Certainly one should not consider the "hither" side or "subconscious continuation of our conscious life" to be the transcendent of which the religious man speaks. There would be no difficulty in saying, as James admits is possible, that the subconscious is the doorway to the divine,²⁴ that the ultimate transcendence which men call God works in and through the subconscious. But to identify the transcendent with the subconscious forfeits the right to call it real in a meaningful sense of the word.

It seems undeniable that certain subconscious patterns of mental activity and symbolism occur and have depths of meaning not always obvious to the consciousness of the individual in

²²James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 502.

²³James, "The Will to Believe," Pragmatism and Other Essays (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1963), pp. 193-213.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 232, 237, 265.

whom they occur.²⁵ In view of this fact men cannot help but wonder whether the object of their religious experience is any more than a product of subconscious symbolism. Nor will it suffice to do as Jung and call the collective subconscious the real, for as Fromm observed this does not in itself show that the transcendent is more than a mass delusion.²⁶ As Alfred N. Whitehead indicated, to move toward the dark recesses of the subconscious is to surrender finally any hope of a solid foundation for religion.²⁷ If by the reality of ultimate transcendence one does not mean something more than the human subconscious, whether individual or collective, it seems inadvisable to call it real to say nothing of the inappropriateness of calling it ultimate or transcendent.

5. Reality Means to have an Independent Existence.²⁸--

If the transcendent is to be more than a mere subjective experience, more than mere human imagination, more than what men deeply

²⁵Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 16. Even though Sartre strongly denounced Freud's view of subconscious determination in his Existentialism and Psychoanalysis, he admitted to a 'depth of consciousness' that would not necessarily conflict with the above assertion of Smart.

²⁶Eric Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 15.

²⁷Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1960), p. 120.

²⁸The word "existence" is not meant here to imply that the transcendent has to be a being to be real. It has a broader meaning such as the word "presence" has as used by Leslie Dewart. Cf. Foundations of Belief (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969).

wish to be true (viz., an illusion), more than the realm of human subconsciousness, then it means that which has an independent existence of its own.²⁹ That is, the transcendent must mean that which exists outside of the minds of the men who conceive it and outside the experience(s) of the men who experience it. For it is certainly not proper to attribute to the transcendent a reality of its own if it exists only in the consciousness of finite men. That is to say, if the transcendent is dependent on the consciousness of others for its reality, then it seems unfitting to attribute to it an independent existence of its own. For example, by real we mean something like that a material object would have (viz., outside of a mind) as opposed to the existence of a number (which, say, exists only in a mind). This is not to say that only things like material objects can be real, for things like minds can be real too. But this is to say that the transcendent will not be considered real unless it has an existence on its own, outside of the reality of other things that exist.

6. Reality Means to have an Objective Existence.--Another way to describe what is meant by real is to say that it has an objective existence. By objective we do not mean merely to be

²⁹This does not mean that nothing dependent can exist; it can have a dependent existence (say, dependent on the Universe, God, etc.) and yet exist independently (i.e., separately from other things). That is, everything but a Necessary existence would in some way be a dependent existence. But things that are dependent ultimately for their existence can still have (relatively speaking) an independent existence of their own.

an object (of a mind) nor to objectify, for in both of these senses something is not real. Rather by objective we mean what is not merely the objectification made by a subject but what is itself a subject or thing. It should be noted that the meanings of subject and object have reversed since the Middle Ages. For the Scholastics, subiectum meant that which exists (objectively) in itself and obiectum meant that which is only (subjectively) represented in a mind. Whereas, in common usage today (due to the influence of idealism) objective means real in itself and subjective means not having an independent existence of its own.³⁰

So when it is said that real means to have an objective existence we mean objective in the modern sense which is to be a subject (subiectum) in the medieval sense. To claim that the transcendent is objectively real is not to say that it is a mere object or objectification of a mind. In this sense objectification is that which is done by a subject, in which case if the transcendent were merely an object (or objectification), then it would not have an independent existence of its own.

In summary, this study seeks to discover adequate criteria for testing the reality of the transcendent object of religious experience. And in view of the further definitions given this means that we wish to find sufficient tests or ways to determine

³⁰Heidegger makes this same point in "The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology" in Philosophy and Religion, ed. Jerry H. Gill (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1968), p. 62.

whether or not that beyond or more to which a man will commit himself without reserve has an independent and objective existence outside of man's subjective awareness. In other words, does the object of man's ultimate concern exist on its own apart from his ideals and awareness of it? So it may be concluded that, whatever else may be implied by the word reality as applied to the transcendent, it means that which has an independent and objective existence of its own apart from any existence in the consciousness of other things. It must be more than an object of other subjects; it must be a subject (or thing) itself.

The Purpose of this Study

The basic reason for this study is to examine the alleged reality basis for religious experience. Believers do make reality claims both implicitly and explicitly, and our purpose is to examine the basis for such claims.

The credal confessions of the existence of God common to major Western religions make an explicit claim for the reality of the transcendent and prayer is an implicit testimony for it. Both the sacrifices of preliterate and the ultimate commitment of moderns reveal a belief in the reality of the ultimate object of their religious devotion. Mircea Eliade contended that it was part of the very genius of a religious man that he seeks reality and thirsts for it with all of his heart.³¹

³¹ Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1959), p. 80.

If a religious man does not seek reality, at least he ought to do so. For of all men the religious person should be concerned with fidelity and maturity, neither of which is evidenced by a refusal to be concerned about the truthfulness of one's religious beliefs. As Freud observed, no mature man will be satisfied with his childhood beliefs simply because he wants them to be true whether there be a basis for them in reality or not. To cling to religion simply because it is a beautiful dream or to hold to it as if it were true are insufficient grounds upon which to base the ultimate commitment which religion demands.³²

Further, the believer ought to examine the reality basis for his belief in the transcendent because of the haunting suspicion that he may be wrong.³³ As even religious men acknowledge, "It is hard to rid our minds completely of the haunting suspicion that the entire religious structure may be nothing more than a grand and beautiful castle in the air."³⁴ The religious man no less than any other man is subject to self-deception. In fact, as Blaise Pascal pointed out, the individual has a thousand stratagems for deception and there are not four honest men in a century.³⁵ Even allowing for some over-statement here, the

³²Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 50.

³³See chapter 4 on the need for reasonable criteria in determining the reality of the transcendent.

³⁴Trueblood, Philosophy of Religion, p. 17.

³⁵Pascal as quoted by Michael Novak, Belief and Unbelief, p. 89.

honest religious person will no doubt agree with Pascal that he has some doubts of his own about the reality of the transcendent object of his religious devotion.

Finally, whether there be serious doubts or not, anything which demands an ultimate commitment, as does religion, ought to be examined as to its reality, if the commitment is to be worthy of a critical mind. It may be meritorious to believe in the reality of the ultimate where one has had little evidence or opportunity to examine it, but it certainly is not very noble or worthy of a rational creature to totally submit himself to something without having reason to believe in its reality. To believe in a cosmic Santa Claus simply because one wills to believe or because it is comforting or simply because it works is unsatisfactory for a thinking man in search of reality.

The Presuppositions of this Study

There are several working principles involved in this study which are not formally justified but are clearly implied. Some of them will be at least partially vindicated in a pragmatic or indirect way, while others will be valuable because of their consistency with the problem and approach which we have chosen. It is not contended that these are the only ways to approach this subject but that they do provide at least one significant way to understand and evaluate the reality basis for religion.

1. The basic working principle throughout this study is that religious experience is a key to understanding the meaning

of religion.³⁶ This implies that religious experience is at the heart of religious expressions, that religion can be understood well from the inside. This means that the believer, i.e., the one who has the religious experience, is in a favorable position to understand what is at the basis of religion. This does not mean that an outsider cannot understand a religious experience which he has never had. It means only that if he is to understand the religious experience of another as a key to understanding religion that he must try to enter into this experience in an empathetic and imaginative way. This does not mean that one has to become religious to understand religion, but it does imply that he must exercise a sympathetic and penetrative insight into the situation of the one who does have a religious experience.

2. Another presupposition of this work is that one is in a better position to determine the reality of religious experience after he has a better understanding of the meaning of it. That is, one is in a better position to evaluate religion after he knows more fully what it is. It is in view of this principle that it is deemed necessary to fully discuss the various kinds or dimensions of religious experience before an evaluation of it is offered. For it is assumed here that one cannot sufficiently judge the reality of a religious experience without knowing the

³⁶ This is what W. L. King called viewing religion from a "detached within" as opposed to the "within" of the partisan devotee, the "semi-within" of the missionary, or the "semi-without" of the theologian or the "without" of the social scientists, Introduction to Religion (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1954), pp. 1-8.

meaning of it. From this it follows that a proper evaluation of religious experience can be made either by a critical believer or by an understanding non-believer. The former has a good "inside" vantage point for understanding the meaning of the experience, and he can develop the ability to critically evaluate it. The non-believer already has the critical faculties since he is not predisposed to believe it, and he can develop the ability to understand it by sympathetic insight. Consequently this study proceeds on the premise that both believers and non-believers will be able to add to our understanding and evaluation of religious experience.³⁷

3. Further, it is assumed here that religious expressions are the key to understanding religious experience. This means that initially at least the believer is in a better position than the non-believer to understand the meaning of his own religious experience. It may be that once the believer has expressed these experiences that a more articulate non-believer can state them better. Nevertheless, the "insider" is in a better position to express what his experiences really mean, even if he cannot express them as well as a more eloquent "outsider."³⁸ Of course one who has both had the experience and the ability to

³⁷As Augustine confessed, "So, many are awakened from sleep by the heretics, so that they may see God's light and be glad," Of True Religion, trans. J. H. S. Burleigh (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1966), p. 16.

³⁸For a further discussion of the relation between experience and expression see chapter 4.

express it well is in the best position of all. Thus it is that so far as the meaning of religion is concerned the expressive believer plays a crucial role.

4. Finally, this study presupposes that verbal expressions are a key form of religious expression.³⁹ That is, since language is one of the highest and most expressive vehicles of communicating human experiences it is assumed that religious language will be a key way to understand the religious life behind it. This is not to say that verbalizations are the most vital part of religion nor the best way to 'catch' a religious experience, for this may be done more effectively through character, ritual, or art.⁴⁰ It does imply, however, that since language is one of man's most effective powers of expression that it is to be expected that it is a key area in the analysis of man's deepest experiences.

The Procedure of this Study

There are many ways to examine religion, but in view of this study's problem and purpose---to examine the reality basis for

³⁹Cf. Willem F. Zuurdeeg who characterizes man as homo loguens, An Analytical Philosophy of Religion (New York: Abingdon Press), p. 23f.

⁴⁰Rudolf Otto may very well have been correct when he said of religious experience (not expression): "It cannot be 'taught,' it must be 'awakened' from the spirit More of the experience lives in reverent attitude and gesture, in tone and voice and demeanour . . . than in all the phrases and negative nomenclature which we have found to designate it," The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 61.

religious experience--the following guidelines seem best suited. While this is not the only valid way to work out a philosophy of religion, it is a valid way to do so.

1. An Experiential Basis for Studying Religion

This is perhaps the most basic guideline of our methodology. It argues that however essential religious expressions are to the understanding of religion that religious experience is basic.⁴¹ In this approach consciousness of the transcendent is fundamental to conceptualizations about it. That is, as Friedrich Schleiermacher pointed out, one must feel the absolute before he can formulate it.⁴² Meaningful affirmations about the transcendent are built on prior awareness of it. Whatever structure may be given to religion by reason the basic "stuff" of religion comes from intuition. A man must somehow sense the supreme before he can state it. For experiencing the presence of the divine is a prerequisite to stating propositions about it. Or as Whitehead put

⁴¹Otto makes this same point by saying that rationalization or schematization of the Numinous is the most important part of the history of religion for it guards religion from falling into fanaticism and mysticality. However, he assumes a Kantian view of the schematization as a priori category, like Kant's category of causality (viz., it operates constitutively not intuitively). The Idea of the Holy, pp. 115, 146, 46-51, 116-120. But we reject this Kantian implication on the grounds that one cannot deny an intuitive knowledge of reality (the noumena) unless he already has an intuitive knowledge of it. One can't limit the bounds of knowledge unless he has already transcended those limits. He can't say that he knows that he doesn't know reality without contradicting himself. As Wittgenstein said, "... in order to draw a limit to thinking, we should have to think both sides of this limit," Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Preface.

⁴²Friedrich Schleiermacher, On Religion, trans. John Oman (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1955).

it, "The true method of discovery is like the flight of the aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation."⁴³ But all these rational operations, William James reminded us, presuppose immediate experience as their subject matter. Explanations do not replace the need for the experience of which it is the interpretation.⁴⁴

This does not render reason unessential in a philosophy of religion. On the contrary, reason plays an essential role in understanding, expressing and evaluating the religious experience. However, experience plays a fundamental role, for without it there would be nothing for reason to understand, express or evaluate. What is being suggested is that if we are to understand religion experientially, then a man's awareness of or consciousness of the transcendent is fundamental. Like Whitehead's aeroplane, we seek constantly to keep in touch with down to earth experience lest we are carried away in the thin air of pure speculative imagination.

2. Religious Expressions as a Key to Understanding Religious Experience (chapter 2). In order to understand the basic religious experience(s) one will analyze their expressions, par-

⁴³Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1929), p. 7. Whitehead said elsewhere, "Thus the real, practical problems of religion have never been adequately studied in the only way in which such problems can be studied, namely, in the school of experience," Religion in the Making, p. 141.

⁴⁴James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 424.

ticularly in language. Hence, it will be necessary not only to understand what the religious language intends to say about the transcendent and its alleged reality but whether or not language is an adequate means for expressing religious experience. In other words, one must face squarely the challenge of Paul van Buren and others that language is inadequate to express God, the transcendent or any of its equivalents.⁴⁵ Once assured that religious language is both basically and adequately expressive of the transcendent, then we may proceed to analyze the meaning(s) of what religious language reveals.

3. The Need to Determine the Character and Dimensions of Religious Experience (chapter 3). In order to fully understand what is meant by religious experience an attempt will be made to determine its essential characteristic(s). Religious experience must be distinguished from moral experience and from aesthetic experience. Once the common core of religious experience is discovered, it must be clearly defined. And once it is defined, then we will examine the various dimensions which religious transcendence has taken. For unless a typology of the directions of transcendence is outlined, one may mistakenly reject as non-religious what is essentially religious. In brief, one must have a full understanding of what religious experience is in all of its basic characteristics and dimensions before one can proceed to examine its alleged basis in reality.

⁴⁵van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, p. 84.

4. Criteria for Testing the Reality of Religious Experience (chapters 4, 5). It is not enough for a philosophy of religion to discover and define the meaning of religious experience; it must also devise ways of testing its reality. The crucial question is not what do religious statements about the transcendent mean. The important question asks: is the transcendent real? Even proponents of the reality basis for religious experience admit that "All experience is liable to misinterpretation [and] . . . much which the experiencer is inclined to take for 'religious' experience is illusion."⁴⁶ To be successful these criteria must show that the transcendent is more than a subjective reality; they must establish it to be an objective reality. Furthermore, the criteria must be more than logical tests which would show only the possibility or impossibility or the reality of the transcendent. They must be epistemological, establishing at least the probability or improbability of it.

Conclusion

The basic problem for which this study seeks an answer is: how can one discover adequate criteria for testing whether the transcendent object of religious experience is real? Can we find sufficient ways to determine whether that which goes beyond or is more than one's awareness in such a way as to make him willing to make a total commitment to it has an independent existence

⁴⁶A. E. Taylor, "The Argument from Religious Experience" in The Existence of God, ed. John Hick (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), p. 155.

outside of himself? Are there ways to test whether the beyond to which men will devote themselves without reserve is more than a subjective part of their own experience, viz., to discover whether it is an objective reality of its own? This study will not attempt to apply the criteria discovered. Rather, it will content itself with the more modest (and yet essential) task of discovering and defining sufficient criteria which can be applied to religious experience.

There are some decided advantages for not attempting to determine whether the transcendent is real but instead to be content with merely laying down the criteria for doing so: (1) It may be that both believers and unbelievers can agree as to how the reality of the transcendent should be tested. If so, then there may be less disagreement in the end as to whether or not there are some reality-based religious experiences. (2) The believer will be able to discover for himself whether all of his experiences are illusory or which (if any) are real. From this follows another advantage, viz., (3) No approval or disapproval of religious experience(s) in general need be concluded. Each experience must be judged on its own merit. It is not to be ruled out a priori because others are illusory nor is it to be accepted naively because others may be real.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AS A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

This chapter is built upon the premise that religious expression, especially in language, is an important key to understanding the basic religious experience(s) these expressions intend to convey. It seeks to answer two questions: what is the basic experience beneath religious expressions which characterizes religious awareness in general? And, is there an adequate language for expressing what is experienced?

The discussion proceeds on the assumptions that: (1) there may be something common to religious experience in general; (2) religious expressions, especially in language may be helpful in discovering what element(s) may be involved in religious awareness.

The Variety of Religious Expressions

Religious experience has been expressed in a variety of basically different ways. Among these the most common are ritual, symbol, myth, and dogma.¹ The first three will be treated only

¹Other religious expression may be found in art, image, conduct, and institution but they are not directly related to our study here. W. C. Smith has a good comparison of many of these, The Meaning and End of Religion, p. 156 f.

briefly.

Religious Expression in Ritual

Some have argued that ritual is the earliest formal religious expression, even before myth, because ritualism can be observed in animals, while they are destitute of a mythology.² Others argue that ritual comes before mythology, since it is more likely that pre-literates danced out their religious values before they thought them out.³ On the other hand, it may be argued that the 'revelation' of the myth must come before the re-enactment of it in ritual.⁴ Whatever the case may be, it is certainly reasonable to conclude that somewhere behind the plethora of religious expressions there was for someone an experience that gave rise to these religious expressions both mythological and ritualistic.⁵

In any event, ritual may be defined as that formalized symbolic way in which a social group periodically expresses and strengthens its beliefs and values.⁶ Or, Whitehead described it

²Cf. Alfred N. Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 25. However, he acknowledges that in specific cases a myth may precede the ritual.

³W. L. King, Introduction to Religion, pp. 141, 142.

⁴Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 8.

⁵Which comes first will probably depend on whether a myth or a ritual was used to evoke the religious experience. If the religious experience came via a myth, then the ritualistic expression of that experience would be subsequent and vice-versa. If, however, the religious experience came some other way, then the first means of expression would depend on whether the individual had greater propensity to act or to talk.

⁶King, Introduction to Religion, p. 141.

as ". . . the habitual performance of definite actions which have no direct relevance to the preservation of the physical organisms of the actor."⁷

We are not concerned here with precise rituals or their significance.⁸ What is of significance is that religion is not found without ritual.⁹ That is, a religious experience inevitably engenders symbolic expressions. It is through these expressions that one is able to discover and analyze basic religious experience behind them. Since the ritualistic expressions are represented in the mythical forms (whichever were first) we will analyze both of them together under the mythical.

Religious Expression in Symbol

Symbol is the broadest term for religious expression including both myth and ritual.¹⁰ Without pausing here to pass judgment on the validity of the distinction, Paul Tillich draws between a "sign" (which, he says, does not participate in the reality to which it points) and a "symbol" which does,¹¹ it is suffi-

⁷Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 20.

⁸For a treatment of this kind the works of Eliade are suggested, viz., The Sacred and the Profane, Myth and Reality, and The Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1954).

⁹See Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, p. 201.

¹⁰Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 117. Tillich calls these latter two the "intuitive" and the "active" forms of symbol expression respectively.

¹¹See the discussion of Tillich's special use of "symbol" later in this chapter.

cient to note that "Symbols have one characteristic in common with signs: they point beyond themselves to something else."¹² To summarize W. L. King, symbols are non-literal figures which point beyond themselves.¹³ That is, religious symbols are directional but not contentful pointers toward the transcendent.

Michael Novak likens symbols to arrows shot in the direction of God but which fall back to earth before they touch Him.¹⁴ In other words, since a symbol points beyond itself it is a fitting way of getting at the transcendent which goes beyond man. And it may be safely assumed that as long as religious experience involves something which transcends this empirical world, there will be a need for some sort of symbolical or non-literal means of expressing it.¹⁵ This is why Tillich argued that ". . . no symbol should be removed. It should only be reinterpreted." "Their symbolic character is their truth and their power. Nothing less than symbols and myths can express our ultimate con-

¹²Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 41.

¹³King, Introduction to Religion, pp. 134-136.

¹⁴Michael Novak, Belief and Unbelief, p. 110.

¹⁵"It [demytholization] is an attempt which never can be successful, because symbol and myth are forms of the human consciousness which are always present. One can replace one myth by another, but one cannot remove the myth from man's spiritual life. For the myth is the combination of symbols of our ultimate concern," Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 50. With this Jaspers agreed when he wrote, "The real task, therefore, is not to demythologize, but to recover mythical thought in its original purity. . . ." Karl Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, ed. Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann (New York: The Noonday Press, 1958), p. 17.

cern."¹⁶ That is, religious symbols are an attempt to express the object of one's ultimate concern, and no words in their ordinary meaning express this extraordinary object. Religious symbols are an attempt to express what cannot be literally and empirically stated. They point to something beyond the ordinary experience, something transcendent.

Religious Expression in Myth

Religious experience spontaneously and inevitably engenders myth.¹⁷ That is, as Tillich said, "The symbols of faith do not appear in isolation. They are united in 'stories of the gods,' which is the meaning of the Greek word 'mythos'--myth. . . . Myths are symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters."¹⁸ Religious man is a myth-maker, for he has the irrepressible tendency to express what he experiences, and myths are the verbal expression of his religious experience(s).

Perhaps the most important thing that can be said about myth to the modern reader is that for the religious man a myth is a true story.¹⁹ The myth is regarded by the primitive as a 'true' story because it always deals with what they consider to be

¹⁶Tillich, Ultimate Concern, pp. 96, 97, 53.

¹⁷Cf. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 423.

¹⁸Cf. Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, pp. 48, 49.

¹⁹"What is important, is the fact that 'primitives' are always aware of the difference between myths ('true stories') and tales or legends ('false stories')." Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 11n. Eliade points out that it has only been in the 20th century that western scholars have rediscovered myth as a 'true' story as opposed to a 'fable' or 'fiction,' op. cit., p. 1.

realities. The cosmogonic myth is true ~~because the~~ existence of the World is there to prove it; the myth of the origin of death is equally true because man's mortality proves it, and so on.²⁰ Of course the mere fact that primitives believed their myths to be true in no way guarantees that they were true, but it does suggest that for a full appreciation of their religious experience it is necessary to view them as if they were true (i.e., by a sympathetic insight).

While the concern here is not to trace the origin of myths,²¹ it suffices to say that the myth-making ability is coterminous with rational man.²² What is important, however, is to note that myths are the symbolic forms by which the religious man expresses his awareness of transcendence.²³ A myth, said Karl Jaspers, is

²⁰Cf. Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 6. From the time of Xenophanes (c. 565-470) on, the Greeks came to reject more and more the mythological expressions found in Homer and Hesiod until the word 'myth' was eventually emptied of any metaphysical value, Ibid., p. 1, cf. pp. 152-153.

²¹On the origin of myths see F. M. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1912), pp. 139 f.; Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 145 f., and Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, pp. 119 f.

²²Bergson writes, "Let us take, then, in the vaguely and doubtless artificially defined realm of imagination, the natural 'cut' which we have called myth-making and see to what use it is naturally put. To this faculty are due the novel, the drama, mythology together with all that preceded it. But then, there have not always been novelists and dramatists, whereas humanity has never subsisted without religion," op. cit., p. 108.

²³Myths have other functions too: (1) They are the means by which religious men became aware of the transcendent (cf. Jaspers, op. cit., p. 3); (2) They supply models for human behavior (cf. Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 8).

a "cipher" of the transcendent, a "code" pointing to God.²⁴ In fact it is the very incomprehensible nature of the transcendent which a myth reveals that gives rise to the nature of a myth as such. For "When the will to comprehend (which does not content itself with external cognition) runs headlong into the incomprehensible, the latter either shows itself in mythical figures and speculative concepts, as though it were striving to disclose itself, but still concealed in magnificently ambiguous language."²⁵

So then it is because the object of myth is the transcendent which necessitates that a myth be understood symbolically but never literally. "If a myth is understood literally," wrote Tillich, "Philosophy must reject it as absurd."²⁶ On the other hand, the myth understood symbolically ". . . is the fundamental creation of every religious community."²⁷ It is because a myth is not to be understood literally that it cannot be empirically verified. "For the reality of the myth," said Jaspers, "is not empirical, i.e., it cannot be investigated in the world."²⁸ However, it is because the myth is not to be understood literally that it becomes a symbolical way to 'open up' to the transcendence for the religious man.

²⁴Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, pp. 85, 87.

²⁵Ibid., p. 29.

²⁶Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 121.

²⁷Ibid. Cf. also Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, pp. 16, 17.

²⁸Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, p. 85.

There have been many attempts to describe more fully what is meant by a myth. Mircea Eliade listed five characteristics of a myth,²⁹ but many of them are applicable only to myths of origin within primitive religions and are, therefore, too narrow to apply to religion in general. Jaspers' analysis is more widely applicable. He wrote,

(1) The myth tells a story and expresses intuitive insights, rather than universal concepts. . . . (2) The myth deals with sacred stories and visions, with stories about gods rather than with empirical realities. (3) The myth is a carrier of meaning which can be expressed only in the language of a myth. The mythical figures are symbols which, by their very nature, are untranslatable into other languages.³⁰

This may be summarized by saying that a myth is a story or series of images through which the transcendent world is symbolized.³¹ It is a symbolic way of expressing one's awareness of

²⁹Eliade said, "In general it can be said that myth, as experienced by archaic societies, (1) constitutes the History of the acts of the Supernaturals; (2) that this History is considered to be absolutely true (because it is concerned with realities) and sacred (because it is the work of the Supernaturals); (3) that myth is always related to a 'creation,' it tells how something came into existence, or how a pattern of behavior, an institution, a manner of working were established; this is why myths constitute the paradigms for all significant human acts; (4) that by knowing the myth one knows the 'origin' of things and hence can control and manipulate them at will; this is not an 'external,' 'abstract' knowledge but a knowledge that one 'experiences' ritually, either by ceremonially recounting the myth or by performing the ritual for which it is the justification; (5) that in one way or another one 'lives' the myth, in the sense that one is seized by the sacred, exalting power of the events recollected or re-enacted," Myth and Reality, pp. 18-19.

³⁰Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, pp. 15-16. The untranslatability of a myth we take to mean untranslatable into non-mythical (i.e., into non-symbol language). Myths are translatable from one language (say, Greek) into another (say, English).

³¹Cf. Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, p. 8.

ultimate transcendence; it is an empirical way of expressing the non-empirical transcendent. As men came to exercise more fully their powers of verbal and rational expression it was inevitable that these mythological expressions would take on a more permanent verbal and credal form.

Religious Expressions in Creed and Dogma

It is often not easy to draw a clear line between the mythological and the doctrinal dimensions of religion. Usually the former is more colorful, symbolic, picturesque, and story-like. "Doctrines," observed Ninian Smart, "are an attempt to give system, clarity, and intellectual power to what is revealed through the mythological and symbolic language of religious faith. . . ."³² In brief, doctrinal representations of one's faith are attempts to give a *logos* for the *mythos*.³³ "To the mystics of all ages," wrote F. M. Cornford, "the visible world is a myth, a tale half true and half false, embodying a logos, the truth of which is one."³⁴ That is, dogma grows out of a more sophisticated attempt to generalize and universalize the earlier mythological expres-

³² Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, pp. 15, 8.

³³ Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, p. 141. Cornford's discussion is helpful on this point. But we need not follow him when he adds that "It then becomes an 'explanation' (*aition*), professing to account for the existence and practice of the ritual, just as the [Platonic] Idea is erected into an explanation or account (*logos*) of the things that partake of it" Ibid., p. 259. There seems to be no reason why a *logos* can't be an expression of a *mythos* without being an explanation or justification of it. See the discussion below.

³⁴ Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, p. 187.

sions of a religion. With this Whitehead agreed when he wrote, "A dogma is the precise enunciation of a general truth, divested so far as possible from particular exemplification."³⁵

As a result of this close connection between mythos and logos, one can see why many philosophical concepts have mythological ancestors and that most mythological symbols have conceptual elements.³⁶ And because literate cultures tend to prize intellectual knowledge, the historical religions generally have a more developed doctrinal dimension than there is in tribal and preliterate religions.³⁷ This has proven to be both a great advantage and a grave danger for religion.

The great advantage of conceptualizing and rationalizing about one's religious experience is that by it he can better understand, propagate, and preserve his faith. As Alfred Whitehead said, precise expression is in the long run a condition for the vivid realization, for effectiveness, for apprehension, and for survival. For progress in truth--whether the truth of science or the truth of religion--is mainly a progress in the framing of concepts, in discarding artificial abstractions or partial metaphors, and in evolving notions which strike more deeply into

³⁵Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 122.

³⁶Cornford lists several examples of concepts borrowed by Greek philosophy from their religious predecessors, From Religion to Philosophy, Chapters 1-4.

³⁷Cf. Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, p. 27.

the root of reality.³⁸ Also, as Rudolf Otto correctly observed, the process of conceptualization of religious transcendence guards a religion from sinking into fanaticism and pure mysticality and qualifies it as a religion for all of civilized humanity.³⁹ Otto went so far as to say that this process of rationalization and moralizing of the Numinous is the most important part of the History of Religion.⁴⁰ It is in this sense that Martin Marty correctly observed that fashionable reaction in recent theology to reject a belief that for a belief in is over extended. "Attempts to rule out one at the expense of the other do violence to the fuller expression of faith throughout Christian history. . . ." ⁴¹

Further, it may be argued that conceptualization of religious experience is not only helpful but it is in some sense necessary. Certainly man's incessant propensity to create myths and creeds would lend support to this contention. It might even be argued with Hegel that a concept (Begriff) is necessary to 'grasp together' experience.⁴² And even though experience is foundational to expressions about it, nevertheless experience is not meaningful unless it is conceptualized.

³⁸Whitehead, Religion in the Making, pp. 139, 127.

³⁹Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p. 146.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 115.

⁴¹Martin E. Marty, Varieties of Unbelief (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1964), p. 22.

⁴²See G. W. F. Hegel, Science of Logic, III.

Of course, as W. C. Smith rightly remarks, any attempt to conceptualize completely a religion is a contradiction in terms, for there is always in principle more in any man's faith than any other man can see and even more than he himself can say.⁴³ Nonetheless he admits that man must somehow conceptualize and intellectualize ". . . in such a way as to do justice to the diversity of the phenomena and at the same time not to do violence to a conviction of those involved that through it all there is a common element of transcendence."⁴⁴

The real dangers in doctrine and dogma, in creed and conceptualization are overextension and disassociation from experience. Overextension means that what is contained in dogmas can become distorted if it is stretched beyond its own sphere of applicability.⁴⁵ Disassociation means neglect of the experience which is at the basis of the credal expression. For example, when such words as God, transcendent, and ultimate are used it is easy to deceive ourselves by having no concrete understanding of their meaning. As Josiah Royce observed, "We forget the experience from which the words have been abstracted. To these experiences

⁴³Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, p. 128.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 151.

⁴⁵Whitehead wrote, "Accordingly though dogmas have their measure of truth, which is unalterable, in their precise forms they are narrow, limitative, and alterable: in effect untrue, when carried over beyond the proper scope of their utility," Religion in the Making, p. 140.

we must return when we want really to comprehend the world."⁴⁶ Or, if one is an outsider to the experiences, he must remember not to substitute the rationalization for what the believer feels to be the reality. Whitehead said it well: "The importance of rational religion in the history of modern culture is that it stands or falls with its fundamental position, that we know more than can be formulated in one finite systematized scheme of abstractions. . . ."⁴⁷ If one is not careful with his creeds he may be guilty of clinging to words and neglecting the reality they represent.

William James was too severe in saying that when a genuine experience becomes orthodoxy, its day of inwardness is over.⁴⁸ Dogmas, he said, ". . . are only bits of truth, expressed in terms which in some ways are over-assertive and in other ways lose the essence of truth."⁴⁹ At least we can safely say that creeds must be personal and honest to be meaningful. As Smith pointed out, sentences have no meaning in themselves; only persons mean (or intend) things.⁵⁰ And what religious persons intend to express by their statements is their experience with the transcendent.

⁴⁶Josiah Royce, "The Problem of Job" in Philosophy of Religion, ed. George L. Abernethy and Thomas A. Langford (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 442.

⁴⁷Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 137.

⁴⁸James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 330.

⁴⁹Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 139.

⁵⁰Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, p. 164.

In brief, religious conceptualizations or creeds are salutary, even necessary, but they must never be a substitute for religious experience. However, this does not mean that religious creeds cannot have authority, even final authority.⁵¹ Walter Kaufmann engaged in overstatement when he said, "The original sin of religion is to objectify the divine and to accept as final some dogma, sacrament, or ritual."⁵² Tillich is less severe and more to the point in saying that creeds are not ultimate, rather, their function is to point to the ultimate.⁵³ But the danger of verbal idolatry is present wherever there are conceptualizations of the ultimate. "It has led," said Erich Fromm, "to a new form of idolatry. An image of God, not in wood and stone but in words is erected so that people worship at this shrine."⁵⁴ That is, to consider an image of the ultimate as ultimate is idolatry

⁵¹Cf. Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 125. Whitehead said, "You cannot claim absolute finality for a dogma without claiming a commensurate finality for the sphere of thought within which it arose," Ibid., p. 126. This is not true if by "dogma" one means the truth being expressed and not the expression of the truth. For surely the finality of the truth which is being expressed does not necessitate the finality of the way in which it is being expressed. Furthermore, even a given expression of truth can be "final" within a given linguistico-cultural milieu, in the sense of being the very best way possible to express that truth in those terms. Then too, one should be careful not to confuse "finality" and "authority," for a given expression of truth (dogma) may be authoritative within a given linguistico-cultural milieu without being final in the sense that no other or no future expression of it could be better.

⁵²Walter Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1961), p. 429.

⁵³Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 29.

whether the image is mental or metal.⁵⁵ Perhaps this is why the God of the Old Testament so jealously guarded his own name, saying to Moses who enquired, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14).⁵⁶

However, even if no doctrinal formula were ultimate and final, one need not concede that all doctrinal expressions are automatically fallible and insufficient. On the contrary, a dogma can be adequate without being final. Its adequacy, like all other representations of religious experience will depend not only on how well it expresses an awareness of ultimate transcendence but how effective this expression is in identifying and clarifying this experience for others of like faith.⁵⁷ The history of the Christian Church, e.g., is a continuous narrowing down and defining, without which many elements would have undercut and denied its existence. "The dogma, therefore, is not something merely lamentable or evil. It was the necessary form by which the church kept its very identity."⁵⁸ In brief, intellectual formulations of religious experience refer only indirectly to the transcendent. Doctrines are derived, historical con-

⁵⁵ John A. T. Robinson, Honest to God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 127.

⁵⁶ On this point Ian Ramsey suggests, "Only God could know his own name. . . . The inevitable elusiveness of the divine name is the logical safeguard against universal idolatry," Religious Language, p. 129.

⁵⁷ On this point Tillich wrote, "'Adequacy' of expression means the power of expressing an ultimate concern in such a way that it creates reply, action, communication. Symbols which are able to do this are alive. But the life of symbols is limited," Dynamics of Faith, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 138.

structions which indicate but do not completely capture the reality they express. In many respects, dogmas are negative and protective, trying to defend what is held to be a living reality against distortion.⁵⁹

What we must not forget about dogmatic (or any other kinds of) expression of religious experience is that "Religions commit suicide when they find their inspiration in their dogmas."⁶⁰ As Schleiermacher remarked, dogmas are but general expressions of definite religious experiences, but the dogmas are not absolutely necessary to religion.⁶¹ That is, religious experience is fundamental, and the dogmas of religion are the clarifying modes of external expression.⁶² "The Dogmas of religion," said Whitehead, "are the attempts to formulate in precise terms the truths disclosed in the religious experience of mankind."⁶³ And closer examination of the religious experience of mankind will reveal the primary function of a creed or dogma is its expression of the believer's awareness of the ultimately transcendent. It is his attempt to render the credible intelligible; to find a

⁵⁹Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 66.

⁶⁰Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 138. But it is too much to say as Smith does, that a vivid faith has little need for abstractions. On the contrary, one can't have a vivid understanding of his faith without abstractions (i.e., conceptualizations) Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, p. 116.

⁶¹Schleiermacher, On Religion, p. 87.

⁶²Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 132.

⁶³Ibid., p. 57.

logos in the mythos of his faith, or to penetrate the meaning of its mystery. Perhaps this is why so many verbalizations are really only distilled mysteries or paradoxes put in propositional form, because there is more to the mystery than a word (logos) or words can capture.⁶⁴

Perhaps, too, the inability of words to completely conceptualize transcendence is the reason so many religious assertions are either directly or indirectly negative. Kaufmann suggested that even monotheism was not originally a positive concept but an expression against polytheism.⁶⁵ Possibly no one in the history of thought has held to the absolute simplicity of the transcendent more than did Plotinus, and he frankly confesses that even "unity" is a negative notion.⁶⁶ Moses Maimonides and the medieval thinkers after him stressed the via negativa as well.⁶⁷ Of course, if knowledge of transcendence is completely negative,

⁶⁴ See Vernon C. Grounds, "The Postulate of Paradox," Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society, Vol. 7 (Winter, 1964) pp. 3-21. Ramsey suggests, too, that this is the reason many of the Christian's verbal models of God are seemingly incompatible, such as God is both "impassible" and "loving." Neither term, he said, is to be understood literally but as a "model" (and we may have many "models" with varying degrees of adequacy) which must be understood not descriptively as a "scale model" but as "disclosure model," capable of evoking a characteristically religious awareness, Ramsey, Models and Mystery (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 19-20; and Religious Language, p. 101.

⁶⁵ Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, p. 287.

⁶⁶ Plotinus, Enneads, V, 5,6 (quoted below, see n. 76).

⁶⁷ See Moses Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, trans. M. Friedlander (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1904), Part one, LVIII-LX, and Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I, 13, 2 and 5.

it is legitimate to ask the question as to whether verbalizations of man's religious vision have any meaning at all. That is, is language really adequate as a medium for the expression of the ultimate?

The Limitations of Language as a Means of Expressing Ultimate Transcendence

Many words have been uttered to lament the limits of language as a means of expression. Among these lamentations mystics have contributed not a few sizeable volumes which attempt by language to say what they say language cannot really express. This very irony itself may be an indication of the indispensability of language, whatever its inadequacies may be. The problem is this: how can limited language express the unlimited? How can earthly terms convey heavenly truths? How can the immediate and immanent reveal the ultimate and transcendent?

Negative Language of Transcendence

The form of the problem is so forboding that many have virtually despaired of speaking meaningfully of the ultimate or God in anything more than negative terms. It is for this reason that Hegel identified religion with a philosophical dialectic, insofar as both must negate the given. "For religion equally with philosophy refuses to recognize in finitude a veritable being, or something ultimate and absolute, or non-posted, uncreated and eternal."⁶⁸ Even Immanuel Kant admitted that "The concept of a

⁶⁸Hegel, Logic, Vol. I, Bk. I, Ch. 3.

noumenon is thus a merely limiting concept . . . and it is therefore only of negative employment."⁶⁹ Tillich, likewise, admits the need of negations to express the ultimate, saying it ". . . cannot be defined beyond these negative terms."⁷⁰ Spinoza's famous dictum: all determination is by negation,⁷¹ is typical of a philosophy of definition by negation that is traceable as far back as Plato's "non-being."⁷²

However, the classic example of negative theology in the west is Plotinus. The transcendent source of all things (which he often called the "One") is so far beyond all sensible and even intellectual awareness that he says it is even beyond all being.⁷³ Agreeing with Plato, Plotinus said of the "One" that ". . . it can neither be spoken nor written of."⁷⁴ When he does, nevertheless, speak of it in any other terms than absolute simplicity or oneness, he readily admits that these ". . . assertions can be no more than negations."⁷⁵ In fact, "If we are led to think positively of the One," said he, "there would be more truth in silence." Similarly, "Even in calling it the First we mean no more

⁶⁹Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 272.

⁷⁰Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 43.

⁷¹Benedict Spinoza, Epistola 50 (Opera, IV, p. 240).

⁷²Plato wrote, ". . . what is not, in some respects has being and conversely that what is, in a way is not," Sophist 241 d.

⁷³Cf. Enneads V, 2, 1 and V, 3, 11.

⁷⁴Enneads, VI, 9, 4, cf. Plato, Parmenides 142 a.

⁷⁵Enneads, VI, 8, 11, cf. also V, 5, 6.

than to express . . . that it is not of that compound nature which would make it dependent upon any constituents." Although Plotinus says many apparently positive things about the transcendent "One," such as calling it good, supreme, absolute beauty, nevertheless he carefully qualifies all these with warnings like the following: "When therefore you seek to state or to conceive Him, put all else aside; abstracting all . . .; see that you add nothing; be sure that there is not something which you have failed to abstract from Him in your thought."⁷⁶

Now the merit of negative religious assertions cannot be denied, for the danger of verbal idolatry is always a real one. To repeat, idolatry is idolatry whether the images are mental or metal. Literalism about the transcendent deprives it of its ultimacy and its majesty, said Tillich.⁷⁷ But all of this is avoided by negative assertions, for it is precisely all limitations and finitude which is being negated so that the negative words may express the unlimited and transcendent.

However, there is a serious, if not fatal, difficulty with purely negative religious assertions. Plotinus himself touched on it when he admitted "It is impossible to say 'not that' if one is utterly without experience or conception of the 'that.'"⁷⁸ That is, all negative predications presuppose some positive

⁷⁶ Enneads, II, 9, 1; emphasis mine.

⁷⁷ Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 52.

⁷⁸ Enneads, VI, 7, 29.

understanding of that about which the predication are being made. Tillich said, "There would be no negation if there were no preceding affirmation to be negated" ⁷⁹ Feuerbach's remark is instructive in this regard: "The truly religious man can't worship a purely negative being Only when a man loses his taste for religion does the existence of God become one without qualities, an unknowable God." ⁸⁰ Indeed, the mystic himself, said Henri Bergson, ". . . has nothing to do with properties which are mere negations and can only be expressed negatively; he believes that he sees what God is, for him there is no seeing what God is not." ⁸¹

Of course, that is precisely the problem, viz., the believer sees the transcendent as a positive reality, but can he say anything about it in language with other than a purely negative meaning (which would seem to be equivalent to no meaning at all)? In other words, even if one can experience the transcendent, can he express it in terms which have a positive meaning? One attempted answer to this problem has been the doctrine of analogy.

Analogous Language of Transcendence

In line with the many references of Thomas Aquinas to the doctrine of analogy his followers have sensed its importance and

⁷⁹ Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 40.

⁸⁰ Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, p. 15.

⁸¹ Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, p. 252.

have given a great deal of time to it.⁸² Since Thomists do not agree as to exactly what Aquinas meant by analogy, we will offer a summary of our own interpretation.⁸³ Basically, there are three alternatives for language about God: its meaning can be equivocal (totally different as applied to God),⁸⁴ univocal (totally the same), or analogous (similar). Now if it is equivocal, then one is really not saying anything meaningful about God when he affirms, e.g., that God is good. For if the meaning of good is totally different when applied to God from what it means as applied to finite goods, then they are really not alike at all in meaning.⁸⁵

Nor, on the other hand, can one's language about God be univocal in meaning for concepts are finite and limited and God is infinite and unlimited, and there is an infinite difference

⁸²The first systematic treatment was made by Cardinal Cajetan, The Analogy of Names (Duquesne University Press, 1953). The most comprehensive textual study is a recent one by George Klubertanz, St. Thomas on Analogy (Loyola University Press, 1960). Another significant contribution has come recently from Ralph McInerny, The Logic of Analogy (Hague: Nijhoff, 1961). But Eric Mascall's Analogy and Existence (Longmans, Green, 1949) is perhaps more well known than the others. The most significant treatment, however, is that of Battista Mondin, The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology (Hague: Nijhoff, 1963).

⁸³Much of this analysis is a summary of our unpublished master thesis, The Use of Analogy in Thomistic Theism, Wheaton College, Illinois, 1959.

⁸⁴Aquinas sometimes says it is "almost equivocal," De Trinitate, VI, 3, reply, as translated by Armand Maurer in The Division and Methods of the Sciences (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute, 1963).

⁸⁵See George Klubertanz, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Being (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), 53-63.

between a finite and an infinite. Or to put it another way, if God is beyond and completely other than this world, then how can terms applied both to him and to the world mean entirely the same thing?

Therefore, since language about God can be neither equivocal (totally different), nor univocal (totally the same in meaning), it must be analogical (partly the same and partly different).⁸⁶

The justification, then, for analogous knowledge is that it is the only meaningful ground between the extremes of skepticism and dogmatism; between not being able to say anything meaningful about God (on the basis of language as equivocal) and being able to speak perfectly about God (on the basis of language as univocal).

Perhaps the other most significant factor in the defense of analogy which Thomists have put forth is that analogy is based on causality. That is, the creature must bear some resemblance to the Creator simply because an effect must in some way pre-exist in the cause.⁸⁷ To put it another way it would be contradictory to say that God can produce perfections which he does not himself possess. That is, it would be contradictory to affirm that the creature has a perfection which its Creator doesn't have.

The attempts to defend analogy notwithstanding, it has not met with wide acceptance in the modern philosophical world for

⁸⁶"Partly" is not intended to imply parts. It means at once alike and different or similar.

⁸⁷See Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles I, 29-30; Summa Theologica I, 4, 3.

two basic reasons: it seems to them to prove either too little or to prove too much. Some medieval Scholastics after Aquinas (like Scotus) took the former position and many moderns (like Hume) supported the latter view. Let us briefly examine these charges.

The basic argument Scotus advances is this: unless there is something the same (univocal) in one's predications of God, he cannot be sure he is really saying anything about God at all.⁸⁸ That is, unless one's predications are univocal, he cannot be sure they are not equivocal.⁸⁹ For if one maintains that this point is not true, ". . . a disconcerting consequence ensues; namely that from the proper notion of anything found in creatures nothing at all can be inferred about God, for the notion of what is in each is wholly different."⁹⁰ Basically, his argument comes to the following: if there is to be a certainty in one's knowledge about God, then there must be univocity in his predications about him.⁹¹ That is, either skepticism or univocity.

Now it is precisely this skeptical alternative that Hume

⁸⁸The reason for this is that "God cannot be known naturally unless being is univocal to the created and uncreated," John Duns Scotus, Philosophical Writings, trans. Allan Wolter (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1964), p. 6.

⁸⁹He adds, "Consequently, every inquiry regarding God is based upon the supposition that the intellect has the same univocal concept which it obtained from creatures," Duns Scotus, Philosophical Writings, p. 28.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹"One and the same concept cannot be both certain and dubious. Therefore, either there is another concept [which is certain], or there is no concept at all, and consequently no certitude about any concept," Duns Scotus, op. cit., p. 23.

took. Fundamentally, he argued that analogy proves too much [and univocity, a fortiori]. For if God is like the world then God is imperfect for there are imperfections in the world.⁹² He wrote, "You have no reason, on your theory, for ascribing perfections to the Deity, even in his finite capacity."⁹³

Following up Hume's line of thought, Kaufmann argued that "The whole theory of analogy, even if otherwise free of holes, would still be shipwrecked on the Christian conception of hell."⁹⁴ That is to say, if God is like everything he created, then (repugnant as it may sound to a believer in God) he is like hell. It is for a similar reason that Plotinus held that God (the One) did not possess what he produced. For God produced finite, limited, multiple things, and he is none of these.⁹⁵ But for Hume, if analogy (or univocity) were true, then God would be finite, physical, and evil since he has produced all of these. However, most theists are not content to accept these as characteristics of God. On the other hand, if nothing can be predicated of God at least in an analogous sense, then it would seem to follow that he must remain cognitively unknowable.

Despite the fact that the doctrine of analogy has not been widely accepted outside Thomistic circles among modern thinkers,

⁹²David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1962), VI.

⁹³Ibid., V.

⁹⁴Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, p. 189.

⁹⁵Cf. Plotinus, Enneads, VI, 7, 15.

it seems to us that it deserves more serious consideration.⁹⁶ Certainly Hume's criticism is not definitive. For it can be argued that only perfections, not imperfections, are to be applied to God. Imperfections are privations or lacks and no lack of perfection can be attributed to God who by nature is said to have all perfections. Furthermore, if God is held to be infinite then of course nothing which necessarily implies a limitation can be attributed to him. At this point a theist may argue that whatever cannot be applied to God without necessarily implying limitations (such as materiality) must be said at best only metaphorically or symbolically. And whatever implies evil may not be applied to God at all, for he is held to be absolutely good. On the other hand whatever perfections can be predicated without necessarily implying limitations may be attributed to God metaphysically or substantially.

However, if it is granted that there is an intrinsic similarity between God and creatures based on the connection of

⁹⁶One of the reasons Thomistic analogy has been rejected by many thinkers is that it has been wedded to Cajetan's view that proper proportionality is the basic Thomistic analogy. For it seems to many that this analogy which is built only on the indirect relation between two relationships (e.g., finite love is to the finite nature of man as infinite love is to the infinite nature of God, like 2/4::3/6) does not really establish any intrinsic similarity at all. More recently, however, Thomists have come to acknowledge that St. Thomas himself based his doctrine of analogy on the intrinsic relation that God bears to creatures as the cause to its effects. See Mondin, op. cit., chapter 4. James F. Ross reopened the study of Thomistic analogy in the context of analytic philosophy in a significant article, "Analogy as a Rule of Meaning for Religious Language," International Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 3 (September, 1961), pp. 468-502.

cause to effects, then it would seem to follow that what may be properly attributed to both God and creatures is based on a univocal meaning of the terms. For example, the term love which can be applied to both God and man will have to have the same meaning even though it is applied to the former without limits and to the latter with limitations. In this sense, the univocal-analogical debate may be solved by saying that the meaning of the terms which are applied properly to both God and creatures is the same but they are not applied in the same way. That is, the meaning is univocal but the predication is analogical.⁹⁷ For example, the word love has the same univocal meaning in and of itself but as applied or predicated of man it means finite love and as applied to God it means infinite love. In one case the same meaning of the word love is predicated without limitation and in the other case it is predicated with limitations. And since there is an infinite difference between a finite and an infinite, it cannot be said that the predications have entirely the same meaning in both cases. However, if there must be an intrinsic relation between the Source of all love (that is, Love itself) and love as it is found in its finite manifestations, there must be some similarity between love as it is found in God and as it is found in his creatures. For even if there is an infinite difference in perfection between God and creatures, there nevertheless need not be a total lack of similarity. There could in fact be an analogy.

⁹⁷ See Armand Maurer, "St. Thomas and the Analogy of Genus," New Scholasticism, Vol. 29 (April, 1955), pp. 143-144.

Whether in fact there is an analogy between God and creatures will depend, of course, on whether or not there is a God who in fact did create creatures in his image. It is not our purpose here to decide this question. What we can contend, however, is that if there were a God who is the cause of every perfection in the world, there would seem to be no compelling reason why one could not speak meaningfully about him even though he be infinite. And on the other hand, even if there is no such thing as a transcendent reality, one can still speak meaningfully about such a supposed reality in analogous language. As long as there are ways to apply words which do have positive meaning beyond the scope of their usual finite application then it will be possible to speak meaningfully of the transcendent. If it can be shown that it is impossible to extend the positive meaning of a word beyond the limits of immediate human experience, then at best one may be able to speak of the transcendent only negatively or symbolically. In order to complete the treatment of religious language attention will now be turned to other attempts to defend the meaningfulness of symbolic talk about the transcendent.

Disclosure Language about the Transcendent

Ian Ramsey seeks to elaborate a meaningful language about transcendence by what he calls "disclosure models." Contrary to "picturing models" or "scale models" a "disclosure model" does not attempt to describe anything, rather it becomes currency for a moment of insight. "The great value of a model," said Ramsey, "is that it enables us to be articulate when before we were

tongue-tied." Disclosure models are the means of the universe revealing itself to man, and they are to be judged primarily on their ability to point to mystery, not on their ability to picture it. Indeed, it is part of the purpose of a model and its qualifiers to leave a mystery intact (e.g., God may be modeled as 'love' and qualified by the word 'infinite').⁹⁸ The intention is to produce, from a single model, and by means of some qualifier, an endless series of variants, . . . in this way witnessing to the fact that the heart of theology is permanent mystery.⁹⁹

Other examples Ramsey gave are words which have evocative powers like indefinite pronouns or nicknames. The latter is a ". . . word which has intrinsically the fewest possible empirical connections, but is very much filled out 'in use.'"¹⁰⁰ That is, language about God is not declarative; it is evocative.¹⁰¹ Ramsey holds that by the use of non-descriptive, evocative language one can avoid being literalistic or purely anthropomorphic about God, for he has learned that no one model has single, all-exclusive track to mystery any more than one metaphor can do full justice to a sunset or to human love and affection. That is to say, disclosure models ". . . are not descriptive miniatures, they are

⁹⁸Ramsey, Models and Mystery, pp. 7; 19-20; 12-13; 71, 61.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 60, 65, 21.

¹⁰⁰Ramsey, Religious Language, p. 162.

¹⁰¹"My suggestion is that we understand their [i.e., names for God] behaviour aright if we see them as primarily evocative of what we have called the odd discernment . . ." Ramsey, Religious Language, p. 56.

not picture enlargements; in each case they point to mystery, to the need for us to live as best we can with theological and scientific uncertainties."¹⁰²

Is not this latter statement an admission of skepticism about God? Is it not merely another way of saying man does not know, or that his knowledge of God is equivocal? To answer this from Ramsey's perspective one must remember that his concern is not with a descriptive knowledge of the transcendent but, rather, with meaningful disclosure language about it.

The least that can be said for Ramsey's "models" is that they do answer Wittgenstein's challenge to keep silent unless one can speak meaningfully.¹⁰³ Even if disclosure models do not allow one to speak descriptively about God, nevertheless they do permit one to speak.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, by virtue of the fact that Ramsey's disclosure models are not cognitively descriptive nor empirically verifiable (as are scientific models)¹⁰⁵ and by virtue

¹⁰²"The intention is to produce, by a single model, and by means of some qualifier, an endless series of variants, . . . in this way witnessing to the fact that the heart of theology is permanent mystery," Ramsey, Models and Mystery, p. 20.

¹⁰³"It is interesting to notice, first, that the possibility of articulation is still, as it always was, the basis of a model's usefulness. The great virtue of a model is that it enables us to be articulate when before we were tongue-tied. But it is evident that articulation now is much more tentative than it was before, that is when it was developed on the basis of a scale model . . . In fact on the new view, the crucial question is: How can we be reliably articulate?" Models and Mystery, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰⁴In a doctoral dissertation on Ian Ramsey, Jerry Gill concludes that "Ian Ramsey's interpretation adequately meets the challenge of Logical Empiricism concerning the cognitivity of Christian language." Ian Ramsey's Interpretation of Christian Language (University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Mich, 1967), v.

¹⁰⁵"But now we must emphasize that models in science . . .

of the fact that they are indefinitely qualifiable, one cannot only speak about God but speak endlessly. And in so speaking, Ramsey contends, one's language does not suffer "death by a thousand qualifications" but rather gives "life by a thousand enrichments."

The question, said Ramsey, is not whether one can speak descriptively about the Divine Nature; the real question is: How can he be reliably articulate? Models help us to reliably articulate theology when two conditions hold: 1) "In all cases the models must chime in with the phenomena; they must arise in a moment of insight or disclosure," and 2) "A model in theology does not stand or fall with . . . the possibility of verifiable deductions. It is rather judged by its stability over the widest possible range of phenomena, by its ability to incorporate the most diverse phenomena not inconsistently." This is what Ramsey calls the method of "empirical fit," which has no scientific deductions emerging to confirm or falsify the stated theories. "The theological model," he said, "works more like the fitting of a boot or a shoe. . . ." ¹⁰⁶ In brief, religious language is empirically anchored (in disclosure situations) ¹⁰⁷ and pragmatically tested by the way it enables one to piece together the

enable us to generate verifiable deductions, and models in theology . . . make possible empirical fit," Models and Mystery, p. 19.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 13, 15-17.

¹⁰⁷ See chapter 3 for a discussion of Ramsey's disclosure situations.

empirical data.

Further, even though disclosure models are not ontologically descriptive,¹⁰⁸ nevertheless they do help to build "family resemblances." "Let us always be cautious," Ramsey warned, "of talking about God in straightforward language. Let us never talk as if we had privileged access to the diaries of God's private life," When we speak of God as "supreme love," e.g., ". . . we are not making an assertion in descriptive psychology. . . ." Rather, we are using a qualified model ("love" is qualified by "supreme") whose logical structure can only be understood in terms of the disclosure-commitment situation in which it arose.¹⁰⁹

What he calls "qualifiers" are ". . . words which multiply models without end and with subtle changes." They create what Wittgenstein called "family resemblances" or a family of models.¹¹⁰ By means of qualification of one model or metaphor,¹¹¹ many of them can be related in an overall meeting place between contexts. And it is at this juncture where the mystery resides.¹¹² That

¹⁰⁸"The English physicists of the nineteenth century were right in wanting some 'ontological commitment,' some 'real existence'; they were only wrong, but badly wrong, in thinking this could be given descriptively. It is this error which the contemporary use of models makes evident and spotlights and is determined to avoid," Ramsey, Models and Mystery, p. 20.

¹⁰⁹Ramsey, Religious Language, pp. 104, 99.

¹¹⁰Ramsey, Models and Mystery, pp. 60-61.

¹¹¹A disclosure model and a metaphor are very much alike in that both ". . . enable us to be articulate and are born in insight," Ramsey, Models and Mystery, p. 48.

¹¹²Ibid., pp. 51, 61.

is, by mapping out the similarities engendered by the meeting of the many metaphors, one may gain increased insight into the mystery. As Max Black put it, "A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other. . . ."¹¹³ It is in this way that metaphors help to visualize the similarity in various situations and thus to begin to form a master map of family resemblances.

Metaphors then are not just link devices between different contexts. They are necessarily grounded in inspiration. Generalizing, we may say that metaphorical expressions occur when two situations strike us in such a way as to reveal what includes them but is no mere combination of them both.¹¹⁴

Ramsey does not spell out what this common element is in which the various metaphors and models coincide, but it is at this point that he comes closest to admitting what the scholastics were getting at in their "univocal element" in analogy. Indeed, it bears a striking resemblance to what Søren Kierkegaard meant by approaching a "paradox" from many sides. He wrote,

...I entered into the whole foregoing discussion--not as though Abraham would thereby become more intelligible, but in order that the unintelligibility might become more desultory. For, as I have said, Abraham I cannot understand, I can only admire him.

By desultory Kierkegaard meant a "...leaping from one point to another so as to illuminate the subject from all sides, or in

¹¹³Max Black, Models and Metaphors, as quoted by Ramsey, Models and Mystery, p. 54.

¹¹⁴Ramsey, Models and Mystery, p. 53.

order that the unintelligibility might be broken down into its several parts."¹¹⁵ But if each one of Ramsey's disclosure illumines a common meaning, or if each one of Kierkegaard's perspectives helps one to understand the meaning of the paradox, then there must be a common core of meaning (a univocal element) which they all convey. That is, if all the models converge to give meaningful insights into the transcendence, then there must be a common basis for them, otherwise the divergent models are not really providing insights into the same thing after all. In this sense disclosure language is doing the same job that the univocal element in analogous is intended to accomplish.

But the basic question which must be answered here is not whether Ramsey's "disclosure" language is really "analogous" language or whether both are like Kierkegaard's "paradoxical" expression, but whether any of these are adequate ways of speaking about ultimate transcendence. However, before we are ready to answer this question we must first review other approaches aimed at discovering an adequate language for the transcendent.

Symbolic Language about Transcendence

Paul Tillich suggests that the answer is to be found in "symbolic" language about God. "Man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically," wrote Tillich, "because symbolic lan-

¹¹⁵Editor's note, Fear and Trembling, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1954), p. 121. Kierkegaard admits that there is a way to understand a paradox, saying, "However, if I regard the problem [of God commanding Abraham to transcend the moral law and kill Isaac] as a paradox, then I understand it in such a way as one can understand a paradox," Fear and Trembling, p. 84.

guage alone is able to express the ultimate." But a "symbol" is not the same as a "sign" for Tillich. A sign is something that points beyond itself, but a symbol is more. "It points beyond itself while participating in that to which it points." For example, the flag is a symbol of the nation because it not only points beyond itself to the nation for which it stands but in addition it participates in the power and dignity of that nation.¹¹⁶

According to Tillich there are three criteria of a true symbol: 1) True, living symbols should be immediately understandable; 2) There should not be resistance to them because of anxiety concerning the idolatrous use of symbols; 3) They should be expressed in a contemporary stylistic form.¹¹⁷

The great symbol of faith for Tillich is the word "God" because somehow the word participates in all the honor and dignity that is attributed to God himself. However, this is not to say that any of the attributes of God or even the word God itself are really descriptive of God. "All the qualities we attribute to him, power, love, justice, are taken from finite experiences and applied symbolically to that which is beyond finitude. . . ."¹¹⁸ They are symbols taken from daily experience, and not information about what God is or what He can do. They do not form a logos about God but a mythos.

¹¹⁶Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, pp. 41, 45.

¹¹⁷Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 92.

¹¹⁸Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 47.

Tillich admits that symbols may lose their meaning and may even die,¹¹⁹ but adds that they may also be revived. "Therefore, no symbol should be removed. It should be reinterpreted."

"Classical, traditional Christianity," he said, "has lived in symbols--Creation, fall, reconciliation, salvation, Kingdom of God, Trinity. These all are great symbols, and I do not wish to lose them." Indeed, Tillich envisioned his writings as ". . . directed precisely to the interpretation of religious symbols in such a way that the secular man--and we are all secular--can understand and be moved by them."¹²⁰

Tillich's concept of symbolic language about God has not been without resistance by contemporary philosophers. Kaufmann's response is to the point:

Some people think that the conception of "symbols" which is fashionable in our day can do the job that "analogy" has failed to do. It is argued that religious propositions which are literally false are true when understood symbolically. The first point to note here is that there is no nonsense whatever which may not be said to be symbolically true, especially if the symbolic meaning is not stated.

If, on the other hand, Kaufmann continued, the ". . . claim that religious propositions are symbolical means that they are richly ambiguous, it is true--but put very misleadingly. . . ."¹²¹

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 47-49.

¹²⁰Tillich, Ultimate Concern, pp. 97, 96, 88-89.

¹²¹Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, pp. 189, 191. Furthermore, Kaufmann contends that Tillich's distinction between "sign" and "symbol" is both arbitrary and ridiculous, for ". . . it would make 'mythical thought' and the 'primitive mentality' of undeveloped peoples and children the norm for all

Tillich was eventually forced to acknowledge that one's knowledge of God could not be completely symbolic by the argument, ". . . that in order to speak of symbolic knowledge one must delimit the symbolic realm by an unsymbolic statement."¹²² His reply was that the one unsymbolic, and therefore unambiguous, statement that can be made of God is that he is "being itself." "But," Kaufmann responded, "this is surely neither a symbolic statement nor a nonsymbolic statement: it is no statement at all, it is a definition--and as it happens, a definition utterly at odds with the meaning of 'God' in probably more than 95 per cent of our religious tradition. . . ." He continues, "Tillich's 'being itself' is neither the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob nor the God of Jesus and Paul In short, Tillich's propositions about God are through and through ambiguous."¹²³

However, inadequate Tillich's symbolic language of God may be, Kaufmann is not entirely consistent in basing a rejection of it on its ambiguity. For Kaufmann himself wrote, "Propositions can be multivocal without being equivocal: to the perspective they speak with many voices, signify many things, and mean a great deal."¹²⁴ On the other hand, to argue (as Tillich eventu-

of us" for they share alike the superstitious belief that a sign is somehow real or participates in the reality which it symbolizes, Kaufmann, Ibid., p. 194.

¹²²A criticism given by Professor Urban of Yale which Kaufmann relates, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, p. 195.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 195, 196.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 72.

ally did) that all symbolic statements must have a nonsymbolic basis is reminiscent of Scotus' contention that there must be a univocal, non-ambiguous basis for all ambiguous and non-univocal predications.¹²⁵

The other alternative to arguing for a univocal basis for all symbolic predications of God is to say that all language about God is purely symbolic. Such is what Jaspers does by calling religious language "cipher" language.

Cipher Language About Transcendence

Jaspers said, ". . . the meaning of the cipher is that through it I actually become aware of something that cannot be expressed in any other language. . . ." For the idea of God, taken seriously, excludes definite determinations, and requires that one go beyond all languages. That is, ". . . a cipher becomes a symbol of a reality that cannot be expressed in any other way." Cipher language is a code language about God because there is no content language about Him. It speaks in a mythos about God because there can be no logos about Him. There can be no clarity where there is mystery.¹²⁶

It is interesting to observe in this regard that some of contemporary philosophy is moving in a somewhat reverse direction from the early Greeks who threw off the vast symbolic visions of mythology and attempted to get a clear-headed picture of the way

¹²⁵See discussion in above notes 89-92.

¹²⁶Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, pp. 87, 89; cf. 85.

things really were--they sought a logos in place of a mythos.¹²⁷
 It would seem that Jaspers and others are saying that the quest for the logos for more than two millennia of Western thought has proved futile; we must return to myths as means of describing reality.¹²⁸

Be that as it may, Jaspers' "cipher" language is admittedly mythical and non-objective. It is in this respect that he opposes so strongly Rudolf Bultmann's attempt to de-mythologize. "We should not destroy, but restore the language of myth," he writes. "To speak of 'demythologization' is almost blasphemous. Such a deprecation of myth is not enlightenment, but sham enlightenment," he continues. "Does the splendor of the sunrise cease to be a tangible, ever new and inspiring reality, a mythical presence, just because we know that the earth is revolving around the sun . . . ?" Bultmann, he complains, fails to recognize that mythical language conveys an untranslatable truth. "The elements of truth in the myth . . . cannot be separated from its historical garb, once the latter has been stripped away."

The real task, therefore, is not to demythologize, but to recover mythical thought in its original purity. . . and indirectly bring us closer to the lofty, imageless

¹²⁷ Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, p. 42.

¹²⁸ Indeed, the later Heidegger's return to the pre-socratics and interest in the poetical utterances of Holderlin would lend support to this analysis, as would Altizer's deep interest in Blake's mystical poetry. See William Barrett, Irrational Man (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1958), p. 209, and Thomas Altizer and William Hamilton, Radical Theology and the Death of God (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966), pp. 171 f.

transcendence, the idea of God which no myth can fully express for it surpasses them all.¹²⁹

The real task, then, is not to demythologize but to "remythologize." Nevertheless, Jaspers admits there is a half truth in demythology, viz., that of ". . . denouncing reification, or conceiving the myth as an alleged reality, opaque and tangible."¹³⁰

In brief, Jaspers' "ciphers," Tillich's "symbols" and Ramsey's "models" are all attempts to avoid two extremes: verbal idolatry (or identifying God with verbal images of him)¹³¹ on the one hand and theological silence on the other hand. But do they succeed?

¹²⁹Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, pp. 85, 17, 16, 33-34, 17.

¹³⁰Jaspers conceives of his own task as one of existential hermeneutics which depends on two critical factors:

"First: Whereas mythical language is historical, and hence its truth can lay no claim to the universal validity of knowledge, it is precisely by virtue of this quality that it can lend the historical Existenz something of the unconditional. The unconditional thus brought to light remains conditioned in expression, historically relative, and objectively uncertain. . . .

Second: All mythical images are ambiguous. This idea is inherent in the Biblical commandment: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Everything mythical is a language that grows faith before the transcendence of the one godhead. While we see, hear, and think in the language of myth conceived as code, while we cannot become concretely aware of transcendence without a code language, we must at the same time keep in mind that there are no demons, that there is no magic causality, no such thing as sorcery," Myth and Christianity, pp. 16-17, 18-19.

¹³¹". . . if we were vouchsafed with God's name, our vision might soon become atrophied--loving the name more than him who had disclosed it--we can only meet this difficulty by supposing that the name of God will never at any time be completely vouchsafed to us," Ramsey, Religious Language, p. 129.

The Adequacy of Language as a Means of
Expressing Transcendence

The ability to avoid successfully these two extremes will be part of the criteria for the adequacy of religious language. For on the one hand, surely no religious expressions about transcendence can be deemed adequate if they do not point beyond the confines of limited empirical experiences to that which is ultimate. And, on the other hand, certainly no talk of the beyond is adequate if it is not grounded and anchored within finite, human experiences. Or, to state the criteria positively, any language which can point beyond limited, human experiences while retaining its basis within them has at least some adequacy for expressing the transcendent.

Before deciding whether or not a given language or way of speaking about transcendence is adequate, one must decide whether or not language itself of its very essence rules out this possibility.

Does Language Necessarily Imply Limitations?

If it could be determined that linguistic expressions always and necessarily imply limitations and are neither applicable to nor evocative of anything beyond empirical limits, then the battle for an adequate religious language is lost. Or, to be more specific, if language necessitates objectification, then there will be no way to speak of a transcendent subject which goes beyond all objectification. Only a careful analysis of what

language is can answer this question.

There can be no doubt that language often involves objectification. Certainly scientific speaking involves objectification, i.e., considering something as an object of our study. In the scientific sense, said Martin Heidegger, ". . . thinking and speaking are objectifying, i.e., positing something given as object in the field of scientific-technological representation (Vorstellen). . . ." He continues, "Outside of this field thinking and speaking are by no means objectifying."¹³² To put it in Ramsey's terms, "scale-model" language is objective but "disclosure-model" language is not.¹³³ The language of pure objectivity is empirically limited, but the language of subjectivity is not, because the former tries to picture whereas the latter points.¹³⁴ As Kaufmann observed,

The question is how we use language--to vivisect experience, killing it for the sake of generalized knowledge, or to capture experience alive. The scientist does the former, the poet the latter, and the philosopher must often try to do both and capture the experience before analyzing it.¹³⁵

What probably tends to mislead many Westerners into thinking that the nature of language is objective is the influence of

¹³²Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology," in Philosophy and Religion, ed. Jerry H. Gill (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1968), p. 64.

¹³³See Ramsey, Models and Mystery, pp. 19-20.

¹³⁴See Ramsey, Models and Mystery, pp. 7, 19, 20, and Religious Language, pp. 56, 162.

¹³⁵Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, p. 88.

scientific type thought in their culture plus the inherent rationalistic bend inherited from the Greeks.¹³⁶ As F. M. Cornford pointed out, the genius of the Greeks was to translate their mythos into a logos,¹³⁷ i.e., to seek clarity where there had been ambiguity. The problem comes, however, when the logos is taken to be an ontos, when language is given a being or essence of its own.

It is to the credit of Wittgenstein that many philosophers are coming to recognize that language has no essence.¹³⁸ To believe that language has a nature or essence is an illusion which contributes to semantical confusion on empirical topics. More important for this study, it would imply that there are necessarily implied limitations of language which render it incapable of speaking of anything beyond the empirical. In Greek philosophy an essence is definable and circumscribable and, therefore, limited. Essences refer to entities and, like the platonic Forms after which they are patterned, they are distinctly limited. So from the recognition that language has no essence follows the conclusion that language is not necessarily limited and, therefore, not inapplicable to the transcendent.

¹³⁶ See A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1946), pp. 42-45.

¹³⁷ Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, pp. 141-142, 258-259.

¹³⁸ Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 28th ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1969), p. 91.

What Is Language?

This raises the question as to precisely what language is. For Plato and his followers language was a revelation of the Logos, an expression of the common wisdom which is in all men. According to Cornford's interpretation of Plato, "The Logos is revealed in speech. The structure of man's speech reflects the structure of the world; more, it is an embodiment or representation of it. . . ." Language, like the visible world, is a manifold, and so half unreal and false.

Language, that stupendous product of the collective mind, is a duplicate, a shadow-soul, of the whole structure of reality . . . nothing, whether human or superhuman, is beyond its reach: Speech is the Logos, which stands to the universe in the same relation as the myth to the ritual action.¹³⁹

That is, as the myth is sometimes a verbalization of the action of a ritual, so is speech a verbalization or logos of the living reality of the whole world.

Several things emerge from this analysis of language which are significant for this study. First, if language is a kind of logos of a community (or cosmos),¹⁴⁰ the question arises again as to whether language is not therefore limited by its very rational structure as a logos and, therefore, incapable of expressing the unlimited? Of course, the answer to this will depend on what is

¹³⁹Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, pp. 192, 141.

¹⁴⁰Cornford contends that this is the original meaning of the word cosmos. "We are reminded that the very word cosmos was a political term among the Dorians, before it was borrowed by philosophy to denote the universal order," From Religion to Philosophy, p. 53.

meant by a logos. A survey of the Greek usage of the term reveals that it had many meanings,¹⁴¹ most of which may be divided into two broad basic categories: logos means either expression of or explanation for; discourse or definition; a verbalization or rationalization.

Now in the former sense of the word there would be no problem in calling religious language a logos. For religious language would be a word about God or the transcendent, not in the sense of describing it but declaring it; not in picturing it but in pointing to it; not in rationalizing it, but in revealing it.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹The Greek word logos may mean: 1) A computation or reckoning (as to account, measure, esteem, or value); 2) relation, correspondence, proportion; 3) explanation (as a plea, theory, law, thesis, reason, formula, law); 4) inward debate of the soul (as thinking, reasoning); 5) continuous statement, narrative (as fable, legend, tale, speech); 6) verbal expression or utterance (as single word; talk, report or tradition, discussion, debate, or deliberation); 7) a particular utterance or saying (as a divine oracle, proverb or maxim, assertion, express resolution, command); 8) a thing spoken of or subject matter; 9) expression, utterance, speech (as intelligent utterance, artistic expression, phrase or complex term); 10) Word or Wisdom of God (as Christ). Taken from Greek-English Lexicon, pp. 1057-1059, Thayer, ed.

¹⁴²Especially would there be no objection for the Christian in view of the Incarnation. Christ was called the Logos of God who lived among men and manifested God's glory. Religious language could profitably follow this paradigm for logos, for it is dynamic and not static. It is not object-centered for Christ was a living subject. Neither is it abstract and impersonal but concrete and personal, and so on. Cf. John 1:1, 14.

However, there are grave dangers with the other meaning of the Greek word logos, if not insuperable difficulties, in applying it to the transcendent. If logos must imply a limited conceptualization, then there would be no way to speak of the unlimited for all concepts are by nature limited, involving as they do some kind of mental picture or image.

Likewise, if language means logos in the sense of rationalization, it seems to be virtually impossible to avoid what has been called "reification"¹⁴³ or verbal idolatry. That is, men will inevitably be led to give explanations for God rather than be content with expression of God. Perhaps it is this inherent tendency in Western language to conceptualize and objectify which has led some to reject the view of language as a logos.

Whatever the reasons may be, there is certainly some merit in viewing language as a "macromyth" or "supermyth."¹⁴⁴ Since the purpose of a myth is to point beyond itself, then religious language as a macromyth would be suitable, could be appropriately characterized as a "macromyth," for that is precisely what religious language intends to do.

Further, as a myth is a kind of "code" or "cipher" to reveal transcendence, then language as a macromyth could be studied in order to decipher the transcendent which it conveys.¹⁴⁵ And,

¹⁴³Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, pp. 105-108.

¹⁴⁴Marshall McLuhan uses the former and W. L. King the latter term. See King, Introduction to Religion, pp. 138-139.

¹⁴⁵This seems to be what Ramsey means when he says that we

if language like myth is a revelation, a letting-be-said (by a subject) as opposed to a saying-about (objects), then religious language as a macromyth can avoid, as Heidegger said, ". . . the untenability and arbitrariness of the thesis that thinking and speaking as such of necessity are objectifying."¹⁴⁶ It would seem to follow, then, that an adequate religious language must be a language capable of expressing subjectivity, for it is precisely as subject that man transcends the limits of objectification and becomes a paradigm for speaking of the transcendent.

A Language of Subjectivity

As Michael Novak observed, in one respect the difficulty of finding a suitable language to speak about God is really in finding a suitable language for talking about the self. "Language borrowed from the object world is systematically misleading when applied to the self or to God. . . ." Language which is formed for the pragmatic purposes of everyday living, he said, ". . . is wrenched out of familiar channels when it is used of God." And language that is sharpened for philosophical purposes ". . . is more fitted for the needs of the system of which it is a part than for speaking of him who . . . moves beyond every system."

should constantly be on the look-out for 'odd' language as a 'tip-off' of the Transcendent. See Religious Language, p. 54 where he says, ". . . a useful antidote to the craze for straightforward language might be found in suitable doses of poetry or greater familiarity with words thrown up in scientific theories . . . and we might even conclude in the end that the odder the language the more it matters to us."

¹⁴⁶Heidegger, Being and Time (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 64.

Even though Novak admits that ordinary language in its use of "I" and "you" provides hints for enquiry about God, he warns that it is basically a language of objects, and is inherently idolatrous. He concludes that ". . . if any language is even remotely useful for talking about God, the likelihood is that it will be the language by which we speak of intelligent subjectivity."¹⁴⁷

Novak offers the following two interpretive principles for a language of "intelligent subjectivity":

Our first assertion is that the experience on which religious language is best grounded is the experience a man has of himself as a subject. [And] Our second assertion is that of all the experiences of intelligent subjectivity, the one most suitable as a guide to our thinking about God seems to be that of intelligent consciousness, including insight and critical reflection.¹⁴⁸

In developing this language he offers two guiding principles:

Thus, first, we will not use any predicate about God that does not at least apply to ourselves as subjects. Secondly, we will heed the warning that language borrowed from the object world can mislead us into thinking that awareness is like sense perception, or that the "world" of subjects is an imitation of the world of objects.

Therefore, for a man to state fully what he means by 'God' he would have to:

. . . 1) narrate many of his experiences (at prayer, in worship, even in secular action), 2) describe the contexts in which he believes he used the word 'God' well, and, above all, 3) enunciate his understanding of human

¹⁴⁷Novak, Belief and Unbelief, pp. 99, 94, 69, 28.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 98-99.

understanding. For what we mean by 'understanding' determines what we mean by 'man,' and what we mean by 'man' guides what we mean by 'God.'¹⁴⁹

However, Novak admits that by the language of "intelligent subjectivity",

We cannot answer directly what God's mode of life is like; at best, we can single out which things in the world he is not like, and which things he may be more like. The chief virtue in taking intelligent consciousness as a model for conceiving of God is that it does not require a corporeal body for its referent.

For example, "In moments of intellectual concentration, or again in moments of artistic contemplation or communion, we find ourselves 'rapt,' forgetful of the demands of our bodies, of the passage of time, of fatigue, of the need to eat." It is such experiences as these, Novak continued, that ". . . furnish us the direction in which total, unlimited, unconditioned consciousness is the upper limit."¹⁵⁰

An Adequate Language About Transcendence

And now to summarize the discussion and draw out a conclusion. Does language necessarily imply limitation? The answer is negative, unless the function of language is misunderstood to be a rationalization rather than a revelation. Only if language is mistaken to be a definition rather than a declaration is it necessarily limited in its application. It is not language as such which is inadequate but objectifying language. Therefore, in order to have an adequate religious language one must avoid

¹⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 101, 70.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 102, 103.

objectifying the transcendent. Basically this can be done in two ways: (1) By devising a non-objectifying language (as Novak); (2) By using objective language with appropriate qualifications so that it is not understood objectively (as Ramsey, et. al.). However, in either case if religious language is to be more than purely evocative non-cognitive insights into the transcendent, then there must be some common element of meaning at the basis of all symbolical and metaphorical predications such as is provided for in analogy. Otherwise, religious language could do no more than evoke an experience with a meaningless beyond, but it could not provide any meaningful understanding of the beyond. Without some common basis for meaning religious language will at best be only metaphorical declarations but not metaphysical descriptions of the transcendent. It will be no more than an exercise in what is linguistically possible about the non-empirical; it will not provide one with what is ontologically true about the transcendent. Without a common basis of meaning for metaphors, models, and symbols the best one can have is a meaningful way that he may speak of the transcendent, without any knowledge of the way the transcendent really is (if it really is).

There are certain essential features of an adequate language about the transcendent which emerge from this study. First as Tillich discovered, all symbolic statements must ultimately be grounded on what is not symbolic. Metaphysical statements are the basis of metaphorical ones. This means that there must be

some univocal meaning between things which are applied to the human experience and to what goes beyond it. It means too that if analogous language is to be meaningfully descriptive of the transcendent that there must be an intrinsic relationship between the transcendent and the immanent. There must be a univocal element or common meaning in the analogy.

Second, since all language taken from finite experience is limited in the empirical setting from which it comes, there must be some way to qualify it before it can be appropriately applied to that which transcends empirical experience. This may be accomplished in at least two ways; by negation and by extension. By negation or appropriate qualifications one may rid a term of what would otherwise be inapplicable to the transcendent.¹⁵¹ However, since every negation rests upon some positive knowledge, there must be some meaning at the basis of all the negations which can be applied by extension from its limited empirical circumstances to the transcendent.

This leads to a third point. There are some terms which are limited and empirical in meaning by derivation but are not necessarily so limited in their application. For instance, the concept of "love" is limited as we know it, but it does not follow from this that love as applied to the transcendent is necessarily

¹⁵¹And when the language is not transparent; when it does not point beyond itself, then it obscures God [cf. Buber, Writings of Martin Buber, ed. Will Herberg (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1956), p. 108], stifles the religious life (cf. Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 132), and leads to verbal idolatry.

limited and empirical. Is there not something about the meaning of the term love itself which makes it possible to extend it without negating its positive content to the transcendent? And is this not also true of other terms such as "being" (in the sense of "to-be-ness")¹⁵² and "consciousness." However, there are many terms which cannot be extended in their positive meaning to that which transcends the empirical. The word "rock," for example, is not applicable to the transcendent in any more than a symbolic way. For the very concept of a non-empirical or infinite rock is contradictory. In brief, only those words whose positive meaning is not essentially changed by extending it beyond the limited, empirical circumstances from which it is derived in human experience can be adequate currency for expressing the transcendent.

Summary of the Chapter

There are many ways religious men have attempted to express their experience of the transcendent, in symbol, in myth, in dogma, etc. The present study has chosen to examine the verbal expressions as a key to understanding what men mean by religious experience. Upon analysis of religious language it was discovered that the fundamental purpose it manifests is to express that which goes beyond the limitations of empirical experience.

Since language was taken to be a significant way of expres-

¹⁵²It is in this sense that the Thomistic notion of God as pure esse (from Exodus 3:14) was not inappropriate.

sing the transcendent, it was necessary to ask which kind of language, if any, is adequate for the purpose of expressing this non-empirical object of religious commitment. The answer to this is two-fold. Both negative and symbolic language are adequate ways of expressing the non-empirical aspect of the transcendent. However, in order for there to be any cognitive content and common meaning in religious language there must be at the basis of these symbols and negations some positive knowledge which can be extended without changing their essential meaning to that which transcends the empirical confines from which the term comes. There must be some metaphysical basis for all metaphorical predications about the transcendent. This is best found in the language of analogy.

CHAPTER III

THE CHARACTER AND DIMENSIONS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The plan of this chapter is to define more precisely what is meant by a religious experience. This will involve two things: first, it will discover and define precisely what is characteristic of a religious experience, and secondly it will examine the various dimensions which religious experience has taken.

The purpose for this chapter is twofold: first, a religious experience will be defined and distinguished from other kinds of experiences such as ethical and aesthetic experiences. After religious experience is understood, then it will be evaluated. That is, we will determine its identity before attempting to discover tests for its reality; we want to know what it is before devising ways of determining whether or not it is real.¹ Secondly, we will seek to elaborate the various dimensions or directions which religious experience may take so as to forstall

¹Even if it were possible to know whether something is without knowing precisely what it is, it certainly would be more helpful to be able to define it more clearly before attempting to make determinations about its reality. Furthermore, it is probably impossible to know that something is without having at least some general notion as to what it is. For example, one may know that there are other persons without being able to define precisely what is meant by a person but probably not without some general idea such as they are "speaking somethings."

mistaking experiences which are essentially religious for non-religious ones. In brief, this chapter is an attempt to understand what the nature of a religious experience is before seeking to find ways to evaluate its reality basis.

The Common Characteristics of Religious Experience

There have been many attempts to define religion. Most of these definitions have at least one common element--an awareness of the transcendent. That a religious experience involves the transcendent is held not only by theists and pantheists but by many atheists as well. The dimension and definitions of the transcendent differ, but a religious experience involves the transcendent nonetheless.

Religious Experience Involves an Awareness of the Transcendent

Some have denied that there is little or any cognitive content common to all religions, but few if any have denied that there is a transcendent dimension which goes beyond the finite individual and his empirical circumstances. Those who believe the transcendent has a reality of its own beyond the human have identified it with the "Universe" or "All" (Schleiermacher), the "Numinous" or "Holy" (Otto), the "Wholly Other" (Kierkegaard), "Being itself" or the "Being beyond being" (Tillich), the "Transcendental Ego" (Koestenbaum), and numerous other realities, personal and impersonal, pantheistic, deistic, or theistic. On the other hand, those who deny its objective reality often admit, nonetheless, that belief in the reality of the transcendent is

characteristic of religion. Some identify it (at least in part) with the individual's subconscious (James), the collective subconsciousness of men (Jung), the collective consciousness of the group (Cornford), the projection of human imagination (Feuerbach), man's absurd project to become self-caused (Sartre), the illusory object of a universal neurosis (Freud), man's higher or ideal self (Fromm), the imaginative unity of human values (Dewey), and so on. But whatever the description or name for the transcendent there is something transcendent (real or not) which goes beyond the individual in which or by which he transcends his finite conditions.

The Religious Person Is Aware of the Transcendent as Other.

Not only is it acknowledged that religious experience involves the transcendent, but it is also recognized that the transcendent is essential to religious experience. Feuerbach contended that it is absolutely essential that the religious man believes God is really out there, for he would not worship it as the ultimately other if he knew it to be nothing but himself.² Indeed, if there is to be any kind of experience, there must be at least a (mental) distinction, if not an (actual) difference, between the one which is aware and that of which it is aware. Even in the experience of self awareness there is a distinction between the "I" and the "me." It is difficult to see what the word "experience" (or awareness, consciousness) could mean if there is

²Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, pp. 13, 30, n. 1.

absolutely no distinction between the "I" (finite individual) and the "Thou," i.e., the transcendent. As Koestenbaum points out, religion is an I-Thou but not an I-I relation.³ That is, there is no meaning left to the word "experience" if there is an absolute merging of the individual and the transcendent.⁴ And even if it is possible to effect an ontological merging of "man" and "God" (though most mystics probably refer to psychological not ontological merging), this state could hardly be called one of awareness or consciousness (which is what we mean by experience).

If experience by its very nature will involve an "other," then it follows that religious experience must also involve something beyond or transcendent. W. C. Smith summed it up well when he wrote, ". . . what they have in common lies not in the tradition that introduces them to transcendence, nor in their faith by which they personally respond, but in that to which they respond, the transcendence itself."⁵

The Unity of Meaning in the Transcendent.---The point of general agreement among scholars is that religions have a great diversity of experience and expression and little if any unity of content. With regard to the first point Schleiermacher argued that multiplicity, far from being bad for religion, is necessary

³Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," op. cit., pp. 204, 205.

⁴In view of this, if the attainment of Nirvana is taken to mean the loss of all awareness, then it would not be a religious experience. It would be the experience of losing all experience.

⁵W. C. Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, p. 173.

for the complete manifestation of religion.⁶ James suggests that plurality in religious experience is necessary to fit the plurality of human needs.⁷ Tillich thinks that we should not pretend an identity where there is a very fundamental difference in the whole experience and attitude as between Western and Eastern religions (e.g., as to their views on history as linear vs. horizontal).⁸ Nor does he feel that they should be mixed, for "A mixture of religions destroys in each of them the concreteness which gives it its dynamic power."⁹

Having said this, however, is not to deny any possibility of identifying a common meaning to religious experience. Dewey was no doubt not far from the truth when he argued that there is little if any specifiable content of value which is common to all religions.¹⁰ However, this conclusion can be misleading, for it discourages the effort to find and define the elements which are common to most if not all religious experiences.

The analysis of William James is more profound and reveals a greater appreciation for the common elements of religious experiences. He suggests that all religions have the following

⁶Friedric Schleiermacher, On Religion, p. 213.

⁷William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 326, 368, 477.

⁸Paul Tillich, Ultimate Concern, pp. 152, 153.

⁹Paul Tillich, Christianity and Encounter with the World Religions, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 96.

¹⁰John Dewey, A Common Faith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), pp. 7-11.

three characteristics in common:

- 1) That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance;
- 2) That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end;. . . 3) That prayer or inner communion with the spirit there-of be that spirit 'God' or 'law'--is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.¹¹

And as to the basic "creed" or cognitive content of all religions James contended that it is two-fold: 1) an uneasiness or sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand; 2) an awareness that we are saved from this wrongness by making proper connection with higher powers.¹²

To rephrase this in our own words, James held that religious experience involves transcendence in two ways: first, the need of man to self-transcend, and secondly, the awareness of the transcendent toward which this transcendence is directed. The first is a process and the second is the object, or sphere in which transcendence operates.

The Need for Self-Transcendence.--Religious experience involves the need to transcend the unalterable displeasures of life. In this sense Koestenbaum was right in describing religion as ". . . man's effort to do something about the desperate condition of his own finitude."¹³ For that matter, Freud was correct in

¹¹James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 475.

¹²Ibid., p. 498.

¹³Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," p. 182.

depicting religion as man's search for a Cosmic Comforter to help him cope with the fearful eventualities of life, as was Bultmann's "Human longing to escape from this world by the supposed discovery of a sphere above this world."¹⁴ There seems to be little reason to dispute Kaufmann when he said, "Religion is rooted in man's aspiration to transcend himself. . . ." "Man," he said, "is the ape that wants to be a god Whether he worships ideals or strives to perfect himself, man is the God-intoxicated ape."¹⁵ Or as Sartre put it, man's project is to become God.¹⁶ In this sense, one may say that man is the being who is characterized by his need for self-transcendence.¹⁷

Even among the more humanistic definitions of religion there is admission of this characteristic feature. Dewey's pursuit of general and enduring ideals despite threats of personal loss¹⁸ is definitely an aspiration for self-transcendence. Even Fromm's self-labeled "humanistic religion" admits the need for

¹⁴See Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth, Vol. I, ed. H. W. Bartsch (Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1953), pp. 26 f.

¹⁵Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, pp. 354, 355, 359.

¹⁶Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 762, 766.

¹⁷Tillich said, "Human potentialities are powers that drive toward actualization. Man is driven toward faith by his awareness of the infinite to which he belongs, but which he does not own like a possession. This is in abstract terms what concretely appears as the 'restlessness of the heart' within the flux of life," Dynamics of Faith, p. 9.

¹⁸See Dewey, A Common Faith, p. 27.

self-transcendence. Religious experience ". . . in this kind of religion," he writes, "is the experience of oneness with the All, based on one's relatedness to the world as it is grasped with thought and with love."¹⁹ With this stress on self-transcending love,²⁰ Tillich's statement agrees, "Agape is a quality of love, that quality which expresses the self-transcendence of the religious element in love."²¹ All the religions of love, then, are illustrative of man's attempt to transcend the conditions of hate and disunity found in this world. Love, said Koestenbaum, is an a priori category by which the religious man unifies his world and overcomes the opposing otherness and attains self-fulfillment.²² Whether it is viewed as love or some other force, religious experience characteristically involves some means by which a man can self-transcend, or go beyond his own frustrating limitations.

Religion Involves the Transcendent.--Not only does religious experience involve a process of transcending or self-transcendence but it implies a dimension or sphere which is transcendent. That is, if the religious aspiration to go beyond is to be realized, then there must be a beyond in which or by which this can

¹⁹Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 37.

²⁰See Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1956), Chapter I.

²¹Tillich, Morality and Beyond (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 40.

²²Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," op. cit., pp. 210 f.

occur. To some this is a personal God; to others it is an impersonal Force. For some it is attainable in this life; for others it is sought in another life. But for every religious experience there is a transcendent dimension of one kind or another in which the transcending occurs. As shall be shown later, this transcendence can and does take many forms including transcendence via other men. But in each case there is always some transcendent involved in religious experience.

Many of the definitions of religion make this explicit.

The Oxford Dictionary, e.g., calls it a "Recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power" ²³ All definitions which use any form of the words "God" or "gods" clearly recognize that there is a transcendent realm implied in religious experience. What is not obvious, however, is that those forms of religion which do not have any such being or referent do likewise involve a transcendent. That is, the word transcendent is not to be limited to personal theistic concepts nor even to pantheistic or impersonal modes of describing the ultimate object or goal of religious aspiration. Nor is it to be limited to what is commonly called the supernatural. ²⁴ In point of fact, by transcendent we do not mean any or all of the particular conceptual ways

²³Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. VIII, p. 410.

²⁴For many moderns this term implies a false bifurcation of reality. John Dewey feels strongly that the concept of a "supernatural" religion is a hindrance to the religious experience. See A Common Faith, pp. 27, 28. Paul Tillich said antisupernaturalism is fundamental to all his thinking, Ultimate Concern, p. 158. See Vol. I of his Systematic Theology on reason and revelation.

of describing God. Rather by transcendent is meant the supposed reality that is beyond all of the actual and even possible ways of speaking thereof. It includes the Buddhistic "Nirvana," Tillich's "Being beyond being," Schleiermacher's "Universe" and "Infinite."

Even among those who deny the reality of the transcendent there is still an admission that religion involves such an alleged reality. Sartre, e.g., uses the word "God" repeatedly²⁵ and characterized man as the one whose fundamental project is to become God.²⁶ Fromm is willing to retain the word God as the symbol of the transcendent, providing it be recognized that he speaks of the transcendent powers of man. He said, ". . . in humanistic religion God is the image of man's higher self, a symbol of what man potentially is or ought to become. . . ." ²⁷ Although Feuerbach categorically denies any reality other than human behind the term God, he not only uses it but recognizes that it is essential to religion to believe that there is a transcendent God. Even though, for Feuerbach, consciousness of God is really only consciousness of man himself, nevertheless man is not directly aware of this. On the contrary, he said, ". . . ignorance of it is fundamental to the peculiar nature of religion."²⁸ God

²⁵See Jean-Paul Sartre, The Words, trans. Bernard Frechtman and George Braziller (New York: 1964), e.g., pp. 18, 97, 173, 178, 185, 188, 190, 193, 227.

²⁶Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 776.

²⁷Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 41.

²⁸Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, p. 13.

is really nothing but the projection of man's own nature, but the religious man isn't aware of this and that is why he worships this as God.²⁹ However, the present concern is not whether God or the transcendent is real. Rather the concern here is with the fact that religious experience seems always to involve a transcendent dimension.

To sum up, a religious experience is not only one of self-transcendence but one which involves a transcendent realm by which or in which the transcending is done or at least toward which it is directed. That is, in order to go beyond or deeper there must be a beyond or depth (real or imagined) toward which or in which the religious experience moves.

Some Paradigms for the Meaning of Transcendence.--Up to this point we have spoken of a religious experience as an awareness of the transcendent, i.e., as that which goes beyond the conditions of man's finite circumstances. No doubt it has occurred to the reader that what is meant by this beyond is not entirely clear. In order to elucidate what is meant by this the suggestion of Antony Flew will be followed, viz., that of giving some paradigm cases or examples from experience.

Paul van Buren focused the problem when he writes, ". . . the difficulty of speaking about 'transcendence,' 'ground and end of all things,' or some other oblique phrase substituted for the

²⁹ Feuerbach said men come gradually to recognize that they have been worshipping themselves, hence, "What was at first religion becomes at a later period idolatry," Ibid.

word 'God'. . . simply begs the empiricist's question."³⁰ "In a secular age, what would that 'more' be? It is our inability to find any empirical linguistic anchorage for that 'more' that has led to our interpretation [that all God-language or its equivalent is dead]."³¹

Since van Buren has regard for Ian Ramsey's approach to this question,³² we will begin with illustrations Ramsey used to explain what is meant by more, beyond or transcendence. These are what Ramsey calls discernment situations. He lists a series of discernment situations, which are ordinary empirical situations that suddenly "come alive" when the "ice breaks," the "light dawns" or that take on "depth." For example, when a Judge suddenly recognizes the accused as his long lost wife, "eye meets eye," or when it dawns on one that the twelve flat lines on a paper have the "depth" of a cube, when a formal party takes on warmth and a "new dimension," or after someone splits his dinner jacket. In each case, something more is revealed than what's seen in the empirical facts alone--the situation has a "depth of dimension" which goes beyond the sensory.

According to Ramsey, metaphors and verbally odd words have the same disclosure power.³³ For examples of verbally odd words

³⁰Paul van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, p. 79.

³¹Ibid., pp. 197, 198, cf. p. 84.

³²Ibid., p. 91.

³³In fact, he goes so far as to say "What is not verbally odd is void of disclosure power," Models and Mystery, p. 69.

he uses nicknames which evoke personal response (cf. "sweetheart" vis-a-vis "Elizabeth Mabel"). Ramsey also finds some tautologies as "I am I" or "Duty for duty's sake," or "Love for love's sake" to be significant and revelatory of more than they 'say' linguistically. In fact he finds "I-language" and moral language to be the key to "God language," in that both are verbally odd; both are straightforward but strained, and both gain their meaning in use.³⁴ That is the way moralists speak of a sense of duty, religion speaks of a sense of the unseen. Both are literally and logically odd but are far from being completely nonsensical. Quite the contrary, odd words and metaphors by their very similarity-with-a-difference can generate insight the way two pictures, rather similar but in some points significantly different, can lead to the apprehension of depth in a 3-D viewer.³⁵

Another example is first-person subjectivity. That is, "I" cannot be exhausted by all that is said about "me"; "I" am more than everything that can be objectively said about me; subjectivity transcends objectivity.³⁶ As Novak indicates, even an empiricist ". . . is more of a mystery to himself than his theory allows him to recognize, and every time he acts he uses the first awareness his theory neglects."³⁷

³⁴Ian Ramsey, Religious Language, pp. 42-50.

³⁵Ramsey, Models and Mystery, p. 10.

³⁶See ibid., p. 41.

³⁷Novak, Belief and Unbelief, p. 74.

Other illustrations of what is beyond the purely empirical experience could be developed, such as the sense in which Kant's noumenon or thing-in-itself is beyond the phenomena or thing-for-me³⁸ or the way in which the so-called transcendental ego is beyond the empirical ego.³⁹ Or the beyond or more may be illustrated by the way the unity of a sentence is more than the words which comprise it or the way the whole is greater than its parts.

However, these illustrations suffice only to show how there can be more in an empirical situation than 'meets the eye'; what they do not do is show why this transcendent or moreness is the object of what the religious call worship, total commitment, or ultimate concern. Certainly a discernment situation which discloses more than the empirical eye can see is not automatically an experience of religious transcendence. That is to say, when the twelve lines on a paper take on the "depth," the viewer doesn't commit himself to this cube. Nor when a formal dinner jacket splits does it thereby "disclose" God. Indeed, there

³⁸Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1956), pp. 54-58, 111. ". . . on the contrary, it itself limits sensibility by applying the term noumena to things in themselves (things not regarded as appearances). But in so doing it at the same time sets limits to itself, recognising that it cannot know these noumena through any of the categories, and that it must therefore think them only under the title of an unknown something," Critique of Pure Reason, p. 273.

³⁹See Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," pp. 179 f. For a similar distinction between Atman and Brahman in Hinduism see Jess De Boer's article, "First Steps in Mysticism," in Faith and Philosophy, ed. Alvin Plantinga (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 74, 79, 87, 90.

seems to be a missing dimension of transcendence to these illustrations that causes them to fall short of being religious. There must be something more to the meaning of more. The missing element is found in total commitment.

Religious Experience Involves a Total Commitment.--A religious experience involves something beyond a mere disclosure, something unconditional and ultimate; something to which men are willing to commit themselves with utter loyalty and devotion. That is, it involves not only an awareness of the transcendent but an awareness of it as ultimate and as demanding an ultimate commitment.

In Ramsey's words the transcendent must be something to which one is willing to give a "total commitment" before it qualifies as religious. For commitment situations he said, are those which have a claim on a man and yet leave him in exercise of his free will. Acting from a sense of duty, the patriot's "my country right or wrong," and one's all absorbing devotion to his favorite hobby are examples of total commitment. Combining the two sets of illustrations, Ramsey argues that a religious experience of the unseen or beyond is one that involves both discernment which goes beyond the mere empirical facts of the situations and which evokes a total commitment to it.⁴⁰ In a hobby one is totally committed to only part of the universe (say, to coin collecting); in mathematics, on the other hand, one is only

⁴⁰Ramsey, Religious Language, pp. 19 f.

partially committed to the whole universe (i.e., a loose commitment to the axioms, knowing other axioms are possible)⁴¹ which are applied to the whole universe; but in religion one has a total commitment to the whole universe.⁴² A religious commitment is "total" because of the depth of its loyalty, and it is "universal" since "It is a commitment suited to the whole job of living --not one just suited to building a house, studying [etc.] . . . and no more."⁴³

What Ramsey is getting at with his "total commitment," Tillich called "ultimate concern."⁴⁴ "The fundamental concept of religion," he said, "is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, by an infinite interest, by something one takes unconditionally seriously."⁴⁵ He explains this to mean ". . . taking something with ultimate seriousness, unconditional seriousness" that which one would be ready to suffer or even die for.⁴⁶

⁴¹The commitment to a given mathematical system (say Euclid's) is only partial or loose because its relation to all the facts in the universe is loose. That is, Euclid's system doesn't explain the areas of inter-planetary space or sub-atomic physics. Other mathematical systems fit better here, so we are only loosely committed to a given system. Nevertheless, once we are committed to, say, the Euclidian definition of a triangle, this is true universally in Oxford, Moscow, or New York, ibid., pp. 36, 37.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 35-41.

⁴³Ibid., p. 55.

⁴⁴"Concern" is in one sense a better word than "commitment" because the latter tends to imply a more specific act presupposing a well defined conceptual framework, whereas religious experience in general (as vs. a special religious experience) does not necessarily presuppose a specific framework or a specific decision.

⁴⁵Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, p. 30

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 7, 8.

Ultimate concern has both a subjective side and an objective side. Subjectively, it indicates that the subject or individual is being unconditionally serious about something; objectively, it refers to the object of our ultimate concern for which Tillich reserves the name "God."⁴⁷

Tillich argued that every man has an ultimate concern, because without an ultimate concern a being has no integrating center of his personal life. "Such a state, however, can only be approached but never fully reached, because a human being deprived completely of a center would cease to be a human being."⁴⁸

"The ultimate concern gives depth, direction and unity to all other concerns and, with them, to the whole personality."⁴⁹

Of course, not every ultimate concern is about something which is really ultimate. "Perhaps the ultimate was once actually the parents, or the mother Later another ultimate, perhaps a loved one, girl or boy, liberates us from this."⁵⁰ But "Man's faith is inadequate if his whole existence is determined by something that is less than ultimate. Therefore, he must always try to break through the limits of his finitude and reach what never can be reached, the ultimate itself."⁵¹ That is

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 106. Whether or not every man does have an ultimate commitment is a moot question. See chapter 5 for further discussion of this question.

⁴⁹Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 105.

⁵⁰Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 183.

⁵¹Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 57.

to say, to rest in what is not ultimate as though it were ultimate is idolatry. This is why Tillich is forced at times to reject even the term "God" or "Being" and speak of the "God beyond God" or the "Being beyond being," since to some the term "God" implies limitations.

What Tillich called being grasped by an ultimate concern may also include what is commonly called worship. That is to say, if the individual responds to the transcendent with an ultimate commitment it is because of the ultimate worth he sees in it. This act is called worship, for to worship something is really to respond to its worth-ship. Hence, if worship is understood in this basic sense of that attitude of admiration connected with an awareness of the ultimate worth of something, then it is closely associated with a total commitment or an ultimate concern. If, however, worship is taken in the more specific sense of prayer or ritual, then it is not an essential ingredient of religious experience.⁵² For one may be totally committed without entering into the ritual of prayer and one may pray without being ultimately concerned. But in the broader sense of the word worship (or even devotion to or love of the Divine) we are faced with the same fundamental awareness that characterizes a total commitment or that is implied in being grasped by an ultimate concern.

⁵²Cf. A. E. Taylor, "The Argument from Religious Experience," The Existence of God, pp. 158-160.

Schleiermacher described this special kind of religious awareness of the transcendent as a "feeling of absolute dependence."⁵³ By that he meant a sense of creaturehood or an awareness that one is not independent from but dependent upon the All or the Universe. It is a sense of existential contingency, a life in the infinite whole.⁵⁴ Otto agreed but felt that the sense of creaturehood resulted from the one's awareness of the Numen rather than being the basis of it.⁵⁵ Even Freud concurred that men have this sense of dependence, only he did not wish to identify it with religious experience.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, there is general agreement on the fact that men do have such a sense of dependence, concern, or commitment which we have called religious experience.

To summarize, a religious experience involves at least two fundamental factors: (1) an awareness of the transcendent, and (2) a total commitment to it as ultimate. There are many different ways the transcendent has been conceptualized and expressed, but these are the two basic factors in the religious experience itself.

Furthermore, to say the transcendent must be viewed as

⁵³Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928, 1956), pp. 12, 19 passim; On Religion, pp. 275 f.

⁵⁴Cf. Schleiermacher, On Religion, p. 39.

⁵⁵Cf. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp. 9-11.

⁵⁶Cf. Freud, Future of an Illusion, p. 52.

ultimate does not mean that it is ultimate.⁵⁷ Idolatry is always a real possibility for the religious. However it is difficult to see how something can deserve the description "object of religious experience" if it is not at least viewed as ultimate by the devotee. Nor does the ultimate have to be static to be ultimate. A commitment to a Hegelian dialectic as the divine unfolding itself in history is an example of a dynamic ultimate. Nor is Dewey's definition of "God" as the imaginative goal of all human values to be excluded from the category of the ultimate. In other words, something does not have to be permanent and unchangeable to qualify as a religious ultimate. If a man is completely committed to the sum total of human "progress" or "achievement," then it is a religious ultimate for him. All that is necessary for a transcendent to qualify as religious is that it be something final and supreme, something beyond appeal and irrevocable. That is, it must be something capable of evoking a complete commitment, utter loyalty, or ultimate concern on the part of an individual.

⁵⁷This is not to say that these are all the factors there ought to be in a religious experience. It does not mean that all that is necessary for an adequate or efficacious religious experience is an ultimate commitment to something beyond man which he thinks (or feels) is ultimate. First, as we indicated earlier (in chapter 1), the religious man ought to be concerned with the reality of the transcendent, even though some appear to be content with it as an ideal or to hold it merely as if it were true. Secondly, it is questionable as to whether or not an ultimate commitment is adequate if it is a commitment to something which is less than ultimate. But we are not here discussing what a religious experience ought to be in order to be satisfactory but what in fact it is in the experience of religious men. See chapter 5 for a discussion of the adequacy of religious experience.

Religious Experience in Contrast to Moral Experience

Since a religious experience is similar to a moral experience and since some thinkers tend to identify them, a few words of clarification are in order. Kant's definition of religion as "The recognition of all duties as divine commands" falls into this general category. Bishop Butler said that religion and morality "closely resemble" each other.⁵⁸ Ramsey calls them "close logical kinsmen" with "great affinities,"⁵⁹ and he suggests that this is the reason that they have so often had the same friends and the same enemies in the history of philosophy. R. B. Braithwaite distinguishes them only in theory not in practice, arguing, "Unless religious principles are moral principles, it makes no sense to speak of putting them into practice."⁶⁰ "A moral belief," he said, "is an intention to behave in a certain way: a religious belief is an intention to behave in a certain way (a moral belief) together with the entertainment of certain stories associated with the intention in the mind of the believer."⁶¹ Fromm ". . . believes that the difference between the religious and the ethical is to a large extent only an epistemological one,

⁵⁸As quoted by Ian T. Ramsey, Religious Language, pp. 32, 33.

⁵⁹Ramsey, Religious Language, pp. 34, 42.

⁶⁰R. B. Braithwaite, "Religious Statements as Ethically but not Factually Significant," The Existence of God (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), p. 241.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 250.

though not entirely so."⁶²

Even those who see a difference between religion and morality tend to stress their inseparability. Tillich wrote ". . . morality is intrinsically religious, as religion is intrinsically ethical."⁶³ Bergson contended that "Originally [i.e., among the primitives], the whole of morality is custom; and as religion forbids any departure from custom morality is coextensive with religion."⁶⁴

Despite the interrelationship and seeming inseparability of religion and morality, they involve clearly differing experiences. As Dewey observed, "The religious attitude signifies something that is bound through imagination to a general attitude. This comprehensive attitude, moreover, is much broader than anything indicated by 'moral' in its usual sense."⁶⁵ William James summed up the difference by arguing that morality accepts the yoke of the universe, but religion welcomes it; religion isn't a mere Stoic submission to the universe but a love of it. Morality calls for obedience, said James, but religion calls for vol-

⁶²Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 93. He does admit ". . . there is a factor common to certain kinds of religious experience [viz., the mystical] which goes beyond the purely ethical. But it is exceedingly difficult if not impossible to formulate this factor of religious experience," p. 94.

⁶³Tillich, Morality and Beyond, p. 15.

⁶⁴Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, p. 123.

⁶⁵Dewey, A Common Faith, p. 23. However, in the final analysis Dewey's definition of religion turns out to be one's broad moral goal, which hardly shows that there is a basic difference between them.

teers.⁶⁶ Schleiermacher offers a further distinction when he contends that morality is man's duty to the universe; religion is man's dependence on it.⁶⁷ But even in dependence there is a kind of duty, only it is a more basic duty than moral duty.

Perhaps no one has drawn the distinction between a moral duty and a religious duty more sharply than Kierkegaard in his famous panegyric on Abraham.⁶⁸ The ethical, said Kierkegaard,

⁶⁶James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 41-45.

⁶⁷Schleiermacher, On Religion, pp. 275. f.

⁶⁸Buber said Kierkegaard rejected this sharp distinction in his latter works. "Our rejection can be supported by Kierkegaard's own teaching. He describes 'the ethical' as 'the only means by which God communicates with 'man' (1853) The ethical no longer appears here, as in Kierkegaard's earlier thought, as a 'stage' from which a 'leap' leads to the religious, a leap by which a level is reached that is quite different and has a different meaning; here it dwells in the religious, in faith and service. This ethical can no longer mean a morality belonging to a realm of relativity, time and again overtaken and invalidated by the religious; it means essential acting and suffering in relation to men, coordinated with the essential relation to God," The Works of Martin Buber, p. 78. But if this were so, it would necessitate a reversal of virtually everything Kierkegaard said about Abraham, which is difficult to believe. Kierkegaard often closely identifies the ethical and the religious particularly when he is contrasting them with the aesthetic. But since he does not anywhere clearly repudiate the sharp distinctions between the ethical and the religious made in Fear and Trembling, it seems best to interpret these other isolated statements that seem to identify the ethical and the religious in view of the clear distinction he does make between them and nowhere clearly repudiates. See Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, p. 78, where he wrote, "The ethical is the universal, and as such it is again the divine. One has therefore a right to say that fundamentally every duty is a duty toward God; but if one cannot say more, then one affirms at the same time that properly I have no duty toward God. Duty becomes duty by being referred to God, but in duty itself I do not come into relation with God. Thus it is a duty to love one's neighbor, but in performing this duty I do not come into relation with God but with the neighbor whom I love."

expresses one's universal duty but the religious says that ". . . the individual as the particular is higher than the universal." This can also be expressed by saying that ". . . there is an absolute duty toward God for in this relationship of duty the individual as an individual stands related absolutely to the absolute." Or, to summarize Kierkegaard, an ethical experience responds to the moral law; a religious experience responds to the Moral Law-Giver Himself. The moral law says, "Thou shalt not kill"; God told Abraham: sacrifice your son Isaac. In this case then, either the religious is above the ethical or Abraham, far from being the great hero of faith, is a down-right murderer. Thus, we are ". . . wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against the fact that Abraham enjoys honor and glory as the father of faith, whereas he ought to be prosecuted and convicted of murder." In Abraham's case he had to transcend the ethical in order to do the religious. This does not mean the ethical is destroyed by the religious; rather, it is merely dethroned by it. For the ethical is a necessary prerequisite to the religious; one can not be religious unless he is first ethical. However, the religious is a higher relationship of duty to God in view of which even the ethical must give way. "Abraham, by a religious act of faith, overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher telos outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former." In this state of absolute duty to God, ". . . the ethical is reduced to a position of relativity" to the point that ". . . Love to God may cause the knight of faith to give his love

to his neighbor the opposite expression to that which, ethically speaking, is required by duty." The religious is higher than the ethical as the individual is higher than the universal, or as the concrete is over the abstract, or as the response to the person of God takes precedence over response to mere propositions about God. That is to say, morality is man's responsibility in this world; religion is his response to revelation from beyond this world. The former calls for duty, the latter for worship.⁶⁹

Furthermore, it may be added that religion differs from morality because the latter can point out man's weaknesses or sin but only the former can help him transcend them. That is, religion is higher than ethics because a feeling of grace is higher than a sense of guilt. Morality tells a man he ought to do; religion can help him do it. The former provides the norm for transcending; the latter can give the motivation for transcending.

In brief, a religious experience differs from an ethical experience in several ways: (1) Its commitment is broader in scope; (2) Its commitment is different in kind; (3) Its object is of a higher order; (4) Its object alone has the power to overcome and unify. First, a religious commitment is broader than a moral one since the former is a whole commitment of the whole man to the whole universe. That is, it is a commitment of man as a whole including his non-moral aspects of being, such as thinking,

⁶⁹All of the above quotes appear in Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, pp. 66, 90, 78, 65, 69, 80.

and acting such as knowing, art, and play. Second, even if one defines the moral more broadly so as to include the whole man, a moral commitment would still differ from a religious commitment in that the former is what one should do; the latter is what one wants to do. Morality is a matter of duty; religion is also one of desire. Further, a religious experience has a higher object than a moral experience. For morality is man's commitment to men; religion is his commitment to what goes beyond men, to the transcendent. Finally, only a religious experience can bring complete unity into one's life. That is, morality can produce guilt; only religion can provide grace. The moral shortcomings call for a religious overcoming. The duality within man calls for a unity beyond him.

There is no need to be long concerned with whether morality flows from religion or religion flows from morality, or whether they are separate streams.⁷⁰ Their close historical and logical connections would seem to preclude the latter. As to the former question, Schleiermacher's suggestion is helpful:

Specific actions follow only from specific impulses. Religion is not a specific impulse, so no specific actions can follow from it. Religion produces action only as a sum of activity flows from a sum of feeling, viz., as that which reflects the inner unity of the spirit.

⁷⁰Tillich writes in this regard: "The question of moral motivation can be answered only transmorally. For the law demands, but cannot forgive; it judges, but cannot accept. Therefore, forgiveness and acceptance, the conditions of the fulfillment of the law, must come from something above the law, or more precisely, from something in which the split between our essential being and our existence is overcome and healing power has appeared," *Morality and Beyond*, p. 64.

"But," he continues, "while a man does nothing from religion, he should do everything with religion. Uninterruptedly, like a sacred music, the religious feelings should accompany his active life."⁷¹

As Tillich indicated, "If the moral imperative were derived from religion in the traditional sense of the word, secular ethics would have to sever any ties with religion, for it rejects direct dependence on any particular religion."⁷² There is certainly a danger in tying ethics to specific religious beliefs, as Freud rightly noted. For if, as men are prone to do, these religious beliefs are rejected, then one has lost his basis for morality.⁷³ However, if one means that morality flows from the far more extensive, if not universal, attitude of men called religious, then Freud's objection loses its force. First one must determine more precisely what is meant by religion before this question can be answered satisfactorily.

Religious Experience in Contrast to Aesthetic Experience

There is also a close connection between religion and art. Whitehead contends that religion and play have the same origin in ritual. "This is because ritual is the stimulus to emotion, and an habitual ritual may diverge into religion or into play, according to the quality of the emotion excited. . . ." He also

⁷¹Schleiermacher, On Religion, pp. 57-59.

⁷²Tillich, Morality and Beyond, p. 30.

⁷³Freud, The Future of an Illusion, pp. 62-64.

observed, ". . . in the modern world, a holy day and a holiday are kindred notions."⁷⁴ Otto noted that the sacred and the sublime are similar in two ways: both are inexplicable and both have the dual character of humbling yet exalting the beholder.⁷⁵ In fact the two experiences are so similar that an aesthetic experience may be used to evoke a religious one, as Otto observed.⁷⁶ Tillich noted that the religious may even appear in a painting which has no religious content in the traditional sense.⁷⁷

How, then, can we differentiate these two closely associated experiences? Schleiermacher put his distinction this way: all science is the existence of things in man; art and culture is the existence of man in things. But both art and science are dependent on the universal existence of all things in the Infinite.⁷⁸ Or, to say it another way, science is speculative, art is practical, and religion is intuitive.⁷⁹

The problem with this distinction is that an aesthetic experience can be intuitive too, as Plotinus points out. That is,

⁷⁴Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 21.

⁷⁵Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp. 44, 45.

⁷⁶For example darkness (as in temples) can evoke a mystical effect; silence can provoke a spontaneous reaction to a numinous presence; and emptiness, by doing away with the "this" and "here" can draw attention to the "wholly other" (Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp. 72, 73).

⁷⁷Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 6.

⁷⁸Schleiermacher, On Religion, p. 39.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 275-284.

art as a practice, (e.g., man making something beautiful) is no doubt distinguishable from religion as a feeling or awareness of the absolute. But what about one's awareness of absolute beauty; is this kind of aesthetic experience distinguishable from a religious awareness of the absolute? For example, in Plotinus there is that absolute beauty (the "One" or "Good") which is experienced as ultimate and is identified with "God." It is beyond all sensible and even intellectual beauty and can be known only in a mystical union with it. If by an aesthetic experience one refers to this kind of ultimate intuition, then it would seem that Schleiermacher's distinction between aesthetics and religion would not hold.

Kierkegaard, in a more radical distinction, views the aesthetic, moral, and religious dimensions as three ascending levels or stages of life.⁸⁰ The aesthetic level is that of feeling, the ethical one of deciding, and the religious level is one of existing. The aesthetic stage represents the routines of life; the ethical gives rules for life, and the religious gives a revelation to life. Whereas the first is self-centered, the second law-centered, the last is God-centered. Aesthetics represents a life without choosing; morality a choosing of life; religion is the choosing of God. From the aesthetic to the moral is a leap⁸¹

⁸⁰These three levels are represented respectively by three of his works, Repetitions (the aesthetic), Either/Or (the ethical), and Fear and Trembling (the religious), and the overall in a work entitled Stages on Life's Way.

⁸¹Each stage is separated by a crisis of despair and is spanned only by a "leap of faith." Lower levels are not

from being spectator to being participator in life; a leap from personal whims to universal norms; from mere deliberation to decision; from being controlled by life to being in control of life. The further leap from the ethical stage to the religious is a leap from the objective realm of abstract, universal moral code, to the subjective realm of concrete, particular conduct; from the essential order to the existential; from propositions about God to the person of God. Briefly, then, aesthetics is something one has; religion is something one is. The former is impersonal; the latter is personal. Aesthetics is something one knows; religion is something one lives. One grips the aesthetical dimension of life, but the religious grips him.

But even Kierkegaard's radical distinction would not do to differentiate what Plotinus meant by an experience of absolute beauty from what Schleiermacher meant by a religious experience. Both are ultimate; both are absolute. Perhaps the simplest way to resolve the problem is to say that for Plotinus there is no distinction between a religious and an aesthetic experience of "Absolute Beauty;" in fact they are identical.⁸² However, there remains the question of whether this is the normal and customary meaning of an aesthetic experience. At least on the lower levels

destroyed, only dethroned, by higher levels, and attainment is no guarantee of permanence. See Walter Lowrie, Kierkegaard (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), pp. 150-167; 230-290; 391-449.

⁸²However, there is certainly a distinction in Plotinus between an aesthetic experience on either a sensual or intellectual level and this highest intuitive experience. Cf. Enneads I, 6, 6-9; V, 5, 12.

(sensual, intellectual) of aesthetic experience there is a marked difference between the religious and the aesthetic experiences; the former is ultimate the latter is not. Aesthetic experience may lead to religious experience, but they are not identical.

Following this line of thought Otto contends that an aesthetic experience can be used to evoke a religious experience, even though the two experiences differ in kind. For Otto an aesthetic experience is a sense of the sublime; a religious experience is an awareness of the sacred or holy--a numinous experience. And even though there is a hidden relation between the sacred and the sublime,⁸³ these two experiences differ in kind and not merely in degree.⁸⁴ Although Otto does not clearly draw out his distinctions, he seems to imply that the difference between them is that between a sense of grandeur on the one hand and a vision of God on the other; like the difference between viewing the Grand Canyon and that of seeing a Holy God (as Isaiah's vision in the Old Testament).⁸⁵ As A. E. Taylor put it, if William Shakespeare walked into the room we should stand, but if Jesus Christ walked into the room we should kneel.⁸⁶ The former could occasion an aesthetic experience; the latter could provide a religious encounter. Aesthetics involves a sense of wonder and amazement;

⁸³Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p. 65.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 106.

⁸⁵Isaiah, chapter 6.

⁸⁶A. E. Taylor, "The Argument from Religious Experience," p. 159.

religion involves a sense of worship and adoration.

But how can one say they differ in kind unless he can show what the difference is? In answer we would suggest two differences: (1) The object of an aesthetic experience, at least in the ordinary sensual or intellectual senses, is not ultimate whereas the object of a religious experience is ultimate. And in the Plotinian sense of an intuitive experience of absolute beauty one really has a religious experience described in aesthetic terms or in its aesthetic dimension. (2) The nature of an aesthetic experience (even in the Plotinian sense of absolute beauty) is different from a religious experience. Even if the object of both is considered to be one and the same absolute, nevertheless the attitude of the religious toward it differs from that of the artist. The latter merely has an attitude of wonder and admiration toward the absolute; the former has a spirit of worship and adoration toward it. The artist is drawn by it, but the religious is also repelled by it. As Otto observed, there is a sense of fear as well as fascination. That is, the religious person is not only devoted to but also senses his dependence on the ultimate. Furthermore, the artist has an attitude of contemplation; the religious has an attitude of complete commitment. That is, the artist as such remains detached from ultimate beauty whereas the religious is aware of his dependence on the ultimate.

Religious Experience in Contrast to a Purely Secular Experience.---An experience need not be secular or non-religious simply because it is humanistic. Both Fromm's and Dewey's views

are humanistic and yet qualify as religious.

In Fromm's case what he calls a "humanistic" religion in contrast to an "authoritarian" religion qualifies (under our definition) as religious. For the higher human self, which he calls "God," does indeed transcend the individual and it is considered ultimate, i.e., he is ultimately committed to it.⁸⁷

Likewise, Dewey's form of humanism is essentially religious. He said, "Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end and against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality."⁸⁸ The ideal goal is transcendent and the type of conviction of it and commitment to it is total.

If this be so, then one may ask just what type of humanistic experience would not qualify as a religious experience. Basically, a non-religious or purely secular experience would be one where either (1) no transcendent other exists beyond the individual, or (2) which if there were an other he would not be totally committed to it because it would not be considered ultimate. The fact that such are difficult to find is testimony to just how incurably religious man is after all. Even Sigmund Freud's god of human reason, which he calls Logos, is not identified with the individual's⁸⁹ rational powers and thus qualifies

⁸⁷Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, pp. 37, 49, 60.

⁸⁸Dewey, A Common Faith, p. 27.

⁸⁹Freud, Future of an Illusion, p. 88.

as transcendent. Likewise, the projected human "self" which Feuerbach says men consider (falsely) to be God is not the individual human being but human nature in general, i.e., universal or generic man.⁹⁰ Of course he does not consider it to be real, nor does Dewey hold his ideal goal to be real. Nevertheless, it is beyond the individual and it is considered ultimate by the religious person. Therefore, it qualifies as an object of religious experience.

The first way in which one may be irreligious is by a refusal to recognize any kind of transcendence whatsoever. This, said W. C. Smith, is what characterizes contemporary secularity.⁹¹ That is, a completely immanent, this-worldly outlook which is unable (or unwilling) to transcend in any direction is essentially non-religious. As Martin Marty put it, "Secularism permits no transcendent It is self-contained, self-explanatory, self-enclosed."⁹² Or as Altizer wrote, "If there is one clear portal to the twentieth century, it is . . . the collapse of any meaning or reality being beyond the newly discovered radical immanence of modern man, an immanence dissolving even the memory or the shadow of transcendence."⁹³

⁹⁰Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, p. 7.

⁹¹W. C. Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, p. 127.

⁹²Martin Marty, Varieties of Unbelief, p. 138.

⁹³Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 22. There are several reasons for this radical immanence: (1) The inability to get at the transcendent because it is "dead" (a la Altizer), or (2) Because our

But not only is there a radically immanent, irreligious stance by some contemporary men because of the inability to discover the transcendent but also because of an unwillingness to make a total commitment (or even a partial one) to it. This unwillingness is the second characteristic of a non-religious experience. There are many reasons some men would refuse to commit themselves to the transcendent, even if it were there: (1) because it is deemed unworthy of their devotion,⁹⁴ or (2) because man considers himself mature enough to get along without the transcendent,⁹⁵ or (3) because the individual desires to honor himself as ultimate.⁹⁶

In brief, a man may be irreligious or purely humanistic in two ways. First, because he is unable to see a transcendent, or second, because he is unwilling to submit to it. In either event his experience falls short of being religious.

language about it is "dead" or meaningless (van Buren), or (3) Because it is "eclipsed" by conceptualizations about it (as Buber said), or (4) Because it is "silent" or hiding.

⁹⁴Ivan in Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov reflects this attitude, for even if God existed Ivan leaves the impression that he would never surrender to Him because of the injustice He has done to man.

⁹⁵Fromm states this well: "If mankind is able to produce enough to feed all men, it does not need to pray for daily bread. Man can provide that by his own effort," Psychoanalysis and Religion, p. 104.

⁹⁶Ayn Rand's philosophy of selfishness is as clear an example of this as one can find. "By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man--every man--is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose," For the New Intellectual (The New American Library: A Signet Book, 1961), p. 123.

Various Dimensions of Religious Transcendence

Now that religious experience has been defined and distinguished from other experiences, it remains to discuss the various directions or dimensions that this transcendence may take. For the transcendent can be the object of religious awareness and aspiration in many different directions. Failure to see these dimensions may be cause for misunderstanding the essentially religious character of these experiences.

The following is offered as a typology of the major dimensions of transcendence: (1) Retrospective transcendence; (2) Vertical transcendence; (3) Eschatological transcendence, and (4) Introspective transcendence. This division suggests, respectively, that men have attempted to transcend backward to origins, upward to the top, forward to the end, and inward to the depth of all things.

The Retrospective Dimension of Transcendence

Retrospective transcendence means that the direction in which the religious man transcends toward the transcendent is a backward one. That is, he seeks to go back to a beginning or point or origin to discover the source of religious awareness. According to Mircea Eliade, this is the characteristic feature of the primitive religious experience. The discussion will begin with Eliade's analysis.

Eliade's Myth of Origins.—For Eliade the transcendent is

called the "Sacred" and this world the "profane."⁹⁷ The Sacred is the opposite of the profane. Manifestations of the Sacred he calls a "hierophany" which is always something "Wholly Other" than the profane world. The "hierophany" is a fixed point (such as a temple or holy spot) where the "absolute reality" is revealed. It is a kind of "doorway" or "gateway" to God. Where the "Sacred" manifests itself there is a "center" which serves as focal point for a "cosmos."⁹⁸ The organizing of one's life around places where the Sacred "breaks through" is called "cosmosizing," i.e., a microcosmic creation. It is the consecration of a place by the repetition of the primitive cosmogony. That is, to organize or cosmosize one's life is to repeat the paradigmatic work of the gods in the beginning.⁹⁹

Eliade called the "opening" to the sacred or transcendent a "Center of the World." A Sacred place is always a center around which man orders his life. The religious man resists chaos and seeks to stay as close as possible to the center of the world. The gods created the world from its center in the beginning and so this is the model after which the religious man patterns his life by a repetition of their paradigmatic act. In short, religious man seeks to situate himself at the "center" of

⁹⁷A term he confessedly takes from Rudolf Otto's analysis of religious experience in The Idea of the Holy. See Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 10.

⁹⁸Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 10-30.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 45, 52, 65.

the world where he is closest to the holy so he can experience in principle the mythical moment of creation.¹⁰⁰

Time is continuous for the pre-literate. It is recoverable in ritual. That is, mythical time can be made present by repetition in ritual of the original act of the gods. Religious time, then, is cyclical and periodically present by means of rites. It was Christianity, however, which radically changed the nature of religious time by asserting that it unfolds (via the Incarnation of Christ) in history, but the pre-literate "mythical time" is not so. For them no time existed before the reality narrated in their myth and it is recoverable through the ritualistic reenactment of the same.¹⁰¹ By this ritual the participant becomes contemporaneous with the time of origin which is a kind of eternal present. That is, ". . . the man of archaic societies is not only obligated to remember mythical history but also to re-enact a large part of it periodically."¹⁰² In this way, the religious man reveals that his desire for transcendence is really in the direction of the original paradise. This "myth of the eternal return," said Eliade, "did not paralyze ancient religious man. It is not a retreat from responsibility but an assuming of it in the creation of the cosmos. It is not a return to

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 45, 52, 65.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 70, 72.

¹⁰²Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 13.

the dream world but a desire for the real world by a return to the original world. It is what we will call a "retrospective transcendence."¹⁰³

"The myth," said Eliade, "relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, ab initio."¹⁰⁴ It is the revelation of a mystery, a recital of what the gods did at the beginning. The function of myth is to fix the paradigmatic model for all significant human activity. Living a myth, then, implies a genuinely religious experience. The religiousness of this experience is due to the fact that one re-enacts the creative deeds of the supernatural.¹⁰⁵ By repeating the myth man remains in the "sacred" or "real," and by continual reactivation of the original gestures of the gods man sanctifies his world. To forget to re-enact the myth is "sin," for it is through ritual and myth that man is in contact with the transcendent. Only by reactualizing the myth does man have hope. That is, by eternal repetition there is eternal recovery.¹⁰⁶

So the religious life for Eliade assumes the following basic form: The belief that 1) there is an absolute reality which transcends the world but is manifest in the world; 2) life has a sacred origin and that man realizes his potential in the degree

¹⁰³Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 92-94.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 95. Cf. Myth and Reality, pp. 5, 6.

¹⁰⁵Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 19.

¹⁰⁶Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 98, 99, 101. Cf. Myth and Reality, pp. 144, 145.

to which he participates in it; 3) that gods created the world, the history of which is preserved in myths; 4) by imitation of the gods man reactualizes sacred history and man keeps close to the gods. Non-religious man, on the other hand, is characterized by 1) his refusal of transcendence and, 2) his acceptance of the relativity of reality or even doubt of its meaning. No such man, said Eliade, are known in archaic cultures; only in modern Western society has "profane" man fully developed.¹⁰⁷

Eliade's view may be summed up this way: Religion is the paradigmatic solution for every existential crisis not only because it can be indefinitely repeated, but also because it is believed to have a transcendental origin, thus enabling man to transcend personal situations and, finally, gain access to the world of spirit.¹⁰⁸ Unlike the "profane" man, the symbols of the religious man are able to "open up" the universe to him. To be sure secular man has many symbols, but none of them are any more than private and partial mythologies which are not experienced by the whole man. None of them are paradigmatic provisions for retrospective transcendence; they do not take the "profane" man back to the transcendent origin of all things.¹⁰⁹ For the primitive man, the meaning of the world was gained through the myth of origin or cosmogony. Its function is to reveal models

¹⁰⁷ Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 202, 203.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 210.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

and, thereby, to give meaning to the world and to human life. Through myth, the world can be apprehended as an intelligible and significant cosmos.¹¹⁰

The Limitations of Retrospective Transcendence.--What Eliade describes is certainly one form of religious transcendence, viz., a retrospective kind. The mistake comes, however, in considering this the only way one may have a religious experience. If retrospective transcendence via myths of origin were the only way to transcend, then few men but pre-literates have been religious. Furthermore, were transcendence possible only via a backward movement to the mythical origin, then Greek philosophy would have spelled the end to all religion. But in fact Greek philosophy opened up the way for a new dimension of transcendence, for they too were interested in origins but they replaced cosmogony with a cosmology.¹¹¹

Both are answers to the question of origins. But the latter is an attempt to go beyond the myth and find an archē or absolute point of beginning by reason. Eliade said that the Greeks attempted to go beyond mythology as divine history and to reach a primal source, to identify the womb of Being. "It was in seeking the source, the principle, the archē, that philosophical speculation for a short time coincided with cosmogony; but it was no

¹¹⁰Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 144, 145.

¹¹¹As Eliade points out, this type of mental attitude is not exclusive to archaic societies; "The desire to know the origin of things is also characteristic of Western culture," ibid., p. 76.

longer the cosmogonic myth, it was an ontological problem." That is, "The 'essential' is reached, then, by a prodigious 'going back' accomplished by an effort of thought. In this sense it could be said that the earliest philosophical speculations derive from mythologies. . . ." In this way ". . . systematic thought endeavors to identify and understand the 'absolute beginning' of which the cosmogonies tell, to unveil the mystery of the Creation of the world, in short, the mystery of the appearance of Being."¹¹² So the earliest philosophic speculations are derived from mythologies: that the mythos and the logos find their common source in an attitude which is religious, viz., the desire to know the answer to the question of origins.

However, the Greek philosophers effected a radical change in the religious myths they inherited. For one thing, instead of viewing them in an emotional or involved way, they looked on them in a detached and speculative manner.

A representation of the world-order which had once been a mystery, fraught, in its earlier days, with awful emotion and serious practical consequences, is now put forward as a rational theory, which anyone who can understand it is free to take or leave.¹¹³

But the rationalization was not complete; there were not only remnants of religious thought in Greek thought but there was also a breaking out in a new dimension of transcendence. This can be seen most clearly in the way Greek rationalism culminated in

¹¹²Ibid., pp. 111-112.

¹¹³Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, p. 50.

Plotinian mysticism.

The Vertical Dimension of Transcendence

The tendency to transcend upward by leaving the lower world of shadows and images and ascending to the world of pure forms above is present already in Plato.¹¹⁴ However, the tendency for vertical transcendence is both more explicit and more clearly religious in Plotinus.

Plotinus: Reaching the God 'Up There.'--For Plotinus all things proceed from the "One" and all things return to it, for all plurality presupposes a prior unity.¹¹⁵ "Anything existing after the First must necessarily arise from that First . . ." he wrote.¹¹⁶ Since the "One" is an absolute unity, all emanations that flow from it must be something less than pure simplicity.¹¹⁷ In fact they form with the "One" a triplicity of unity in a descending order toward greater multiplicity. After the primary unity (the One) there is a secondary unity (One-Many) called "Nous" or "Intellect" and a tertiary unity (One-and-Many) called "World Soul."¹¹⁸

The first movement in Plotinian thought is that from unity to multiplicity. At the bottom of the chain of emanation is

¹¹⁴See particularly Plato's famous Cave Analogy in Republic VII.

¹¹⁵Plotinus, Enneads III, 8, 9; V, 3, 15.

¹¹⁶Ibid., V, 4, 1.

¹¹⁷Ibid., V, 3, 15.

¹¹⁸Ibid., V, 1, 8.

matter which is the most multiple of all. Matter is most multiple and has the least unity. It is the place where unity takes its last stand against chaos. Matter is the place the whole process of emanation from absolute simplicity (the One) peters out. "For as necessarily as there is Something after the First, so necessarily there is a Last: this Last is Matter, the thing which has no residue of good in it: here is the necessity of Evil." Furthermore, the farther something is from unity the less reality it has, for divergence from unity involves a corresponding divergence from reality. In other words, the farther down the emanation extends the greater is the multiplicity and the less is the reality. And at the very bottom one finds the evil of almost total multiplicity and an almost complete lack of reality, which he calls "Matter" or "Non-Being." It is by contact with this matter that the lower phase of the individual soul of a man is contaminated and, therefore, must purify itself of this proliferation and begin to ascend toward higher and higher unity.¹¹⁹

The second great movement in Plotinian philosophy is the move upward away from multiplicity to a higher unity. Men must be careful lest by continually drenching themselves in the multiplicity of matter, they can become irretrievably fragmented and absolutely evil. But fortunately as men wander in this foreign land of evil they have a natural homesickness for the "Fatherland"

¹¹⁹Ibid., II, 4, 11; I, 8, 7; VI, 2, 5; I, 8, 3; I, 8, 5; I, 2, 4.

of good. "The appetite for the divine Intellect urges them to return to their source." That is, being unsatisfied in the multiplicity of evil they are pulled together by a higher unity. Since the move from unity to multiplicity is outward and downward, the move up toward greater unity again will be inward and upward.¹²⁰

The first step in the move upward toward higher unity is from the sensible to the intellectual. It begins in the realm of sense, where one is "busy about many things," where the soul is "befouled by its housing, made fragmentary by corporeal extension." Here it is in sensation that noting the flux of things it knows at once that from elsewhere comes that higher unity that floats on things below. Looking at the multiple images of sensation, man recognizes in them a unity which as a fugitive has entered the realm of matter. So as one beholds the unity below he is impelled to pursue them to their higher source. That is to say, the sign of the sensible point upward from their own multiplicity to a higher unity; the roads of the many lead to the one. But the road that leads upward first leads inward. Man has an intellectual unity which is greater than sensation. The inner unity of his intellect is greater than the outward multiplicity available through his bodily senses.¹²¹

The next step in the ascent toward greater unity moves from

¹²⁰Ibid., I, 8, 13; IV, 8, 4; I, 6, 7.

¹²¹Ibid., I, 3, 4; I, 6, 2-8; VI, 9, 11; I, 3, 6.

the intellectual to the intuitional. Since every particular thing has a unity of its own to which it may be traced, as one mounts upward from sensation, he must come first to the immediate unity for soul, which is found in the intellectual realm called Nous." "In this upward movement one takes with him only that better [higher] part of the Soul which alone is winged for the Intellectual act." To know the intellect joins in a higher unity where knower becomes identical with the known.¹²² However, even in the intellectual realm there is this basic duality of knower and known and the multiplicity of Forms or Ideas by which things are known. Hence, it is necessary for the one seeking absolute unity to press upward, beyond intellectual knowledge to an intuition of absolute Simplicity.

In this final stage in one's "vertical" transcendence he finds himself alone with the Alone. For ". . . the Supreme is not known intellectually." Hence, one wishing to contemplate what transcends the Intellectual attains by putting away all that is of the intellect. For

. . . knowledge of the One comes to us neither by science nor by pure thought . . . but by a presence which is superior to science . . . for science implies discursive reason and discursive reason implies manifoldness. He then misses the One and falls into number and multiplicity.

To know the "Supreme" one must merge with the "Supreme" and become one with it, center coinciding with center. Just as one must become godlike and beautiful if he cares to see "God" and

¹²²Ibid., V, 3, 4.

"Beauty," so one must become one with the "One" if he is to know the "One." The soul must put away all multiplicity, sensible and intellectual so that "alone it may receive the Alone."¹²³ It is at this point that one's vertical transcendence is realized, when he has reached the top of the pyramid in which the many lives meet in an absolute simplicity.

So in Plotinus the Greek rationalization went beyond itself, beyond reason, and returned to its religious roots. As Emile Brehier said, the Greek yearning for philosophical unity had fulfilled itself in the mystical unity; mysticism had completed rationalism.¹²⁴ But the religious transcendence involved in this mystical union is not the same as for pre-philosophical man. There are no myths for Plotinus. It is not a question of origin but unity; not a search for what is at the beginning but what is at the top. That is, transcendence is not retrospective but vertical. And furthermore, transcendence is no longer super-natural but natural for Plotinus, a fact which the neo-platonic Christians would find some difficulty in reconciling with grace.

Reaction to the God "Up-There."--Some thinkers have not been

¹²³Ibid., VI, 7, 35; V, 5, 6; VI, 9, 4; (Katz' translation); VI, 9, 10; I, 6, 9; VI, 7, 34.

¹²⁴Emile Brehier, The Philosophy of Plotinus, trans. Joseph Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 162.

¹²⁵Even Augustine was still sorting out the Neo-platonic incompatibilities with his Christian philosophy at the end of his life as the many modifications and revisions of his "platonism" made in his Retractions reveal.

content with vertical transcendence since they feel that it too involves a mythological view of the universe. Contrary to what the Greek philosophers did in seeking the reality of the logos in the mythos they have denied any reality in the mythos whatsoever. Rather, these contemporary thinkers have sought a reality behind the myth, by stripping the myth of its historical trappings to get at its ontological truth. Rudolf Bultmann is a good example of this reaction to vertical transcendence, to the God "up there" or "out there."

Bultmann contended, for example, "The whole conception of the world which is presupposed in the preaching of Jesus as in the New Testament generally is mythological." By this he means the conception of the world as being structured in three stories, heaven, earth, and hell; the conception of the intervention of supernatural powers in the course of events; and the conception of miracles. According to Bultmann, "These mythological conceptions of heaven and hell are no longer acceptable for modern men, since for scientific thinking to speak of 'above' and 'below' in the universe has lost all meaning. . . ." ¹²⁶

In this mythological structure it would be necessary to speak of God as "up there" or "out there." ¹²⁷ It is in this sense that Bultmann's "demythology" would oppose even the concept of vertical transcendence. "To de-mythologize," said

¹²⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 15, 20.

¹²⁷ Robinson, Honest to God, pp. 11 f.

Bultmann, "is to reject not Scripture or the Christian message as a whole, but the world-view of Scripture. . . ." It is ". . . to deny that the message of Scripture and of the Church is bound to an ancient world-view which is obsolete." "Therefore," he continued, "it is mere wishful thinking to suppose that the ancient world-view of the Bible can be renewed."¹²⁸

However, de-mythologizing does not mean a rationalizing of the Christian message, Bultmann assured us. "Not at all! On the contrary, de-mythologizing makes clear the true meaning of God's mystery." It is to seek the ". . . deeper meaning which is concealed under the cover of mythology."¹²⁹ He held that "The purpose of demythologization is not to make religion more acceptable to modern man by trimming the traditional Biblical texts, but to make clearer to modern man what the Christian faith is." What

I am fighting against is just this fixation of God as an objective entity. . . . Therefore my attempt to demythologize begins, true enough, by clearing away the false stumbling blocks created for modern man by the fact that his world view is determined by science.¹³⁰

What Bultmann is against is the objectification that mythology implies. In this sense, modern science can be as guilty as ancient mythology.¹³¹ In brief, de-mythologize means to de-objec-

¹²⁸Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, pp. 35, 36, 38.

¹²⁹Ibid., pp. 43, 18.

¹³⁰Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologization," Myth and Christianity, ed. Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann (New York: The Noonday Press, 1958), pp. 59, 50.

¹³¹"Mythical thinking is just as objectifying as scientific thinking, for instance, when the former represents the transcen-

tify. It is in this respect somewhat the reverse of the Greek rationalization.

What does one discover in de-mythologizing the biblical concept of the God "up there"? According to Bultmann one discovers ". . . the transcendence and hiddenness of God as acting."¹³² This is because "The invisibility of God excludes every myth which tries to make God and His action visible; God withholds Himself from view and observation."¹³³ That is to say, "Man's life is moved by the search for God because it is always moved, consciously or unconsciously, by the question about his own personal existence." Of course, "The question of God and the question of myself are identical," wrote Bultmann. But, "From the statement that to speak of God is to speak of myself, it by no means follows that God is not outside the believer," he reminds us. "Thus, the fact that God cannot be seen or apprehended apart from faith does not mean that He does not exist apart from faith." What this does show, said Bultmann, is that God cannot be objectified.¹³⁴

From this it is clear that Bultmann's demythologization of vertical transcendence, of the God "up there" is by no means to be construed as a negation of all transcendence. To be sure,

dence of God in terms of remoteness in space [way "up there"] . . . "For all human world-views objectivize the world and ignore or eliminate the significance of the encounters in our personal existence," Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, p. 61, n. 1; p. 83, cf. p. 62.

¹³²Ibid., p. 83.

¹³³Ibid., pp. 83-84.

¹³⁴Ibid., pp. 53, 70, 72.

". . . for scientific thinking to speak of 'above' and 'below' in the universe has lost all meaning, but the idea of the transcendence of God . . . is still significant,"¹³⁵ he wrote. There is a "God" or "transcendent." He is active in man's personal, existential experience. He does in some sense exist apart from man, but He doesn't exist "up there."

If God doesn't exist "up there," then where is he to be found? In which direction does man transcend in a religious experience for Bultmann? In brief, the answers are respectively "in Christ" and "forward." Bultmann, as a Christian, believes that God is revealed in Christ and that ". . . it has become more and more clear that the eschatological expectation and hope is the core of the New Testament preaching throughout." "Today," he wrote, "nobody doubts that Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God is an eschatological one--at least in European theology and, so far as I can see, also among American New Testament scholars." What Bultmann finds, then, in New Testament eschatology ". . . is not simply the idea of transcendence as such, but of the importance of the transcendence of God, of God who is never present as a familiar phenomenon but who is always the coming God, who is veiled by the unknown future." In brief, "This, then, is the deeper meaning of the mythological preaching of Jesus--to be open to God's future which is really imminent for every one of us . . . ; to be prepared, because this future will be a judgment on

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 20.

all men who have bound themselves to this world and are not free, not open to God's future."¹³⁶

From Bultmann's de-mythological rejection of vertical transcendence, then, one is led naturally to consider more seriously the view of eschatological transcendence. As the Greek rationalization made retrospective transcendence obsolete, so also demythologization makes vertical transcendence untenable for some modern men. Hence, there is a turn in a new direction, that of eschatological transcendence.

Eschatological Dimension of Transcendence

Only on the view that history is going somewhere is the position of eschatological transcendence possible. If there is no horizontal history with an end or goal, then man cannot transcend in that direction. Such a linear view of history is unknown to ancient and Eastern ways of thinking. For the archaic societies, Eliade pointed out, time is mythical and not historical.¹³⁷ However, with the Hebrew prophets appears the first clear indication that there is an end or goal for time, i.e., a culmination or climax towards which human events are moving.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 13, 22-23, 31-32.

¹³⁷ Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 72, 112.

¹³⁸ A recent historian wrote, "The Hebrews broke sharply with all these prevailing conceptions of time and history. Instead of recurring events, they saw a series of distinct episodes, each involving a unique intervention by Yahweh, unrepeatable and irreversible. Instead of circular patterns, they saw history moving in a straight line toward the fulfillment of divine purpose," Trygve R. Tholfsen, Historical Thinking (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, inc., 1967), p. 43.

Even more decidedly clear is this point in the New Testament. As Eliade observed, Christianity radically changed the nature of time by sanctifying it through the Incarnation of Christ.¹³⁹

God Is Dead.--Hegel wrote that God is dead¹⁴⁰ and Nietzsche took it seriously.¹⁴¹ And Altizer drew out the religious implications for this in a kind of eschatological transcendence. In fact Altizer contends that Nietzsche was the first radical Christian.¹⁴²

When Altizer says God is dead he does not mean that God has always been dead (i.e., that there never was a living God) or that the idea or word "God" has ceased to be effective today (as van Buren said),¹⁴³ or that God is merely hidden from man's view (as Buber held). For ". . . every man today," Altizer wrote, "who is open to experience knows that God is absent, but only the Christian knows that God is dead, that the death of God is a

¹³⁹Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 72, 112.

¹⁴⁰Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit, near the beginning of the section on "Revealed Religion" wrote, unhappy consciousness ". . . is the bitter pain which finds expression in the cruel words, 'God is dead,'" The Philosophy of Hegel, p. 506.

¹⁴¹Henry D. Aiken wrote, "Hegel said, but Nietzsche believed that 'God is dead,'" The Age of Ideology (New York: A Mentor Book 1956), p. 206. Nietzsche's famous passage comes from his Gay Science, No. 125, where the Madman cries out, "Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction?--for even gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!"

¹⁴²Thomas Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism, p. 25.

¹⁴³Altizer lists ten different senses of 'God is dead' on pp. x-xi, Radical Theology.

final and irrevocable event. . . ."¹⁴⁴ He feels that too many thinkers have been attracted by Martin Buber's idea of the "eclipse" of God. "God is not simply hidden from view, nor is he lurking in the depths of our unconscious or on the boundaries of our infinite space. . . ."¹⁴⁵ We must confess, he adds, that ". . . the death of God is so to speak an actual and real event, not perhaps an event occurring in a single moment of time or history, but notwithstanding this reservation an event that has actually happened both in a cosmic and in a historical sense."¹⁴⁶

When did God die? God died in the Incarnation of Christ. "To know that God is Jesus," Altizer remarked, "is to know that God himself has become flesh: no longer does God exist as transcendent Spirit or sovereign Lord. . . ."¹⁴⁷ Why? Because as spirit becomes the word this empties the speaker of himself and the whole reality of spirit becomes incarnate in its opposite. That is, "If Spirit truly empties itself in entering the world, then its own essential or original Being must be left behind in an empty and lifeless form." Or, to put it another way, if Christ is identical with God, then heaven was emptied of its God when Christ came to earth.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism, p. 111.

¹⁴⁵Altizer, Radical Theology, pp. 125-126.

¹⁴⁶Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism, p. 103.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 67, 68. Altizer admits to a Hegelian interpretation here. See pp. 62-69, 80.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 69, 92.

Further, God not only died in a general sense by becoming Incarnate, i.e., by entering the realm of flesh (and thus leaving the realm of Spirit), but God also died in a specific sense when Christ died on the cross. "Yes, God dies in the Crucifixion: therein he fulfills the movement of the Incarnation by totally emptying himself of his primordial sacrality." In fact, "Only in the Crucifixion, in the death of the Word on the Cross, does the Word actually and wholly become flesh." And, "Finally, the Incarnation is only truly actually real if it effects the death of the original sacred, the death of God himself."¹⁴⁹

How does the Incarnation effect the "death" of God? To understand this, said Altizer, one must speak of God as a dialectical process rather than as an existent Being. That is, "Progressively but decisively God abandons or negates his original passivity . . . becoming incarnate both in and as the actuality of world and history." In fact, to the extent that the Christian Word fails to negate its original form it cannot be a forward moving process or a progressive descent into the concrete. That is to say, "Only a sacred that negates its own unfallen or primordial form can become incarnate in the reality of the profane." To cling to a transcendent and wholly other God is a denial of the historical reality of the Incarnation. For "Dialectically, everything depends upon recognizing the meaning of God's total identification with Jesus and of the understanding that it is

¹⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 113, 54.

God who becomes Jesus and not Jesus who becomes God."¹⁵⁰ In brief then, God must die in the Incarnation for God is a historical and dialectical process which can come to realization only by negation.

Is transcendence totally lost, then, in the immanence of the Incarnation and death of God? Certainly what we have called retrospective and vertical transcendence are eliminated by Altizer. For ". . . as a result of a total movement from transcendence to immanence, we must be freed from every attachment to transcendence, and detached from all yearning for a primordial innocence." That is, ". . . the Crucifixion embodies and makes finally real a divine movement from transcendence to immanence" So then ". . . the Christian who wagers upon a totally incarnate Christ must negate every form and image of transcendence, regardless of what area of consciousness or experience in which it may appear." In fact, it is suicidal for the contemporary Christian to cling to transcendence for both guilt and repression result from clinging to a transcendent God. Above all, said Altizer, theology must abandon a religious form, wholly and consistently repudiating the religious quest for the primordial sacred, for unless it does theology will remain bound to a primordial or transcendent Word and thereby it will remain closed to the present and human actuality of history. In brief, "The death of God abolishes transcendence, theology making possible a

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 90, 86, 153, 149, 82, 83.

new and absolute immanence, an immanence freed of every sign of transcendence."¹⁵¹

Regardless of the very categorical sound of Altizer's statements, he does not eliminate all dimensions of religious transcendence. He does repudiate retrospective and vertical transcendence but he does not eliminate eschatological transcendence; in fact his own view involves a kind of eschatological transcendence. He wrote, "An incarnate Word embodying a real transfiguration of Spirit into flesh cannot be sought in a heavenly beyond, nor can it be reached by a backward movement to primordial time; it is only in the actual and contingent processes of history that Spirit becomes flesh."¹⁵² What Altizer is saying is that man cannot transcend backward or upward; he must transcend in the forward movement of history.

Like Bultmann, Altizer argued that the New Testament concept of the "Kingdom of God" is decidedly eschatological, that the believer must remain open to the future. Said Altizer, ". . . radical faith is a total response to the actual presence and the forward movement of God in history." As a distinctively Christian form of faith it ". . . must ever be open to new epiphanies of the Word or Spirit of God, epiphanies that will not simply be repetitions of the original manifestation of God . . . truly new epiphanies whose very occurrence either effects or records a new

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 136, 139, 143, 145, 77, 154.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 45, 46, 156. See also his Radical Theology, p. 150.

actualization or movement of the divine process."¹⁵³ It is this forward movement of Christianity which distinguishes it from other movements of transcendence. "Yet such a forward movement cannot culminate in an abolition of the opposites by returning to a primordial Beginning. Like its analogue in the prophetic faith of the Old Testament, it must be grounded in an eschatological End. . . ." That is, man ". . . must move forward beyond the death of a primordial or original sacred to an eschatological coincidentia oppositorum that reconciles and unites the sacred and the profane." So any authentically kenotic movement of incarnation must be a continual process of Spirit becoming flesh, of eternity becoming time, or of the sacred becoming profane. However, this does not mean that the sacred becomes and remains the profane, thus ending the forward transcendence. For the movement of the sacred into the profane is inseparable from a parallel movement of the profane into the sacred. "Consequently, a consistently Christian dialectical understanding of the sacred must finally look forward to the resurrection of the profane in a transfigured and thus finally sacred form."¹⁵⁴ Just what this "transfigured" form or "new epiphany" will be is not known nor is it important for present purposes. What is significant is to observe that the radical Christian has an eschatological hope;

¹⁵³Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism, pp. 105, 84.

¹⁵⁴Altizer, Radical Theology, pp. 150, 151, 152, 155. Of course this does not mean that the whole Christian life is merely anticipatory. While he is waiting for the new epiphany, the Christian must go out into the world in seeking Jesus.

that when the transcendent could no longer be discovered in the realm up there but rather came down here in human history, it keeps moving forward. In brief, transcendence is not dead for Altizer, only the traditional backward and upward forms of it are dead.

The Secularization of Religion.--While contemporary man awaits the future epiphany of transcendence, he must live within a secularized world. And even granting that radical atheism of Altizer with its Hegelian dialectic and demise of God is not the only form of eschatological transcendence, one must nevertheless come to grips with the problem of relating transcendence (of whatever dimension) to an immanent-oriented world. That is, there are semantical problems with transcendence even if there were no dialectical problems with it. This is the issue that van Buren addresses in The Secular Meaning of the Gospel.

Van Buren stated his position as over against Bultmann, Ogden and the demythologization school which, while rejecting mythological expressions of transcendence, nevertheless maintain there is some meaningful usages of words like "transcendent." He argued that the demythological position ". . . does not do justice to the thinking of modern man when it speaks of 'experienced nonobjective reality'; it does not see that modern man cannot even speak analogically about 'God.'" ¹⁵⁵ Van Buren offers the following reasons for his position: ¹⁵⁶ First, the expres-

¹⁵⁵ van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, p. 64.

¹⁵⁶ He offers three more reasons which are not applicable to

sions like "nonobjective reality" and "transcendence" are meaningless because they are not verifiable in experience; that is, there are no conceivable experiences that could count either for or against something being ultimately transcendent. Second, analogous language about transcendence or God is no more useful to modern, empirically oriented man than is objectifying language of mythology or science. That is, "The empiricist in us finds the heart of the difficulty not in what is said about God, but in the very talking about God at all. We do not know 'what' God is, and we cannot understand how the word 'God' is being used. . . ." That is, the demythologizers reject any objective meaning for the word God and the nonobjective or symbolic meaning allows for no verification and, therefore, has no meaning at all. Today, wrote van Buren, "we cannot even understand the Nietzschean cry that 'God is dead!' for if it were so, how could we know? No, the problem now is that the word 'God' is dead."¹⁵⁷

Van Buren admitted that ". . . the heart of the method of linguistic analysis [which he uses] lies in the use of the verification principle--that the meaning of a word is its use in its context." That is, the meaning of a statement is to be found in, and is identical with, the function or use of that statement.¹⁵⁸

speaking of transcendence but apply to the historicity of the New Testament kerygma about Christ, ibid., pp. 68-73.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 64-68, 84, 83, 103.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

This is, of course, a more flexible variation of the principle than its earlier form as empirical verification.¹⁵⁹ That is to say, "There are a variety of 'language-games' activities with their appropriate language, and a modified verification principle is now used to ask what sort of things would count for an assertion and what sort of things would count against it."¹⁶⁰

As a result of the need to verify these statements about transcendence somewhere in human experience, van Buren argues that all God-statements must be translated into man-statements.¹⁶¹ In this way he feels that the apparently transempirical aspects of religious language can be understood in terms with an empirical footing. For example, "Whatever can be known concerning 'God' has been answered by the knowledge of Jesus"¹⁶² As Jesus himself said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."¹⁶³ So then, statements about transcendence must be translated or understood in terms of immanence; statements about God must be translated into statements about man. In this way religion can be secularized by being humanized, i.e., by being understood in purely human terms. But if one is limited to the human for an understanding of the transcendent, it is only natural that men

¹⁵⁹For a statement of the earlier principle see A. J. Ayer's principle of empirical verification in Language, Truth and Logic, chapter 1.

¹⁶⁰van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel, p. 15.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁶²Ibid., pp. 196, 147.

¹⁶³According to the Gospel of John (14:9).

would explore the depth of human experience. In fact it is this depth which becomes a new way to transcend--an introspective kind of transcendence, a transcending inwardly.

Introspective Dimension of Transcendence

If, as has been contended, religious experience always involves transcendence, then it is only natural that different ways to transcend will be discovered when traditional ways are shut off. In fact, inward or introspective transcendence is by no means new. The mystics have long sought the Divine in the "depth" of their own soul. However, there is a definite connection between this modern transcendence in depth and the rejection of the other dimensions of transcendence just discussed.

Robinson's God "Within."--Various influences in the contemporary world have converged to direct the religious man inward in search for the transcendent. First, the stress on immanence obvious in all the secular theologians. Then, the inapplicability of objective or empirical language about God leads naturally to a search for a more subjective approach. Also, the very fact that the two traditional forms of transcendence (retrospective and vertical) have been so emphatically rejected, there has been little option for those not connected with a distinctly Christian or eschatological transcendence. In brief, the religious man must transcend, and if he cannot transcend backward or upward, then he may try transcending in an inward direction.

Bishop Robinson led a reluctant revolution in the direction of what has been called introspective transcendence. Echoing

Bultmann he argued that God can no longer be conceived as being "up-there" at the top of a three-story universe. He can no longer be thought of as the "Most High" who on occasion "comes down" to man or the one to whom some men are "caught up." Robinson said men must drop the primitive concept of a "Sky god" or "High god" as well as the equally false mental image many moderns have of "an Old Man in the sky."¹⁶⁴ Nor can the out-moded, pre-scientific conception of a God "up there" be replaced with the equally unacceptable one of a God "out there." That is, God is not beyond outer space. Such a crude projection of God has been destroyed with the coming of the space age, Robinson argues. Hence, this spatial way of picturing God is more of a stumbling block than an aid to belief in God today, wrote Robinson.¹⁶⁵

However, Robinson makes it clear that his intent is not to replace a transcendent God with a pantheistic and immanent one. "On the contrary, the task is to validate the idea of transcendence for modern man." What Robinson proposes, following Tillich, is to reverse the symbolism from a God of "height" to one of "depth" in order to make religious language more relevant. For the word "deep" means more than the opposite of "high"; it also means the opposite of shallow. This is why "height" so often signifies unconcern while "depth" denotes concern, for a remote God cannot really be involved. It should be further noted

¹⁶⁴ Robinson, Honest to God, pp. 11-13.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 13-17.

that "This is not just the old system in reverse, with a God 'down under' for a God 'up there.'" God is not another being but is the "depth and ground of all being" (as Tillich said). Or, to borrow Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words, God is the "'beyond' in the midst of our life," a depth of reality reached not on the borders of life but at its 'center.' Likewise, wrote Robinson, Buber was right when he said that whoever ". . . gives his whole being to addressing the Thou of his life, as a Thou that cannot be limited by another, he addresses God."¹⁶⁶

So then, ". . . theological statements are not a description of 'the highest Being' but an analysis of the depths of personal relationships . . . it is saying that God, the final truth and reality 'deep down things,' is love." And furthermore, Robinson wrote, "If statements about God are statements about 'ultimacy' of personal relationships, then we must agree that in a real sense Feuerbach was right in wanting to translate 'theology' into 'anthropology.'" This does not mean, of course, that God is nothing but man, as Feuerbach would have it, for this would lead to the deification of man. But rather, as Buber said, "Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou." That is, it is between man and man that we meet God, but not as Feuerbach said that man is God.¹⁶⁷

For Robinson the necessity of the Transcendent within human

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 44, 54, 130, 45-48.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 49-53.

experience ". . . lies in the fact that our being has depths which naturalism, whether evolutionary, mechanistic, dialectical or humanistic, cannot or will not recognize." That is, "The man who acknowledges the transcendence of God is the man who in the conditioned relationships of life recognizes the unconditional and responds to it in unconditional personal relationship." In other words, "God, the unconditional, is to be found only in, with and under the conditioned relationships of life: for he is their depth and ultimate significance."¹⁶⁸ And as Tillich observed, to speak of the transcendent in this sense means that within itself the finite world points beyond itself.¹⁶⁹

In brief, Robinson is suggesting that in view of the obsolescence of a transcendence in "height" that men may profitably speak of a transcendence in "depth." That is, if it is not possible to speak of the transcendent "up there" men may speak of the transcendent "in here"; we may speak of an introspective transcendence where 'vertical' transcendence is not possible.

God and the Subconscious.--Speaking of the God within the "depth" of human experience is neither new nor without problems. It was a natural way to describe God even before the Freudian elaboration of a subconscious 'depth' to human experience. However, Since Freud, there has been the temptation to consider the subconscious either identical with or closely associated with the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 54, 55, 60.

¹⁶⁹ Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. II (1957), p. 8.

transcendent because it is beyond, mysterious, and a realm over which men have no conscious control. Rather, in some way it controls them.

Eliade, for example, said that the unconscious displays the structure of a private mythology. He goes even further and contends

. . . not only that the unconscious is "mythological" but also that some of its contents carry cosmic values It can even be said that Modern man's only real contact with cosmic sacrality is effected by the unconscious, whether in his dreams and his imaginative life or in the creations that arise out of the unconscious.¹⁷⁰

James also closely associates the subliminal and the supreme. He contends that the spontaneous source of religious conversation is the subconscious. For James it is not the source or root of a religious experience that is important; "If the fruits for life of the state of conversion are good, we ought to idealize and venerate it, even though it be a piece of natural psychology." James does not say that the source of conversions is purely natural, that the subconscious is God. He admits that ". . . the reference of a phenomenon to a subliminal self does not exclude the notion of the Deity altogether," for ". . . it is logically conceivable that if there be higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so might be our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them." That is, James does not deny that there is more than the subconscious to what is meant by God; what

¹⁷⁰ Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 77.

he did say is that the transcendent is at least ". . . the subconscious continuation of our conscious life."¹⁷¹

But it is precisely this close association of the transcendent with man's subconsciousness that raises anew the question of the reality basis for religious transcendence. For if one admits with James that sudden religious conversions can be explained on a purely natural basis and that there are no unmistakably unique characteristics of so-called supernatural conversions; if one admits that there is in the subconscious a transcendent realm of spontaneous power capable of transforming lives,¹⁷² then one cannot help but wonder whether or not the subconscious is all that is meant by the transcendent. Indeed, this is precisely the position taken by Carl Jung who identifies God with the collective subconscious of men. And even those who do not make this identification are sometimes haunted with the possibility that there might be no more to the transcendent than what transcends the consciousness of individual men, viz., in the subconsciousness of the race. But since we have taken for the meaning of reality only that which is more than and independent of the subconsciousness of men, whether individual or collective, this raises afresh the question of how to test the reality of the transcendent.

Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter has been to discover the essen-

¹⁷¹William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 232, 237, cf. 265, 508.

¹⁷²Ibid., pp. 233-237.

tial character and basic dimensions of religious experience. First, it was discovered that a religious experience always involves a transcendent dimension, i.e., something which goes beyond and is more than the empirical conditions of finite man. Secondly, the transcendent must be considered as ultimate, i.e., something about which one is ultimately concerned or to which he gives a total commitment.

After distinguishing religious experience from moral, aesthetic, and secular experiences the various dimensions of transcendence were explored. These were found to be four:¹⁷³ 1) retrospective transcendence to the origin, 2) vertical transcendence to the top, 3) eschatological transcendence to the end, and 4) introspective transcendence to the depth of all things. From this we conclude that there are many directions or dimensions of the transcendent, but religious experience always involves an ultimate commitment to the transcendent,¹⁷⁴ of one dimension or another.

¹⁷³There may be other directions or ways to transcend. Teilhard De Chardin suggests transcending toward a divine "Center" in his work, The Divine Milieu (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957).

¹⁷⁴No attempt has been made here to analyze Eastern religions but there is no reason why these types of transcendence would not include them. Most Oriental religions seem to be either vertical or introspective kinds of transcendence.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF PROOFS IN DETERMINING THE REALITY OF THE TRANSCENDENT

It has been argued to this point that a religious experience is a total commitment to the transcendent, i.e., to that which one feels to be beyond himself. This transcendent dimension is conceived in different directions (backward, upward, forward, and inward), but religious experience always involves transcendence in one direction or another. That is, it always involves a commitment to a beyond which it considers to be ultimate. The question is this: is there any way to determine whether or not the transcendent is really beyond the persons who are experiencing it? Is the beyond really beyond religious experience with an independent reality of its own?

This raises the question of proving or disproving the existence or reality of the transcendent. Traditionally, religious thinkers have offered several arguments or 'proofs' in defense of the reality of the transcendent or "God." We will only attempt to sketch them here because they are well known to most readers.

Attempts to Prove the Existence of God

Since the theistic arguments have assumed many forms and

have been classified in different ways we will simply organize and restate them in what seems to us their basic logical structure. Taking them topically they are the Cosmological, Teleological, Ontological, and Moral proofs for the existence of God.

The Cosmological Argument¹

Basically this is the argument from effect to cause or from contingency to necessity or from creation to Creator. The logic of the argument may be stated something like this. The being or existence of the world must be either uncaused, self-caused, or caused by another for there are no other alternatives. But the existence of the world can not be uncaused for it's existence is contingent, i.e., the world exists but need not exist; it does not account for its own existence; the world doesn't explain why it is when it need not be. Nor on the other hand can the world be self-caused. For to have its existence caused the world would first have to be non-existent, and to cause existence it would have to be existent. Therefore, to cause its own existence the world would have to be non-existent and existent at the same time and in the same sense which is impossible. But if the world is

¹A good list of readings on the Cosmological argument may be found in Part I of The Cosmological Arguments, ed. Donald R. Burrill (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1967). A very good summary of the essence of the Cosmological argument, not in the above, is Francis H. Parker's article, "The Realistic Position in Religion" found in Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, pp. 78-113. More comprehensive treatments of the argument are given by E. L. Mascall in He Who Is (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943), Austin Farrer's Finite and Infinite and R. Garrigou-Lagrange, God: His Existence and His Nature (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 2 vols., 1934 and 1936).

neither uncaused nor self-caused, then it must be caused by another cause.

Now this cause of the world cannot be caused by another cause which is caused by another cause and so on infinitely, since an infinite series of existentially dependent causes is impossible. For in every infinite series of causes where one depends on another for its existence at least one cause must be causing, otherwise there would be no causality in the series. But in an infinite series of causes every cause is being caused, for that is what is meant by saying that it is an infinite series. But if every cause is being caused and at least one cause is causing, then at least one cause must be both causing its own existence and having its existence caused at the same time and in the same sense which is a contradiction. Therefore, if there cannot be an infinite series of existentially dependent causes for the world, then there must be a First, Uncaused Cause of the existence of the world.

The Teleological Argument²

This is basically the argument from design to Designer or from purpose to a Purposer, that is, the argument from final causality. Its logical structure is simply this: every design

²Readings on the Teleological argument may be found in Part II of Donald R. Burrill, op. cit. Complete works on it are not so plentiful but A. E. Taylor's Does God Exist? (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1945) contains a good defense of it as does the more recent work by Robert E. D. Clark, The Universe: Plan or Accident? (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, 1961).

has a designer; the world has great design; therefore, the world has a Great Designer. That the world is a great design is revealed in Nature where one can see a delicate balance of plant and animal life; in the organs of the human body such as the eye and ear which are clearly structured for the purpose of seeing and hearing; in the very division of the sexes into male and female which is for the obvious purpose of propagating, etc. In brief, the ordered relation and adaptation of means to ends reveals clearly that there must be an Orderer or Adaptor; their design shows that there must be a Designer. And since the design and order of nature goes far beyond anything the intelligence of man has contrived, then nature's Designer must be an intelligence far beyond man's.

Of course the more sophisticated forms of the Teleological argument must handle the possibility that what appears to be a great design might be no more than a 'happy accident.' That is, the so-called order of nature could be no more than a chance combination of the parts with which it is composed. In view of this possibility the Teleological argument takes the following logical form. Either the world with all its adaptation of means to ends, etc. is the result of design or else it happened by chance. It is highly improbable that the world happened by chance. Therefore, it is highly probable that the world was designed by an Intelligent Mind. The reason that it is highly unlikely that the world results from a fortuitous combination of events is that the known number of parts at the known rate of

development occasions a possibility so remote that believing the world happened by pure chance would be like believing that Webster's unabridged dictionary resulted from an explosion in a printing shop. It is possible but highly improbable.

The Ontological Argument³

This is the argument for the necessity of being (or ontos). It argues that if a Necessary Being is conceivable then it must exist. That is, a Necessary Being must necessarily be (i.e., exist), for if it doesn't have to exist necessarily then it is not (a) necessary Being but only a contingent being, i.e., one that exists but need not exist.

The classical formulation of the Ontological argument took the following shape. God by definition is that than which nothing greater can be conceived, for if one could conceive a greater than it by definition would be God. But it is greater to exist than not to exist, for existence is a better state than non-existence. Therefore, God (or that than which nothing greater can be conceived) must exist, for if he did not exist then we could conceive of one greater, viz., one that did exist. But God is by definition that than which there is no greater. Therefore, he must exist or else he is not really that than which

³Readings on the Ontological argument may be found in The Ontological Argument, ed. Alvin Plantinga (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1965), or in John Hick's The Many-Faced Argument (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967). The complete statement of the ontological argument by Anselm including his dialogue with Guanilo may be found in St. Anselm: Basic Writings, trans. S. N. Deane (Open Court Pub. Co., 1962).

nothing greater can be conceived.

Although it is not obvious in this classical way of stating the argument that there is a hidden implication in the minor premise, nevertheless this can be made clear by restating the argument as follows. God by definition must possess all perfections. Existence is a perfection. Therefore, God by definition must exist. That is to say, if God can be defined as a being which must possess all perfections then he must exist for if he didn't then he would lack one perfection, viz., existence and therefore he would not qualify under the definition to be God. The problem with the argument in this form is in showing that existence is a perfection. That is, is existence a characteristic or feature which some things may or may not have? Is existence a predicate or attribute which can be attributed to something the way other characteristics can such as "red" or "tall" can be said of things?

In order to answer this question the Ontological argument must contend that if existence is not a perfection at least necessary existence is a perfection of a Necessary Being. For if a Necessary Being doesn't have to necessarily exist, then it is not a Necessary Being. In other words, a Necessary Being must necessarily have being; it couldn't just happen to be, for then it would not be a Necessary Being.

The Moral Argument⁴

This is the argument from a moral law to a Moral Law-Giver. Originally it was not conceived as a proof which was rationally necessary but only as a postulate which was morally or practically necessary. Eventually, however, it came to have the form of a rational argument which goes something like this. Every moral law has a moral law-giver (or legislator). There is a moral law which is independent of men. Therefore, there is a Moral Law-Giver who is independent of men. The first premise is taken to be self-evident, for how could something be legislated without a legislator? How could it be ruled without a ruler? How can there be prescriptions without a prescriber? It is the minor premise that needs more explanation.

How is it known that there is an objective moral law, independent of individual men and of the race in general? It must be independent of individual men, it is argued, otherwise there would be no standard to judge between them. Indeed, there could not ever be any real discussion or difference between them on moral questions unless there were a moral law beyond them to which they could make common appeal. Furthermore, individual men feel themselves under the compulsion to do what is right

⁴On the Moral argument one can trace the essence of its development in the following articles: Immanuel Kant, "God as a Postulate of Practical Reason" in The Existence of God, ed. John Hick (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964); Hastings Rashdall, "The Moral Argument," The Existence of God; W. R. Sorley, "The Moral Argument" in Philosophy of Religion, ed. George L. Abernethy; C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, Part I, chapters 1-5, and Elton Trueblood, Philosophy of Religion, chapter 8.

even though this urging from beyond them is sometimes contrary to their wishes and instincts. Now unless they are totally deceived at the most serious level of what they consider to be their duty (even to the point of paying the supreme sacrifice), then there must be beyond them a moral law which is in some sense binding on them. And what is true of the individual is true of the race as a whole. That is, not only individuals but the race as a whole experiences a moral prescription from beyond them to which standard their desires and conduct does not always conform. Indeed, there could be no such thing as progress of the race as a whole unless there were an objective moral law which is beyond the race as a whole and by which the race could be judged to be doing "better" or "worse." But if there is an objective moral law beyond all men, then there must be a Moral Law-Giver beyond mankind.

Of course not all theists hold to the validity of all of these arguments nor do they all feel that the arguments really logically and demonstrably prove the existence of God. Some theists, however, have held that at least one or more of these arguments do indeed prove the existence of God, and most theists give at least some weight to the arguments. But in any event the modern response to theistic proofs has been less optimistic and less enthusiastic. It will be necessary to examine the reactions to proofs for the reality of any kind of transcendent object of religious experience and even some attempted disproofs of the

same before we can properly address the question as to whether or not there is any way to test the alleged reality of the object of religious experience.

Modern Attitude Toward Proofs for Religious Reality

The prevailing modern attitude toward proving the existence of God or the transcendent has been uniformly sceptical if not negative. There are a number of reasons for this. Peter Koestenbaum succinctly summarized some of the basic reasons when he wrote, ". . . the arguments are logically invalid, epistemologically defective, and axiologically misplaced."⁵ To these we may add a few more reactions that have come from modern thought in response to proofs for God.

Proofs are Psychologically Unconvincing

Rational proofs for God or the transcendent are generally unpersuasive to outsiders. As Martin Marty noted, "Apologists know that proof is convincing only when people are already predisposed to believe."⁶ Novak points out that the most persuasive force for religion ". . . is not rational theology but mystical theology, not the principle of objectivity but of subjectivity, not the clear . . . arguments of Aquinas but the record of the tormented inner experience of Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, which are found most appealing."⁷ The reason for this,

⁵Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology" in Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, 178.

⁶Martin Marty, Varieties of Unbelief, p. 209.

⁷Michael Novak, Belief and Unbelief, p. 105.

William James suggested, is that human needs go deeper than the rational. In fact, the rational nature of man is impressed with arguments only after his feelings have been impressed. That is, experience is more convincing than logic because the rational nature of man is at best secondary as compared to his private, inner life.⁸ In other words, a man often finds reasons for something because he already believed it; he doesn't usually believe it because he already has reasons for it. Psychological persuasion precedes rational demonstration.

One of the reasons proofs are psychologically unconvincing is that they tend to be academic and formal; they often do not touch men where they live. As John Dewey observed, "The cause of the dissatisfaction is . . . that they are too formal to offer any support to religion in action."⁹ That is, a rational proof does not meet man's existential needs. Rational proofs like the mathematic proofs are 'cold' and do not call for a commitment of the whole man. As Ian Ramsey pointed out "There are no placard-bearers in mathematical departments with legends like 'There'll always be a Euclid,' or 'Prepare to meet they Riemann today.'"¹⁰ Likewise, there is little tendency for most moderns to join the cause to an "Uncaused Cause" or to be deeply moved by an "Unmoved Mover." In brief, even if rational "proofs" for

⁸William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 72, 73.

⁹John Dewey, A Common Faith, p. 11.

¹⁰Ian Ramsey, Religious Language, p. 37.

the transcendent were valid, they seem not to be vital; they seem too speculative to mean much for man's practical life. And to contend that theistic arguments can prove God but not persuade men of it does not seem to impress many moderns. For what value is it to have been rationally driven to the theistic waters from which one does not desire to drink?

Proofs are Logically Invalid

But not only are theistic proofs psychologically unpersuasive to the modern mind, they are also widely considered to be logically invalid. As Kaufmann argued, "Can we prove God's existence with a valid argument in which God does not appear in any of the premises?" For "Clearly, if God does not appear in any of the premises, he will not appear in the conclusion either: if he did, the argument would have to be invalid."¹¹ That is, logically, the conclusion can be no broader than the premises. If one begins with God in the premises, he has already begged the question. And if one does not begin with God in the premises, there is no logically valid way to come up with God in the conclusion, Kaufmann urges.

This same objection may be put in another way. It is sometimes argued that: Every finite thing is caused; The world is finite; Therefore, the world has a cause.¹² But in this form of

¹¹Walter Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, p. 169.

¹²Allan B. Wolter, The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus (New York: Franciscan Institute St. Bonaventure, 1946), p. 44.

the argument the word "cause" in the conclusion seems to have a different (broader) meaning than it has in the premise. For in the premise it means finite cause and in the conclusion it is supposed to mean an infinite Cause (viz., God). From a logical standpoint this seems to be a "Four-term" fallacy.

Another way of saying that the arguments for God are invalid is to follow David Hume who contended that "Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as nonexistent. There is no being, therefore, whose nonexistence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being whose existence is demonstrable."¹³ That is, to conclude the existence of God is not rationally inescapable since it is also logically possible to posit the opposite of whatever is said to exist. This argument is directed particularly at the Ontological argument which Kant found to be at the basis of all the other proofs for God.

For no argument, Kant argued, can conclude that God necessarily exists, unless it demonstrates that God is a Necessary Being. "But experience can only show us that one state of things often or at most commonly follows another, and therefore affords neither universality nor necessity."¹⁴ So the only non-experiential argument which could possibly show that the existence of God is necessary is the argument for a Necessary Being, i.e., the

¹³David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, part IX.

¹⁴Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1950), p. 62.

Ontological argument. This argument, however, is not rationally inescapable since it is not contradictory to reject it. For, as Kant stated it, "To posit a triangle, and to reject its three angles, is self-contradictory; but there is no contradiction in rejecting the triangle together with its three angles."¹⁵

Proofs are Epistemologically Defective

Closely associated with the criticism that the proofs for God are logically invalid is another criticism which has been widely echoed since Kant's time. It is the charge that the proofs are epistemologically defective. In Kant's words, "Through concepts alone, it is quite impossible to advance to the discovery of new objects and supernatural beings [as in the ontological argument]; and it is useless to appeal to experience, which in all cases yields only appearances."¹⁶ That is, all that one can know is the phenomena (thing-for-me) and not the noumenon (thing-in-itself). Kant did not deny that there is a reality behind appearance but he is saying that ". . . we know not this thing as it is in itself but only know its appearances, namely, the way in which our senses are affected by this unknown something."¹⁷ One of the arguments Kant used to support this position is that "If the objects of the world of sense are taken for things in themselves . . . contradiction would be unavoidable."¹⁸ That is,

¹⁵Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, p. 502.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 530.

¹⁷Kant, Prolegomena, pp. 60, 62.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 91.

on the assumption that we know the noumenon and not merely the phenomena the human reason eventuates in inexorable contradictions or antinomies.¹⁹

There are other very basic reasons why Kant concludes that our knowledge is limited to appearances which may be summarized as follows: all knowledge begins with experience but does not arise from experience. There are certain necessary a priori conditions for experience which make experience possible. These "forms" of sensation (like Time and Space) and "categories" of understanding (like Unity, Causality, Necessity) provide the structure of sensation and knowledge while experience provides the content or "stuff"; experience provides the data and the mind the determination of our knowledge. Therefore, all that one knows is what the thing is to him (phenomena) as the mind has formed or determined it and not what it is in itself (noumenon) independently of this.²⁰

In brief, Kant is arguing that knowledge is constructive of reality and not intuitive.²¹ He is saying that one can not know the way things really are but only the way the mind constructs them. If this be the case, then all attempts to prove the existence of God would find themselves incapable of building any rational bridge across the chasm that separates the way things

¹⁹See Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, pp. 396 f.

²⁰See ibid., pp. 65, 175, and Prolegomena, pp. 42-74.

²¹On this point see F. H. Parker, "Traditional Reason and Modern Reason" in Faith and Philosophy, pp. 40, 41.

appear and the way they really are.

Proofs Are Axiologically Misplaced

Even though Kant gave up any rational proofs for the existence of God he did say that it is morally necessary to posit God. This shift from what is rationally necessary to what is morally required signals another shift in the modern attitude toward rational proofs for the existence of God. Kant argued, e.g., that moral duty demands that men seek the highest good (the summum bonum) which is the union of virtue and happiness. But this is not possible in this life since doing one's duty does not always bring him the maximum of happiness. "Thus God and a future life are two postulates which, according to the principles of pure reason, are inseparable from the obligations which that same reason imposes upon us."²² Kant felt that by connecting God with a man's concrete moral values rather than his abstract reason that a man would have a more valuable orientation for his religious convictions. This is why Kant could say, "I inevitably believe in the existence of God and I am certain that nothing can shake this belief, since my moral principles would thereby be themselves overthrown, and I cannot disclaim them without becoming abhorrent in my own eyes."²³

Not all modern religious thinkers agree with Kant about the need to posit God in order to secure the fulfillment of man's

²²Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, p. 639.

²³Ibid., p. 650.

moral duty. However many have followed Kant's basic axiological orientation by relating their religion to man's basic moral values. And in view of this the value of rational proofs is seen to be secondary at best. James, e.g., contended that modern man wants to know what will be the "cash value" of religion in their lives and world.²⁴ Søren Kierkegaard took a more radical position arguing that it is folly even to attempt to prove the existence of God.²⁵ Michael Novak's view is not quite so extreme but it too reflects this same axiological reorientation toward proofs. "A formal argument for the existence of God is not of much use in the life of one who is trying to decide between belief and unbelief." For ". . . there are many layers of point of view, inquiry, and new horizons to come through before one can understand the formal argument."²⁶ That is, there may be a secondary (or tertiary) role or value for a formal rationalization of one's experience of God. But to consider a rational proof to be the prime basis for one's religious experience is a misplacement of values.

Proofs Are Ontologically Inadequate

There is another more sophisticated critique of theistic proofs which grows out of most of the previous criticisms. It argues that even if one could devise a rational proof for God it

²⁴James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 433,435.

²⁵Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), p. 31.

²⁶Novak, Belief and Unbelief, p. 130.

would not necessarily follow that he really existed. It argues that even if it were rationally necessary to conclude that there is a God it does not follow from this that God really exists. For there is always the possibility that the rationally inescapable is not real. Perhaps the way men must think is not in the final analysis the way things really are.

The basis of this reaction to theistic proofs is traceable to Kant's contention that men must act and think as if there is a God. On one interpretation of this it could be argued that God does not really exist but it is necessary to think that he does in order to have unity in one's thoughts.²⁷ Whether or not Kant actually took this position is not our purpose to determine here. It is at least a prima facie possibility that a theistic proof could be logically valid even if there were no God. Norman Malcolm offered an Ontological proof for God but said, "I can imagine an atheist going through the argument becoming convinced of its validity, acutely defending it against objections, yet remaining an atheist. . . ."²⁸

But just how can something be rationally inescapable without

²⁷Kant never denied that there was a noumenal reality; he denied only that one could know what it was, Critique of Pure Reason, pp. 264-275. He even asserted that "The categorical imperative leads directly to God, yes, serves as a pledge of His reality," from Kant's Opus Postumum quoted by T. M. Greene in "Introduction" to Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. Theodore Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1934), p. lxvi.

²⁸Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Argument" in The Existence of God, p. 67.

being ontologically so, one may ask. Those who object that the theistic arguments do not really prove God exists could argue in the following way. In order to defend that the rationally inescapable is real the theist would have to prove that the principle of non-contradiction, which is at the basis of all rational arguments, is necessarily true of reality. But the traditional defense of this principle is that it cannot be denied without affirming it, therefore, it must be so.²⁹ For one must assume that the very statement (or thought) by which he denies the principle of non-contradiction is itself non-contradictory, otherwise the very denial is meaningless. But all this really proves is that the principle of non-contradiction is inescapable; it does not prove that it is true of reality. That is, for one to say that it is unavoidable is not the same as affirming that it is ontologically so. For even though one cannot affirm it to be false, he can believe it to be false. Furthermore, the argument goes, even though it cannot be demonstrated to be false, it might still be false.³⁰

Arguing in this same vein, C. I. Lewis suggests ". . . if we should be forced to realize that nothing in our experience possesses any stability . . . that denouncement would rock our world to its foundations," and ". . . yet such a world-shaking

²⁹See Aristotle, Metaphysics IV, c. 4, 1006a, Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

³⁰F. H. Parker, "The Realistic Position in Religion" in Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, pp. 86 f.

event is still quite possible . . . simply because, on this view, not even the law of non-contradiction is necessarily true of the real world."³¹

Now in like manner one could argue that a proof for God could be rationally inescapable without necessitating the conclusion that God truly exists. That is, one could contend that all that the proof does at best is to show that one can not think consistently without logically implying that there is a God, but it does not follow from this that God really exists. All that would follow necessarily is that one can not think in any rational way which would not logically imply positing God. That is, one must think as if there were a God because there is no other consistent way to think, but this does not mean that there really is a God.

Attempts to Disprove the Reality of God

However, not all modern reactions to religious proofs are content to point out the inadequacies of these proofs, some have gone so far as to suggest that they can disprove the reality of God or the transcendent. If they can establish their case then it will be unnecessary to go any further in an attempt to discover criteria for testing the alleged reality of the transcendent. Hence, it is necessary to examine these disproofs first.

³¹C. I. Lewis, Mind and the World Order (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1929), p. 306.

The Difference between 'Disbelief' and Disproof

Actually there have not been many disproofs for the existence of God offered in the history of thought. Most serious atheists have been content to disbelieve (on probability grounds) rather than attempting to disprove (on logically certain bases) that there is a God. Bertrand Russell, for example, said, "I'm not contending in a dogmatic way that there is not a God. What I'm contending is that we don't know that there is."³² Likewise Sigmund Freud's Future of an Illusion is not an attempt to disprove God, however much doubt he succeeds in casting on God's existence. Freud clearly admits that there may be a God and that his position against religion may be wrong.³³ And even those who tend to disbelieve in God because of the problem of evil do not usually formulate it as a disproof of God's existence but of his infinite power or love.³⁴

Several Disproofs Discussed.

However, those who wish to contend seriously on behalf of the reality of God can take little consolation in the fact that many unbelievers don't try to disprove God until they have first answered the other unbelievers who have attempted to demonstrate there is no God.

³² Bertrand Russell, "A Debate on the Existence of God," The Existence of God, p. 180.

³³ Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 87.

³⁴ John Stuart Mill, "The Problem of Evil," The Existence of God, pp. 119-120.

Feuerbach's Epistemological Disproof of God.---Ludwig Feuer-

bach is an example of someone who seems to attempt a disproof of God. For him God was "nothing but" a projection of human imagination. The reason God can be "nothing more" than man, said Feuerbach, is that a man's understanding can go no farther than his nature. If man understands the infinite then he must be infinite. In Feuerbach's own words, ". . . in the consciousness of the infinite, the conscious subject has for his object the infinity of his own nature." A man's understanding is limited to his nature, for ". . . so far as thy nature extends, so far reaches thy unlimited self-consciousness, so far art thou God." For example, if a man can feel the infinite, then he must be infinite, for "How couldst't thou perceive the divine by feeling, if feeling were not divine in its nature?" And if a man can think the infinite, his thought must be infinite, for "The object of the intellect is the intellect objective to itself." In brief, the reason there is no God beyond man is that "Man cannot get beyond his true nature"; he can never get loose from his own species. If "The object of any subject is nothing else than the subject's own nature taken objectively," then it would follow that there is no reality beyond man.³⁵

³⁵ Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, pp. 3, 8, 9, 11, 12. Feuerbach applies the same logic to every other faculty of man saying, "But feeling has here been adduced only as an example. It is the same with every other power, faculty, potentiality, reality, activity--the name is indifferent--which is defined as the essential organ of any object. Whatever is a subjective expression of a nature is simultaneously also its objective expression," Ibid., p. 11.

The crux of Feuerbach's argument seems to rest on the following affirmation: "I cannot know whether God is something else in himself or for himself than he is for me; what he is to me is to me all that he is." Man cannot take ". . . a point of view above himself, i.e., above his nature, the absolute measure of his being." For "I can make the distinction between the object as it is in itself, and the object as it is for me, only where an object can really appear otherwise to me. . . ." That is, "The measure of the species is the absolute measure, law, and criterion of man."³⁶

Now whatever this argument does it certainly does not prove that there cannot be a God beyond man but only (at best) that one cannot get at any thing apart from his thoughts about it. But it certainly is not an unintelligible position to hold as Kant did that there really was a noumenal "thing-in-itself" even if one could only think the phenomenal "thing-for-me."³⁷ That is, all Feuerbach's argument shows (at best) is that one can't think about God apart from his thoughts; it does not show that God cannot exist apart from one's thoughts.

Furthermore, Feuerbach's disproof of God rests on the premise that one cannot know an infinite without being an infinite, etc. But surely he does not prove this point. That is, he does not show that it is absolutely impossible that a finite could

³⁶Feuerbach, Essence of Christianity, p. 16.

³⁷Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, pp. 265-270.

know the infinite. Indeed, he admits a distinction between the finite individual man and his infinite species, holding only the latter to be God.³⁸ And if there is a difference between man in particular and man in general (i.e., mankind), then there is no reason why one could not make a similar distinction between finite man and an infinite God. And if individual man can know man in general (i.e., mankind) which goes beyond his individual, finite limits, then there seems to be no reason why a finite man can't know an infinite God which goes beyond the limits of the individual finite man. But in any event, it does not follow to argue that all that God is to me is all that God really is. There is also the possibility that God exists beyond my thoughts; he could be even apart from being thought by men. In brief, this is to say, the possibility exists that there can be a God beyond his being thought by us, even if we could not think of him apart from our thought.

An Attempted Ontological Disproof of God.---Now when the problem is stated in this form, it becomes clear that the attempt to disprove God, as Kant said of the attempt to prove God, has an ontological premise in it. It is a kind of ontological disproof of God.

J. N. Findlay attempted to defend such an ontological disproof of God. He argued, e.g., that (1) ". . . the Divine Existence can only be conceived, in a religiously satisfactory manner

³⁸Feuerbach, Essence of Christianity, p. 7.

if we also conceive it as something inescapable and necessary, whether for thought or reality." And (2) from this ". . . it follows that our modern denial of necessity or rational evidence for such an existence amounts to a demonstration that there cannot be a God."³⁹ That is to say, if God must be a Necessary Existence and if no necessity is possible with regard to existence, then it would follow that God cannot exist at all. For God cannot exist in a non-necessary (i.e., contingent) way and still be God. And nothing can have a necessary existence, for no existential propositions are necessary.

In support of the first premise he argues that "The true object of religious reverence must not be, merely, that to which no actual independent realities stand opposed: it must be one to which such opposition is totally inconceivable." Furthermore, ". . . not only must the existence of other things be unthinkable without him, but his own non-existence must be wholly unthinkable in any circumstances." It is not possible to view God as one who just happened to exist (but not necessarily) or to be wise, powerful, etc. "An object of this sort would doubtless deserve respect and admiration, and other quasi-religious attitudes, but it would not deserve the utter self-abandonment peculiar to the religious frame of mind." That is to say, such a being would deserve a quasi-religious respect but not full religious reverence.

³⁹J. N. Findlay, "Can God's Existence be Disproved?" New Essays in Philosophical Theology, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955), p. 48.

In fact, said Findlay, ". . . it would be idolatrous to worship it."⁴⁰

Now in support of the second premise Findlay argues "Plainly, (for all who share a contemporary outlook) they entail not only that there isn't a God, but that the Divine Existence is either senseless or impossible." This is so, he argues, because on a ". . . modern view of the matter, necessity in propositions merely reflects our use of words, the arbitrary convention of language." On such a view, ". . . the Divine Existence could only be a necessary matter if we had made up our minds to speak theistically whatever the empirical circumstances might turn out to be."⁴¹ But this would be no more than a predisposition to view things in a given way or what R. M. Hare called a "blik."⁴² This may be sufficient for a purely theoretical view of God, "But it wouldn't suffice for the full-blooded worshiper . . ." who desires the Divine Existence both to have that inescapable character which can, on modern views, ". . . only be found where truth reflects an arbitrary convention, and also the character of 'making a real difference' which is only possible where truth doesn't have this merely linguistic basis."⁴³ But if God must be con-

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 48, 52, 53, 54.

⁴²R. M. Hare, "Theology and Falsification," New Essays, pp. 99-102. A 'blik' is an unverifiable, pre-cognitive disposition to view things from a certain chosen perspective.

⁴³Findlay, "Can God's Existence be Disproved?" pp. 54, 55.

ceived as necessarily existing and if necessary existence is impossible, then God cannot exist, for the only way he can exist is necessarily. And on a contemporary view of language no statements which have to do with existence can be necessary.

Now as Malcolm pointed out, this ontological disproof of God seems to stand or fall on the premise that every existential proposition must be contingent. But, replied Malcolm, "... the view that logical necessity merely reflects the use of words cannot possibly have the implication that every existential proposition must be contingent." All that view requires of us is ". . . to look at the use of words and not manufacture a priori theses about them."⁴⁴ That is, we must not legislate the meaning of language but listen to it; we must not dictate what all propositions must mean but try to discover what they do mean. As Wittgenstein said, "This language game is played!"⁴⁵ In fact, it seems possible to offer an example of necessary existential propositions. "I am I" is both necessarily and existentially true, argued Ramsey.⁴⁶

But even if no necessary existential propositions could be produced from the level of contingent beings it does not follow that this also applies to a Necessary Being. Indeed, it is precisely the point of the Ontological argument that a Necessary

⁴⁴Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Argument," pp. 61, 62.

⁴⁵Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, sect. 654.

⁴⁶Ramsey, Religious Language, p. 46.

Being is a special case or even the unique case where existence must be attributed to it necessarily, otherwise it would not be a Necessary Being.

Or to put it another way, is one able to deny absolutely the possibility of Necessary Existence without making an existentially necessary assertion? For it would seem that the proposition "It is impossible that a Necessary Being exists" is meant to be more than an arbitrary use of symbols; it is meant really (not just arbitrarily or symbolically) to deny the existence of God. If it is meant as an actual demonstrative denial of God's existence, then it would have to be both necessary and existential itself. But if it is an existentially necessary proposition itself, then can it be used to prove that there are no existentially necessary propositions? And if it is not meant to be either an existential or a necessary proposition, then it either doesn't actually deny the possibility of God's existence or it doesn't really prove its position demonstratively. In brief, the ontological disproof is subject to the same criticisms to which the ontological proof is subject. If one can't move from thought to existence to demonstrate God, then neither can one do it to deny God.

Sartre's Existential Disproofs of God.--There are two basic grounds on which Sartre rejects the reality of God:⁴⁷ One, that religious phenomena can be explained non-supernaturally the way

⁴⁷See Hazel E. Barnes in "Translator's Introduction" to Sartre's Being and Nothingness, p. xxxv.

Freud does, and, two, that there are absurdities involved in believing in God.⁴⁸ We are concerned here with the latter because only these would amount to a disproof of God if valid. Sartre's latter arguments against God focus on three areas: 1) the idea of God as self-caused is contradictory; 2) The idea of God as creator is incompatible with human freedom; 3) God can't transcend the totality of things.⁴⁹

(1) Let us begin with the idea of God as contradictory. Why is the concept of God as causa sui (self-caused) absurd? Because for God to cause himself he would have to stand at a distance from himself. But if God can do this, then his existence is contingent or dependent. But if he is contingent or dependent, he cannot be God. Therefore, there is no God. Or to put the argument in classical terminology, God can't be self-caused, for to cause being one must be, and to be caused one must not be. Therefore, a self-caused being would both be and not be at the same time and in the same sense which is contradictory. So God as ens causa sui is impossible.⁵⁰

In reply to this alleged disproof of God it should be pointed out that God as a self-caused Being is contradictory, but God as an un-caused Being is not. That is, there is another possibility Sartre doesn't consider. Of course a Necessary Being can not

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 694, 754, 762, 766.

be caused or else it would not be absolutely necessary. And a Necessary Being can not be self-caused for this is a contradiction. But Sartre does not consider the possibility that a Necessary Being may be uncaused. Indeed had he borrowed a premise from one of his own objections to the Cosmological argument he could have seen that the notion of an uncaused being is not contradictory. For Sartre argued that finite being does not need an explanation; it is "given" or "gratuitous." Finite being is just "there" and, hence, it does not need God to explain why it is there. He wrote, "Being is without reason, without cause, and without necessity." And he admitted that "This is equivalent to saying that being is uncreated."⁵¹

Now if being can just be there without any explanation, then this amounts to saying that it is uncaused. And if it is not impossible for finite being to be uncaused, then surely there is no reason why an infinite Being can not be uncaused. At least Sartre has not given here any demonstrable proof that God can not be conceived without contradiction to be an uncaused being. At best, Sartre's argument would eliminate the possibility of God being a self-caused being.⁵²

⁵¹Ibid., p. 758; Barnes, "Translator's Introduction," Being and Nothingness, p. lxxvii.

⁵²One of the problems here is semantical. Philosophers like Spinoza and Descartes have spoken of God as self-caused but have really meant uncaused. That is, they do not take self-caused in the sense of causing one's own existence but in the sense of being completely self-sufficient and not dependent on another. What Sartre does with this way of conceiving God shows how unfortunate it is for theists to describe God as a self-caused Being.

(2) Another disproof of God offered by Sartre is that human freedom is incompatible with God. Summarizing Sartre's argument, either a man is free and does not derive his meaning from God, or he is dependent on God and not free.⁵³ That is, either man creates his own meaning or else God creates man's meaning. A man is either self-determined or determined by God. Both are impossible.

In direct opposition to Freud who contended that man is subconsciously determined Sartre argued that man is consciously determined.⁵⁴ Man is always free to say "no."⁵⁵ And even "Not to choose is, in fact, to choose not to choose."⁵⁶ Freedom for Sartre did not mean what it meant for Leibniz, viz., that God made man's essence and left the man to act freely within this structure. According to Sartre, if God had given an essence to man this would predetermine all his future acts.⁵⁷ Even if God has determined the end of a man's life man is not free, according to Sartre. For if God has determined the time a man's life will end, then the man can not be responsible for making his life what it will have been.⁵⁸

⁵³Barnes, "Translator's Introduction," Being and Nothingness p. xxxv.

⁵⁴This is the main thrust of Sartre's Existential Psychoanalysis, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953), cf. pp. 46-59.

⁵⁵Cf. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 529 f.

⁵⁶Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 589.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 573 f.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 659.

In brief, man is fundamentally and radically free. He creates his own meaning. He is responsible for his own life. Man is condemned to freedom; he cannot escape it. And since man is fundamentally responsible for his own meaning and life, then there cannot be a God who gives meaning to man's life. Either God gives meaning to man's life or man gives meaning to his own life. Man gives meaning to his own life. Therefore, there is no God.

Whatever else Sartre's argument does, it obviously does not disprove God. If human freedom were absolute in a positive sense, this would disprove God. But if a man's freedom were absolute in a positive sense it would also disprove that there were any other men. For it is not possible for any more than one being to have freedom in a positive and absolute sense. However, freedom as negation is possible for many beings. That is, one can have the ability to say "no" even though one is forced to do the opposite he wishes to do. A good example of this is Sartre's contention that the French were never so free as when the Germans occupied France. Obviously he doesn't mean that this was the positive desire or choice of the French, but that the French were free not to "accept" the Germans whose forceable occupation was nevertheless "there." In fact, for Sartre "'To be free' does not mean 'to obtain what one has wished' but rather 'by oneself to determine oneself to wish.'"⁵⁹ If this is so, then however morally or

⁵⁹Hazel E. Barnes, "Key to Special Terminology," Sartre's Being and Nothingness, p. 370.

existentially distasteful it may be to think that God has in some way limited one's freedom or independence, it certainly is not logically contradictory.

Furthermore, Sartre by no means proves that man is as free as he thinks. It is philosophically possible that man is not free at all in the sense of doing other than what is predetermined. For it is not philosophically contradictory to hold that events are both determined and freely chosen, i.e., that the free choice was part of the predetermination. It may be existentially disconcerting for one to discover that his creative powers are not absolutely original, that he is willing only as God wills, but it is certainly not logically impossible. That is, it is possible that there is a God who in some way is the ultimate source and circumscription of our freedom, whether this is the way we desire it to be or not. No amount of existential or experiential reaction to divine intrusion into one's life can rule out the logical possibility that there just may be a God anyway. It is just as much an illusion to conclude that there is no God because one doesn't want an invasion of his independence and creativity as to conclude that there is a God because one wishes to have a cosmic comforter.

(3) Sartre's third disproof of God is really more serious. He contends that it is impossible for God to transcend the totality of consciousness. "For if God is consciousness, he is integrated in the totality" and does not really transcend it. "And

if by his nature, he is a being beyond consciousness (that is, an "in-itself" which would be its own foundation) still the totality can appear to him only as object or as subject," neither of which is possible. That is, if God has no consciousness, then he can not be conscious of any totality either as a subject or as an object. "Thus no point of view on the totality is conceivable; the totality has no 'outside,' and the very question of the meaning of the 'underside' is stripped of meaning."⁶⁰

Since we have already spoken to the issue of how it is meaningful to speak about a beyond or transcendent,⁶¹ we will speak only directly to Sartre's problem here. Of course it is meaningless to speak of God as being beyond the whole in any strictly literal sense of the word. But it is not meaningless to speak of God as more than the whole the way unity is more than the parts of a thing or the way depth of experience is beyond the factors which comprise it. In like manner it is possible that God may be beyond or more than our limited consciousness in the sense that he is consciousness while we only have consciousness.⁶²

⁶⁰ Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 370.

⁶¹ See the last part of Chapter One.

⁶² Koestenbaum distinguishes the "empirical ego" (the one perceived) from the "transcendental ego" (the one perceiving). And he argues that the "transcendental ego" should be identified with God because 1) It is experienced as the source of all consciousness; 2) As always the same; 3) As unthinkable as to its non-existence; 4) As existing of its own necessity; 5) As external to the time-space world; 6) As the Unity in the nexus of intersubjectivity; 7) As the subjective center of all consciousness; 8) As contentless consciousness or the pure subject; and 9) As complete freedom. Now in view of this, said Koestenbaum, even

In other words, it is possible for God to be consciousness and yet be beyond our consciousness without contradiction. For the very theoretical or ideal existence of a transcendental ego reveals that it is not impossible to speak of a transcendent consciousness. In brief, Sartre's disproof of God does not follow, for it is possible that there is an ultimate subject or center of consciousness which goes beyond our limited consciousness. It is possible that there are different levels of consciousness. That is, there is no reason why man can not be conscious of something while at the same time be conscious that this something transcends his consciousness of it. This seems to be the case of one's consciousness of his own self. That is, an individual seems to be aware that there is more to himself than he is conscious of in any given state of consciousness. Likewise, when one is conscious of another person he seems to be aware that his consciousness of that person does not exhaust the personality of that person. So, there seems to be no reason why one can not be conscious of a being like God which transcends his consciousness.

The Status of Disproofs of God

To summarize, we have found no valid disproofs of the reality of God or the transcendent. All admit of some possible alternative; none show that it is logically impossible that there is a transcendent reality. Indeed, it would appear to be an

though Kant and Husserl did not identify the transcendental ego with God, its characteristics lend themselves naturally to this identification. See Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition of Phenomenology," pp. 185, 186.

impossible task to absolutely disprove the reality of God. One would have to possess absolute knowledge in order to be absolutely certain there was no possibility of a God. In brief, he would have to be God in order to disprove God.

But it must be remembered that for many modern thinkers neither is it possible to prove the reality of the transcendent. Does this mean that we have reached a stalemate of proof and disproof? Is this the best that one can conclude, viz., that the reality of the transcendent is possible but not provable or disprovable? Are there no ways to test the reality basis for religious experience? This situation calls for a reassessment of the role of argumentation in religion.

The Role of Reason in Determining the Reality of the Transcendent

From the position that proofs are not possible it by no means follows that reason has no role nor that adequate criteria are not available nor necessary. Religion, too, is subject to error and illusion. As even ardent defenders of the reality of the transcendent will sometimes admit, "It is hard to rid our minds completely of the haunting suspicion that the entire religious structure may be nothing more than a grand and beautiful castle in the air."⁶³ As Novak observed, "The believer often fails to recognize that he needs a criterion for distinguishing

⁶³Trueblood, Philosophy of Religion, p. 17.

in himself true belief as opposed to false; he needs a way of guarding against illusion."⁶⁴

Despite this fact, there are some who contend that the transcendent needs no verification but is self-authenticating. Robinson, e.g., argues that "God is, by definition, ultimate reality. And one cannot argue whether ultimate reality exists. One can only ask what ultimate reality is like. . . ."⁶⁵ Here he is following Tillich who contended that the question isn't whether God exists but rather which of the many symbols most adequately expresses him. "This is the problem, and not the so-called 'existence of God'--which is in itself an impossible combination of words. God as the ultimate in man's ultimate concern is more certain than any other certainty, even that of oneself." Indeed, the very fact that one forms the question "Does God exist?" reveals that the symbol "God" has lost its meaning for him, said Tillich. In other words, "It is meaningless to question the ultimacy of an ultimate concern." Atheism is actually impossible for Tillich. For ". . . he who denies God as a matter of ultimate concern affirms God, because he affirms ultimacy in his concern."⁶⁶ This does not mean that man is conscious of his ultimate concern (i.e., of "God"), but he has one nonetheless.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Novak, Belief and Unbelief, p. 21.

⁶⁵Robinson, Honest to God, p. 29.

⁶⁶Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, pp. 46, 47, 63, 88.

⁶⁷Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 50.

Tillich is not alone in his contention that God's existence cannot really be questioned. Søren Kierkegaard said: "Thus I always reason from existence, not toward existence" ⁶⁸ In a similar way, Bultmann argues that the revelation of God is self-vindicating and to ask for a criterion for questioning the direct revelation of God is ". . . to presuppose that we can ascertain the truth of the revelation before recognizing it as revelation." God doesn't have to justify himself to man. Every demand for criteria must be dropped as soon as the face of God appears, he argues. ⁶⁹

Now there is something deceptively oversimplified about this position that must be clarified before we can fully appreciate the need for criteria to determine the reality basis for the transcendent. Jaspers spoke to the heart of the issue when he wrote, "It is not God who must justify himself, but every manifestation in the world that pretends to be the word of God, the act of God, the revelation of God." In other words, "It is not God who is to be tested, but whether what a man says is true" ⁷⁰ Or to restate it, if we know that it was a transcendent reality that one is aware of in religious experience, then there would be no need to verify it. But that is precisely the problem.

⁶⁸Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, p. 32.

⁶⁹Bultmann in Myth and Christianity by Jaspers and Bultmann, p. 68.

⁷⁰Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, pp. 80, 81.

viz., we do not know that it is a transcendent reality. The reality of the transcendent is what is under question. That is, since our experience itself is not God or the transcendent, it is necessary to have some means of determining whether or not our experience has a reality behind it.

Certainly, we cannot identify the experience itself with the ultimate for then it becomes redundant to ask if there is any reality behind it. For we have already contended that by the transcendent object of religious experience we mean more than a subjective condition of human experience; more than a projection of human imagination; more than an illusion of human wishes, and more than a subconscious continuation of human experience.⁷¹ If the basis for religious experience is actually no more than a projection of the experience, it is meaningless to call it "real." And if it is meaningful to ask about the reality basis for religious experience, then it is needful to find some adequate criteria for deciding on the question.

The search for adequate criteria for determining the reality of anything is not easy but it is necessary, particularly in religion. As Novak said, "If by intelligence we cannot know whether there is a God: if, that is, a man has no way of defending himself with critical intelligence against illusory beliefs, then the edifice of revealed religion is--for us, at least--on shaky grounds."⁷² Certainly if a man is ultimately concerned about

⁷¹See Chapter One for further elaboration of this point.

⁷²Novak, Belief and Unbelief, p. 40.

what isn't even real, he ought to know about it. For the religious person of all men should be concerned with maturity and fidelity to the truth whatever it may be, even if it is the discovery that the object of his ultimate concern is not real. Eliade said that the religious man by nature is one who thirsts for reality with all his heart.⁷³ If not, at least he ought to be. For as Freud remarked, anyone with a sense for reality will not be satisfied to worship a God who is no more than an illusory projection of his own wishes.⁷⁴

The Logical Criteria

Two logical criteria may be suggested for testing the reality of the transcendent, one negative and one positive. Negatively, whatever is logically contradictory cannot be real. Positively, whatever is rationally inescapable must be real.

The Negative Criterion.--This will be used in determining the possibility of the reality of the transcendent. For certainly a logically contradictory position is not to be held as true. Contrary to C. I. Lewis and those who hold that the principle of non-contradiction might not apply to reality we would argue that this assertion itself makes no sense unless the law of contradiction does apply to the real world. As Francis H. Parker remarked, the justification for holding that the law of non-contradiction must apply to the real world is that no one can assert

⁷³Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 80.

⁷⁴Freud, The Future of an Illusion, pp. 49, 50.

or even believe that it does not apply without implying that it does.⁷⁵ Furthermore, no meaningful statement can be made which denies the principle of non-contradiction. The principle is literally undeniable. And to say that the principle is undeniable is not to argue in a circle; it is not using the principle of non-contradiction to defend the principle of non-contradiction. That is, we are not affirming that it must be true because we could not even make the statement that it is true unless it were true, thus enabling us to make the statement that it is true in a non-contradictory way. What we are contending is that the law of non-contradiction must be true since there is no way to deny it without affirming it in the same breath. That is, it is not the fact that the law of non-contradiction is affirmable which necessitates its truth but the fact that it is undeniable. The principle of non-contradiction is such that one must assume its truth to affirm it and one must even assume its truth to deny it. In either case there is no way to even think without assuming that the principle of non-contradiction is true. So whether one affirms it or denies it, he really affirms it. The law of

⁷⁵Francis Parker, "The Realistic Position in Religion" in Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective, p. 88. He contends that "... the opponent of the realist thesis of cognitive independence is, at bottom, in the self-defeating position of denying his thesis in the same breath with which he affirms it, of implying that the principle of non-contradiction is true independently of our knowledge of it just in order consistently to deny it. But this is, on the one hand, exactly not to maintain any consistent position at all and also, on the other hand, to grant the independent truth of the principle of non-contradiction and hence also of the demonstration of the realist thesis of cognitive independence which is based upon the independent truth of that principle.

non-contradiction is not non-affirmable, which means it must be affirmed to be true. Hence, no position about the reality of the transcendent can be held to be true if it is contradictory.

The Positive Criterion of Reason.--Not only is it impossible for the contradictory to be real, but it is necessary for the rationally inescapable to be real. By rationally inescapable is meant a non-contradictory position the only possible alternatives to which are contradictory. If it were not so that the only alternative to contradiction were true, then it would follow that nothing could be true. For if the only logically possible view there can be can not be true, then nothing can be true for there are no other possibilities. But to say that nothing can be true is contradictory by the negative criterion of reason, the law of non-contradiction, since the statement that nothing is true would have to be a true statement in order for it to make any sense. But if it is a true statement, then something is true, viz., the statement that nothing is true. However, to say that it is true that nothing is true is to utter a contradiction. Therefore, if it is not true that nothing is true, then it must follow that something is true. And if something must be true, then it must follow that the only possible thing that can be true really is true.

If, then, the rationally inescapable (viz., the only logical possibility) must be real, then this would invalidate the earlier objection to theistic proofs, viz., that they could be rationally inescapable without being ontologically so. For that very state-

ment about what is ontologically so could not be true unless the rational did apply to the real. Therefore, if any proof can be shown to be rationally inescapable then it would settle the question of the reality of the transcendent. The question, then, is this: are any of the proofs for the existence of God rationally inescapable?

Applying the Logical Criteria

Since we have already discussed the application of the negative criterion under the alleged disproofs for God and concluded that none of them show that it is logically impossible that the transcendent is real, then it remains only to ask if any of the alleged proofs are rationally inescapable. For granting, as we have argued, that the rationally inescapable is also real, then if any of the proofs are without logical defect it will follow that God is real.

Alternative to the Teleological Argument.--It was admitted in the formulation of the Teleological proof that the conclusion is not rationally inescapable. That is, there is a non-contradictory alternative, viz., that the world happened by chance.⁷⁶ And even if this alternative is not probable, nevertheless it is possible. And if it is possible, then it is not irrational to hold this position. Furthermore, if it is possible that the world happened by chance then maybe it did happen that way. For things that only have "one chance in a million" sometimes do happen.

⁷⁶This alternative is developed by Hume's Philo in his Dialogues. See Donald Burrill, The Cosmological Arguments, pp. 185-198.

That is, just because the possibility of getting three sixes in one throw is only 1 in 216, it doesn't follow that it will take 216 throws to get it. It may come on the first throw. At any rate, whether the world did or did not happen by chance, it is not logically contradictory to hold that it happened by chance. Hence, the Teleological argument is not rationally inescapable.

Alternatives to the Moral Argument.---Neither is the Moral argument rationally inescapable. For it is always possible that what appears to be independent of man, what appears to come from beyond him is no more than a vague undefined ideal existing only in individual human minds and nowhere outside of them. Or it is possible that what men think is a moral law independent of themselves is no more than their own sub-conscious, i.e., it exists only beyond their own consciousness but not beyond their sub-consciousness.⁷⁷ Then, too, the moral law could be nothing more than the collective sub-consciousness of men, which would explain both its apparent beyondness and also why no one individual completely understands it, viz., because it doesn't exist in any one man in a complete form.

Furthermore, it is not irrational to hold that there could be an objective moral law, independent of mankind without holding that there is a Moral Law-Giver. For it is not contradictory to hold that the moral law is a structure which exists on its own or as the binding force of interrelationships among

⁷⁷This is the position of Carl Jung. See Psychology and Religion, Chapter Two.

men.⁷⁸ Nor is it contradictory to hold that the moral law is no more than an accidental order resulting from chance arrangement in the universe. That is, it is not impossible that mind, idea, and law could be the result of matter, however unlikely this may be.

Alternatives to the Cosmological Argument.--Rational alternatives to the Cosmological argument are not as easy to come by, at least not in the form of the Cosmological argument stated above. One could deny that the world exists but it is difficult to see how he could consistently deny that he exists, for he would have to exist in order to deny that he exists. And if he cannot deny that he exists, then the argument could start from his contingent existence and move on from there with the same logic.

Of course one could deny that it is rationally necessary for contingent things to be caused. That is to say, he could deny that it is not rationally necessary to conclude that there must be a reason or explanation as to why a being exists when it need not exist. This denial would amount to an attack on the principle of sufficient reason. It would be saying that everything does not have to have a sufficient reason, that some things just are and don't need a reason, explanation, or cause. In other words, the world is uncaused; its being is gratuitous or just there without any explanation.⁷⁹ That is, one could deny that

⁷⁸This criticism is mentioned by M. Rader in Enduring Questions (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 341.

⁷⁹This position is suggested by Sartre's analysis. See n. 68 above.

everything needs a sufficient reason either inside or outside itself by simply holding that only some things have sufficient reasons, and the world is not one of them. This would avoid the trap of having to say that nothing has a sufficient reason while one has a sufficient reason for saying that, thus contradicting one's self. What this position could say is that there is a sufficient reason (whatever it may be, evil, absurdity, etc.) for holding that the world does not need to have a sufficient reason. And even if one didn't have a sufficient reason for saying that the world does not need to have a sufficient reason, still this position would be rationally possible (even though it would not be rationally compelling since it has no reason for its conclusion), for it has not been shown why the world must have a cause. That is, it has not been shown why the world can't simply be there.

The other alleged alternatives to the cosmological argument don't seem to be rationally possible alternatives once one grants the need for a sufficient reason or cause. An infinite regress, e.g., is not rationally possible, for if an explanation is necessary then putting it off forever is not sufficient. That is, by adding up an infinite number of non-explanations one does not get an explanation. If each individual cause is inadequate to explain the effect and an explanation is necessary, then an infinite number of inadequate causes will not add up to an adequate explanation; all an infinite series provides is one infinitely inadequate explanation. That is, an infinite regress doesn't

really give an explanation; it is an attempt to explain away the need for any explanation.⁸⁰

Nor does the Cosmological argument necessarily commit a "Four-term" fallacy, for the conclusion of an "Infinite" cause is not necessarily a different term from the "finite" cause of the premise. For all that need be meant by "Infinite" is in-finite or not finite. Or to put it another way, the word "cause" can have the same meaning in the premise and in the conclusion, but it must be remembered that the conclusion is that there is a not-caused (i.e., un-caused) kind of "cause" which accounts for the existence of the world. That is, the word "cause" itself has the same meaning in the premise and in the conclusion; only in the conclusion the "cause" is said to be a not-caused kind of "cause" which makes it a very special kind of "cause."

Alternatives to the Ontological Argument.--Since Kant it has been widely held that the Ontological argument (which involves existence as a predicate) is not valid. But since Malcolm's re-statement of the argument argued that existence is not a predicate but that necessary existence is a necessary predicate for a⁸¹ Necessary Being, this former objection does not necessarily hold.

⁸⁰On the impossibility of an infinite regress of dependent causes see John Duns Scotus, Philosophical Writings, pp. 44-46.

⁸¹Norman Malcolm in "Anselm's Ontological Argument," wrote, "Previously I rejected existence as a perfection. . . . but [now hold] that the logical impossibility of non-existence is a perfection. In other words, necessary existence is a perfection," op. cit., p. 142.

Does this mean, then, that the argument is rationally inescapable? Not even Malcolm claims that. He holds merely that "The only intelligible way of rejecting Anselm's claim that God's existence is necessary is to maintain that the concept of God, as a being a greater than which cannot be conceived, is self-contradictory or nonsensical." He confesses, however, "I do not know how to demonstrate that the concept of God--that is of a being greater than which cannot be conceived--is not self-contradictory."⁸² He felt, of course, that no one has yet shown that it was contradictory and that it was not likely that anyone would, but he did admit that it was possible that someone could. And if it is possible that the concept of God as a being possessing all possible perfections is contradictory, then Malcolm's form of the Ontological argument is not rationally inescapable.

Furthermore, other thinkers have attempted to show that there are other rational alternatives to Malcolm's argument. Alvin Plantinga, e.g., argued that Malcolm's restatement of the Ontological argument is not rationally inescapable since (1) Malcolm has a hidden conditional, viz., if God exists then he must exist always and necessarily and since (2) Malcolm overlooks the alternatives that (a) it might have just happened that God has always existed and always will exist or (b) that God never has existed and never will exist.⁸³ And if any one of these is

⁸²Malcolm, op. cit., p. 157.

⁸³Alvin Plantinga, The Ontological Argument, pp. 165-166.

shown to be a possible alternative to Malcolm's argument, then the argument is not logically inescapable. And since neither Malcolm nor his opponents hold the argument to be 'air-tight,' admitting of no possible alternatives, then it is not rationally inescapable.

The Function of Reason

If the reality of God or the Transcendent is neither rationally impossible nor rationally inescapable, then it can neither be proven nor disproven in the strongest sense of the term "proof." However, it does not follow from this that reason has no role in determining the question of the reality of the transcendent object of religious experience. On the contrary, reason plays an essential role in the resolution of this problem, for without the critical function of reason one would have no way to examine and evaluate his experience. And in this case one would never be able to get beyond the bare possibility of there being a transcendent reality. He would never be able to speak even of the probability or improbability of its reality. And the sheer possibility of there being a transcendent reality is scarcely enough to warrant a total commitment to its reality, at least not for a critical thinker.

In order to avoid this rational impasse and thereby warrant a religious commitment to the reality of the transcendent it is necessary to spell out more precisely the role of reason in determining this question. The following guidelines are suggested:

- (1) In view of the inability of reason to decide the issue in a

rationaly inescapable way it should be recognized that there are certain options available to the rational man and that there is a significant role for "decision" in determining this question;

(2) However, so that the conclusion as to the reality or unreality of the transcendent is not left to purely "subjective" choice there must be adequate criteria established by which one can determine the probability or improbability of the reality of the transcendent. (3) But in order that the criteria are more than purely abstract and arbitrary norms there must be a relationship established between the criteria and religious experience which they are testing. It will be necessary to explain this in more detail.

The Need for Decision.--Actually the inability to prove absolutely whether or not there is a real object of religious experience turns out to be a definite advantage, for it leaves room for the involvement of the whole person (including his will) in determining this basic question. That is, if as Aquinas argued that once something is proven demonstrably there is no longer any need to believe in it, then this basic dimension of religion would be simply a matter of the mind with no room for faith or decision.⁸⁴ For once something is proven the mind cannot escape assent to it; there is no need for the will to venture out in faith to believe it.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II, 1, 5, body.

⁸⁵ Aquinas, On Truth, XIV, 9, reply.

But the problem with proofs in this sense, were they possible, is that they sacrifice personal commitment for rational certainty--they leave no room for the person to make a decision of his own. In this sense they destroy responsibility. As Tillich correctly noted, "This element of uncertainty in faith cannot be removed, it must be accepted. And the element in faith which accepts this is courage."⁸⁶ But this doubt is not the academic doubt of the sceptic but the doubt of one who is ultimately concerned. For where there is no doubt of this kind there is no indication that one's attitude is a religious one.⁸⁷ For ". . . serious doubt is confirmation of faith. It indicates the seriousness of the concern, its unconditional character."⁸⁸

Furthermore, as Jaspers observed, "It is only when there is no such objective guarantee that faith acquires meaning and strength, for only then is it authentic decision."⁸⁹ Kant seemed to be getting at this same point when he wrote, "I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge [of God] in order to make room for faith."⁹⁰ In brief, a strict rational proof would eliminate the personal, responsible, and volitional involvement of the total man in his total commitment, which is incongruous with

⁸⁶Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 16.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 22.

⁸⁹Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann, Myth and Christianity, p. 69

⁹⁰Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, p. 29.

the very nature of the religious commitment. Rationally inescapable arguments, if there are such, would be a hindrance to religious experience; there must always be room for decision if there is to be a personal or responsible commitment made about the transcendent. John E. Smith summarized this point very well when he wrote, "When the reality of God is made into a necessary logical outcome, to be acknowledged merely as something required by thought, there seems to be room neither for love nor for that voluntary movement toward God which is essential to religious faith."⁹¹

The Need for Criteria.--It goes without saying that a decision will not be meaningful or reasonable unless there are adequate criteria by which it can be judged. For religious experience no less than other kinds of experience is subject to misinterpretation and illusion. At least for the philosopher of religion, the unexamined religious experience is not worth having. Here it is not a matter of a strict proof or disproof of the object of religious experience but of establishing its reasonableness or unreasonableness. For unless there is some significant role for reason we are left in the clutches of subjectivism. Even the appeal to some kind of special religious revelation will not avoid the problem for it too is part of religious experience and is therefore subject to interpretation and verification like other experiences.⁹²

⁹¹John E. Smith, Experience and God, p. 110.

⁹²See Chapter Five for further elaboration of this point.

So, then, neither strict proof nor uncritical experience is a sufficient basis for a religious commitment to the reality of the transcendent. For as John E. Smith said, "If the assertion of God's reality cannot survive critical questioning then we must fall into unintelligibility and succumb to doubt. . . ." ⁹³ That is, the appeal to experience is not naive. The reflective person must have a set of principles for analyzing experience. And in view of this it will be our task (in the next chapter) to elaborate a set of criteria which one can apply to religious experience in order to determine whether or not the transcendent object thereof is real.

The Need for a Basis in Experience.--In order to ensure, however, that the criteria are more than abstract unrelated ideas arbitrarily imposed on experience there must be a clear relationship established between these criteria and the experience which they purport to test. Otherwise one can easily back out of the snare of subjectivism where there are no tests for experience into the trap of a rationalism where there is no basis in experience for the ideas which are to evaluate it. In other words, it must be remembered that rational analysis is a secondary operation based on the primary data of experience. That is, even though reason is essential, experience is basic to it. Experience is the 'stuff' out of which reason builds the structure. Experience gives content and meaning to ideas.

⁹³ John E. Smith, Experience and God, p. 111.

Especially is it appropriate, if not necessary, in asking the question about the reality of the transcendent that there be strong ties established with experience. For if humans are to have any contact with the real it will have to be through human experience.

Summary and Conclusion

The classical attempts to prove the existence of God, which apply also to the broader designation of the transcendent reality, have not received an enthusiastic response among most modern thinkers. Most thinkers have found them to be either psychologically unconvincing, logically invalid, epistemologically defective, axiologically misplaced, or ontologically inadequate.

The most radical response to the attempts to prove the reality of the transcendent have been the counter attempts to disprove it. However, upon analysis of Feuerbach's epistemological disproof, Findlay's ontological disproof and Sartre's existential disproofs it was discovered that, like the proofs, these disproofs were not rationally inescapable. There is always the possibility that there is a transcendent reality.

Concluding, then, that the reality of the transcendent was neither rationally impossible nor logically inescapable, we are left with the task of finding some meaningful criteria for testing the reality basis for religious experience. It was further suggested that these criteria must be both closely related to experience and also leave room for decision or the responsible

involvement of the whole person. Otherwise, the process would not be a truly religious involvement.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in view of the conclusions of this chapter and the proposed criteria for evaluating religious experience, the force of the reaction to "proofs" may be obviated. For it is granted that the proofs are not logically inescapable. Further, if we can establish adequate criteria for determining the reality question this will answer the problem about the epistemological defects and the ontological inadequacy. Finally, if the criteria are based in one's personal experience, there should be no problem as to these criteria being either psychologically convincing or axiologically relevant. If, on the other hand, adequate criteria cannot be developed, then some of the force of the reaction to proofs could also be leveled against the criteria as well.

CHAPTER V

FORMULATING TESTS FOR DETERMINING THE REALITY OF THE TRANSCENDENT

The plan of this chapter is not to establish the probability or improbability of the reality of the transcendent object of religious experience. Rather, the purpose is to lay down tests by which one may determine for himself whether or not there is a reality beyond religious experience. Besides being a more modest task than most theistic endeavors, this procedure has several advantages. First, it is more in accord with the spirit of our endeavor to base a philosophy of religion in experience. Second, it encourages each man to exercise his own responsible judgment in deciding on this question about ultimate reality. Finally, it avoids coming to any categorical approval or disapproval of given or special religious experiences and brings the criteria to bear on religious experience in general so that one may see which (if any) of the various kinds of religious experience are reality based and which are not. That is, if each kind of religious experience is tested on its own merits, then one is not forced to the hasty conclusion that either all religious experience is based in reality or that it is all an illusion.

Summarizing the Nature of Religious Experience¹

Before suggesting some tests for religious experience perhaps it would be well to review precisely what we mean by religious experience. In this way one will be in a better position to know exactly what it is to which the tests are being applied.

First, it should be pointed out that religious experience is taken here in the broad sense of an awareness of the transcendent and not in the narrow sense of specific religious experiences like mystical experiences. Not that special religious experiences are illegitimately religious, for there is a sense in which they may be even more religious than the other kind. Namely, they may be a heightening or more highly concentrated awareness of what is sensed in the religious experience in general. Among other things the value of limiting our analysis to religious experience in the broad sense is that the tests will be available to a much broader group of persons who have not had these special religious experiences.

The Awareness of the Transcendent

One of the fundamental factors in a religious experience is an awareness of something which goes beyond the limits of the consciousness of individuals, that is, a transcendent. We have seen that there is always a more or beyond which the individual religious man senses to be other than himself. That is, he always feels that there is something beyond himself which is more

¹This is a summary of Chapter Three.

ultimate than himself. He is convinced that there is an all or whole of which he is only a 'part' and on which he is dependent.

Now this transcendent takes on various dimensions and descriptions in different religious experiences. In some religious experiences it is viewed as the transcendent origin which can be reached only retrospectively by going back via myths of origin (cf. Eliade). Others view it as the transcendent top or point of absolute unity which can be approached only by going upward in a vertical transcendence (cf. Plotinus). Still others consider the transcendent to be the ultimate end of a forward or eschatological transcendence (cf. Altizer). And finally, there is the religious experience which moves inward in a kind of introspective transcendence toward the ultimate depth (cf. Robinson). But whatever the direction taken by religious experience or whatever the description given to the transcendent, religious experience always involves an object which transcends the individual.

A Total Commitment to the Transcendent

Not only does religious experience always involve a consciousness of a transcendent object but it also involves a total commitment to that object as ultimate. Simply to be aware of the transcendent is not sufficient; commitment is necessary. For as the ultimate it demands an ultimate commitment; a partial commitment will not suffice. To qualify as a religious commitment it must be a total commitment. Mere concern is not enough; religious concern is an ultimate concern.

Of course if one is completely committed to an object as

ultimate it is because he sees worth in it--ultimate worth. And it is in this sense that a religious experience is one of worship, because of what the religious person feels to be the worth-ship of the object. That is, he worships it because he finds it completely worthy of his complete adoration.

Implied also in a total commitment is a sense of absolute dependence on the object of religious experience. For one would not need to be totally committed to it if he felt that he could live independently of it. It is the very essence of religious experience that one feels a sense of utter dependence on what he considers to be the ultimate. The religious person feels that he cannot transcend without depending on the transcendent to enable him to transcend.

Suggesting Criteria for Testing the Reality of the Transcendent

Now that the basic structure of religious experience has been summarized we are in a better position to suggest criteria for testing its reality basis. But first we should review what we mean by the term "reality."

Meaning of Reality

First, by "reality" is meant more than a subjective condition of human experience, for in this sense of the word the transcendent would be real as long as someone felt he were experiencing it. Then too, we mean more by reality than a mere projection of human imagination, for in this sense of the word one would have to unfairly conclude that even atheists like Feuerbach hold

to the reality of the transcendent. Nor do we take reality to mean the object of human wish-fulfillment, for on that ground even the Freudian religious illusion would be a reality. Furthermore, reality means more than human subconsciousness whether individual or collective, for in that sense the transcendent would be no more than the part of human consciousness of which individuals are no longer conscious. That is, God would be no more than what man does not recall about himself.

On the positive side we suggested that by reality is meant what has an independent existence of its own beyond that existence it has in the consciousness or subconsciousness of men. That is, the transcendent must exist outside of subjective human experience before we considered it real. Also, by real is meant what has an objective existence outside the subjective existence in human experience. That is, the real is something which exists outside of other subjects and is not merely an objectification (i.e., an idea) of a subject or mind.

Some Tests for the Reality of the Transcendent

Now that a review has been made of what is meant by religious experience and what is meant by reality we are in a position to suggest ways of determining whether or not there is a basis in reality for the transcendent object of religious experience. We offer only "tests" since it was concluded in the previous chapter that there are no "proofs" or "disproofs" available at least none which are logically inescapable. Therefore, we are

²See Chapter Four for a fuller discussion of this point.

in search only of principles which can yield reasonable or probable conclusions which are sufficient to determine whether or not one is justified in concluding that the transcendent is real. This means, of course, that it is always possible for one to be wrong about the reality of the transcendent. But this is part of the risk involved in a religious decision. In fact, this is one of the reasons that a religious commitment necessitates the responsible and critical involvement of not only one's mind but also his will and the whole person. Three tests for the reality of the transcendent may be offered. The first test is that of need, ultimate need; the second is the ultimacy of the object; and the third is fulfillment.

Ultimate Need as a Test for Reality of the Transcendent.--

It was argued forcefully by Freud that the human wish for a Cosmic Comforter was not a sufficient ground for concluding that there really is such a being. With this we completely agree. For no matter how sincerely or even earnestly one wishes for a pot of gold at the end of his religious rainbow his wish can in no way be taken as a guarantee of the reality of its object. Indeed, Freud was certainly right in being suspect of the reality of things which are merely objects of human wishes. More specifically we may agree with him when he wrote, "We say to ourselves: it would indeed be very nice if there were a God who was both creator and benevolent providence . . . , but at the same time it is very odd that this is all just as we should wish it our-

selves."³ That is, we agree with Freud that one has the right to doubt the reality basis for religious beliefs whose sole support is that humans hope that they are true. Such is surely wishful thinking or what Freud called an "illusion." That is, it could possibly be true that there is a Heavenly Helper just as men wish there to be, but this belief remains suspect because its basis is so wishful.

However, while subjective human wishes are no firm basis for determining the reality of something, nevertheless an objective human need may be a good reality criteria. It may be argued, for example, that nature manifests a general teleology or purpose in view of which it is unreasonable to assume that nature would produce a need for which it does not intend a fulfillment. If nature has produced thirsty creatures, then it is reasonable to assume that nature has also provided water somewhere to fill this thirst. If nature has produced hungry creatures, then it is not unreasonable to conclude that nature has also provided food somewhere to satisfy them. And if nature has created males, then it makes sense to believe that there are females somewhere to mate with them. In brief, wherever the world has produced a need we may assume that it has also provided an object to fill that need. Wherever there is really an objective need for something, we may reason that its object really exists (or existed) somewhere.⁴ For all of nature seems to abhor vacuums and rushes to

³Freud, Future of an Illusion, pp. 57-58.

⁴To argue that human needs are probably fulfillable is not

fill them. Nature fills its own voids.

And even if it could be shown that there are some exceptions to this general principle that wherever there are objective needs (i.e., needs produced by nature) there really are objects to fulfill them, nevertheless one could argue that wherever there is an ultimate need there must be an ultimate object to fulfill it.

For even if one could explain the failure of the universe to care for some minor and immediate needs, it would surely be unreasonable to conclude that there is really no ultimate object to satisfy an ultimate need. Or, in other words, if men really need a transcendent, then there probably is a transcendent reality to fill this need. If men really need the ultimate then it is reasonable to conclude that there is an ultimate reality.

Of course it is possible that objective human needs, even an ultimate one, are not fulfillable. It is just possible that the universe is mocking man, saying, "I made you so that you really need love, but love is not a reality. You really need friendship but there are no friends anywhere, etc." That is, it is at least possible that life is absurd and meaningless. It is possible that man has a God-sized vacuum in his heart for which there is no God to fill it.⁵ Or, in the broader terms we have adopted

to say that wherever there are needs that they will be fulfilled. Certainly there have been many hungry and thirsty people who have never received food or water. But would the world produce hungry and thirsty people if it had no food or water anywhere to provide for them? It seems reasonable to assume that it would not.

⁵This is the position of Sartre, and it is discussed above in Chapter Four.

In this study, it is possible that man really needs a transcendent but there is no transcendent reality anywhere. This is no doubt possible, but on the other hand it does not seem very probable. It seems much more reasonable to believe that if men have an objective need for a transcendent that the transcendent is objectively real. Objectivity of a need, especially an ultimate need, is an indication of the reality of the object of that need. For if an object really must be (in order to fulfill a real need), then it is reasonable to assume that this object must be real.

There are other kinds of need which do not argue for the reality of their objects the way that objective needs do. These may be called subjective needs. For example, there are personal and social needs which are by no means a guarantee of the reality of their objects. Society can create its own needs. A competitive society, e.g., can create the need for success. Television can create the need for children to see television. Luxury can create the need for more luxury. Drugs can create the need for more drugs, etc. But none of these needs is objective and certainly none is ultimate. None of these is created by nature and none is basic to the nature of man.

An objective need, as opposed to a mere subjective one, is a sine qua non for actualizing full human potentiality. An objective need is a real need and not a mere wish, however strong the wish may be. Men may wish to have honey, but they really need bread. The real problem is to establish that "Man cannot live by bread alone." That is to say, can it be shown that man really

needs the transcendent?

To establish that man's religious need is not merely subjective is not an easy task. For perhaps Freud was right that men do not really need God but only wish to have one. If the need for the transcendent is to be used as a test for its reality, then the burden of proof is to show that men really need the transcendent. There are several ways one might attempt to demonstrate that man needs the transcendent. First, he might attempt the very difficult task of isolating the social and personal conditions which might have created an artificial or subjective need for the transcendent. In this way one might be able to discover whether or not men reared without religion in their environment would still have a basic objective need for the transcendent. This task, of course, would be very difficult both because of the rarity of such totally religious-free environments and because of the complexity of factors involved. Another approach which is less sociological and more philosophical is as follows. For example, one could analyze the nature of human experience as described by both religious and non-religious men to see if, despite obvious differences in the way believers and non-believers express their experiences, there might not be some common cosmic transcendent of which both find themselves in need in an objective way.

Since we have already detailed the multi-dimensional need for the transcendent expressed by religious men earlier, we need only to remember here that at the very heart of the religious

experience is the need for the transcendent. Even some religious atheists (like Altizer) who deny all traditional forms of transcendence see a new direction for man to transcend, viz., a forward one in the eschatological dialectic of history. There seems to be little doubt that religious men both theist and non-theist feel a real need for the transcendent. The question is whether this felt need has a real objective basis or whether it is just a peculiarity of the religious temperament. Although an examination of the experiences of non-religious men would not be definitive as to whether or not there is an objective need for the transcendent, nonetheless such a study is quite illuminating. As a matter of fact, some of the strongest testimony to man's need for God has come from some contemporary non-believers.

In his autobiography, Jean Paul Sartre confessed, "I needed God, He was given to me, I received Him without realizing that I was seeking Him." Further, he said, "I reached out for religion, I longed for it, it was the remedy. Had it been denied me, I would have invented it myself." But "I needed a Creator, I was given a Big Boss."⁶ Nor is Sartre alone in expressing man's need for God. Walter Kaufmann said, "Man is the ape that wants to be god Religion is rooted in man's aspiration to transcend himself Whether he worships idols or strives to perfect himself, man is the God-intoxicated ape."⁷ Others have expressed

⁶Sartre, The Words, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), pp. 102, 97.

⁷Walter Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, pp. 354, 355, 359.

man's need to transcend as a serious search for God. Franz Kafka's novels express lonely man's unsuccessful attempt to communicate with some important otherness beyond his own self. Samuel Beckett's play, Waiting for Godot, reflects a similar craving to hear from God. As William Barrett noted, "Surely the audience at Beckett's play recognized . . . some echo, however veiled, of it's own emptiness, in Heidegger's phrase, it's 'waiting for God.'"⁸ Of course it may be argued that whether biographical or autobiographical these are no more than expressions of what we have called subjective needs for the transcendent, in which case they can not be used as evidence for the reality of the transcendent. However valid this objection may be with regard to others, it certainly does not apply to all of what Sartre said.

Sartre saw man's need for God to be so great and so basic to his very nature as man that God is said to be man's fundamental project. Sartre wrote, "To be man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God."⁹ Of course, Sartre felt that the whole project was absurd and vain because it is logically impossible for there to be a God. However, it has already been pointed out that his logical rejection of God was based on the faulty conception of God as a Self-caused rather than an Uncaused being. And as to the existential absurdity of man needing the transcendent, if the need for

⁸William Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 63.

⁹Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 762, 766.

God is so great in each man, then we are cruelly dishonest with ourselves when we give up in despair. That is, if men really need the transcendent the way they seem to need it, then there is at least a prima facie reason for continuing the search.

Other atheists admit that man does have an objective cosmic need for the transcendent, but they are not willing to identify this with a religious experience. In a key passage Freud agreed with Schleiermacher that men do have a sense of dependence on the universe or all. Freud, however, was not willing to call this experience religious. It is not the feeling of cosmic dependence on the transcendent whole which is religious for Freud. On the contrary, religion is found in the response man gives to this feeling in seeking a remedy for it.¹⁰ But if Freud is willing to admit that there is a basic sense in which men are dependent on the transcendent--even though he is unwilling to call this religious--then at least on the level of experience there seems to be a basis for arguing that men may have an objective need for the transcendent. Whether or not all men are willing to recognize this need for the transcendent or even should recognize it is not the point here. For the issue here is not whether men have a subjective awareness of an objective need for the transcendent but whether or not there really is an objective need. For if there is really an objective need for the transcendent, we have argued that the transcendent is probably objectively real.

¹⁰Freud, Future of an Illusion, p. 52.

Or, in other words, if there is really an ultimate need for the transcendent, then no doubt the transcendent is ultimately real. The objectivity of the need favors the reality of the object of that need, especially when the need is ultimate.

As to whether a man feels that it is necessary to affirm this need subjectively is another question. In the final analysis each man will have to decide this question for himself. But if it can be shown that there is an objective and ultimate need for the transcendent, then whether or not one decides to make an ultimate commitment to it we may assume that it is real.

Ultimacy of the Object as a Test for the Reality of the Transcendent.--Not only does the ultimacy of the need argue for the reality of the object of that need but the ultimacy of the object itself can be used as an indication of its reality. Of course not all religious experience involves an ultimate object. Some men make an ultimate commitment to what is less than ultimate. Idolatry happens. Some men make a kind of ultimate commitment to their country, as appears from the patriot's "My country right or wrong." Other men make an ultimate commitment to social causes and still others to a human lover. But the problem with any such ultimate commitment to objects which are less than ultimate is that the object is not adequate for the commitment. The country errs, the cause fails, and the lover dies. Nothing short of an ultimate object is capable of fully satisfying an ultimate commitment. The reason for this is that the thirst for unlimited satisfaction can not be fully satisfied by any limited

object. As it is put in the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, there is nowhere "under the sun" that a man can find ultimate satisfaction.¹¹ Everything in this world is temporal, and man thirsts for the eternal. Or, as Augustine said it, the heart is restless until it finds its rest in God.

Of course some objects which are not ultimate are capable of satisfying an ultimate commitment, at least in part and for a time. But even if a limited object were capable of fully satisfying an ultimate commitment indefinitely, it would still be true that nothing short of what is actually ultimate would be capable of justifying an ultimate commitment. For nothing short of an ultimate object is worthy of an ultimate commitment. But in either event, no religious experience is adequate unless its object is ultimate. Probably only an ultimate object is adequate to satisfy an ultimate commitment, and certainly only an ultimate object is adequate to justify it. Therefore, even if one agreed with Tillich that all men are religious in that they have an ultimate commitment to some object,¹² it would not follow that all men were adequately religious. There are many objects of ultimate concern--wealth, fame, country. However, as Smith said,

¹¹Ecclesiastes Chapters 1 and 2.

¹²Certainly all persons have a center of their personality, i.e., a unifying core or concern (cf. Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 106 and Dynamics of Faith, p. 105), but whether or not this concern is total or ultimate is the question. At least some men deny that they have any kind of ultimate concern about anything (Jean Paul Sartre, e.g.). Furthermore, even if one can't be a person without some kind of ultimate concern, then it might be said that some individuals lack personhood for this very reason.

"But the final question is whether our ultimate concern is fixed on the really ultimate or upon some lesser object which, being finite, must be regarded in the end as an idol."¹³ So we may conclude that all men are not adequately religious; not all have an object which is really ultimate, even though they may have given an ultimate commitment to it.

But from this we may also draw a further conclusion, viz., that if a religious person does have an object of his ultimate commitment which is really ultimate, then he has no reason to believe that it is not ultimately real. That is, ultimacy is a test for reality in religious experience. For if the ultimacy of the object of religious experience is not a test for its reality, then it would follow that what is really ultimate is not ultimately real. And if we are willing to use the word "real" of immediate objects of human experience and concern such as things and persons, then there seems to be no reason not to use it of an ultimate object which is really ultimate. Why should the immediate be real but the ultimate not be real? If on the other hand, one is willing to say that whatever is really ultimate is ultimately real, then in order to test the reality of the object of one's religious experience he need only find a way of determining whether or not this object is really ultimate.

Of course it is not an easy task to show that the object of one's ultimate commitment is really ultimate. It certainly is

¹³John E. Smith, "Ultimate Concern and the Really Ultimate," in Religious Experience and Truth, p. 67.

not sufficient merely to say that it is ultimate. Idolatry comes not only in many forms but in subtle forms. Some idols are metal and some are mental. Some men may consciously worship something finite; others would only unconsciously worship a limited object. How, then, is a religious man to be sure that he is ~~neither~~ consciously nor unconsciously committed to what is less than the ultimate? The answer is not easy nor is it necessarily hopeless.

One way to assure oneself of the ultimacy of the object of his religious commitment is for him to make a conscious and deliberate effort to purge himself of all idolatry. That is, he should never permit his religious devotion to focus on or settle on any finite object or image through which the ultimate is manifest to him. It is at this point that the religious person may profitably use what Ramsey called disclosure models, that is, metaphorical ways to manifest what is beyond the empirical but which will leave its transcendent mystery intact. Ramsey's device for assuring that the religious person did not focus on the limited aspects of the conceptual models was what he called qualifiers, that is, words which qualify the model or conceptual image of the transcendent in such a way as to force it to go on and on until it reaches a disclosure of what is beyond it. For example, when God is spoken of as an "Everlasting Father" the familiar metaphor of a father is qualified by the word everlasting in such a way as to force the mind to think on and on until, without forsaking the empirical anchorage of the meaning of earthly father, it will receive a disclosure of the transcendent.

What Ramsey attempts to do with qualified models Tillich would do with religious symbols which, he said, point beyond themselves. In like manner both Jaspers' cipher language and Bultmann's demythologized language are attempts to de-objectify expressions of the ultimate so as to avoid verbal idolatry. This has been the basic motivation behind the mystic's negative language and even the metaphysician's analogous language. In each case the aim has been to find an adequate way to focus the mind on that which is being revealed in the religious experience (viz., the transcendent) rather than focusing on the instrument through which it is being revealed (viz., language, etc.).¹⁴

However, it is not sufficient merely to be able to talk about the transcendent or ultimate; one must be assured that there is a transcendent there about which he is talking. That is to say, the disclosure language must disclose something; the model must manifest something. Since the function of religious language is to reveal the transcendent, the final test of its adequacy will be whether or not it opens up a meaningful experience of the ultimate. For an adequate language about an ultimate is no guarantee that there is an ultimate. It is possible that one could devise an adequate language about an ultimate or transcendent that does not really exist. The ability to speak meaningfully about something is no guarantee of the reality of that object, else one would be forced to conclude that all persons and

¹⁴ Compare Chapter Two for a discussion of the adequacy of religious language.

events in novels are actual.

The acid test of religious language is twofold: does it meaningfully express the ultimate, and does it evoke a religious response? That is, does the language about the ultimate bring one face to face with an ultimate which can evoke an ultimate commitment? Many men are willing to make an ultimate commitment to what is less than ultimate; this is idolatry. But when a man is willing to give an ultimate commitment to what is really ultimate, then there is no reason to believe that it is not ultimately real. Can man be mocked as to the reality of so serious an act?

Of course it does not necessarily follow that the transcendent is real on the grounds that it can be shown to be ultimate. There is no logical necessity here. We have already set aside the position that one can show the reality of the ultimate in a rationally inescapable way. But just because something is not rationally inescapable does not mean that it is not reasonable. Indeed, if one is unwilling to consider what is adequately religious (viz., what involves an ultimate commitment to what is really ultimate) to be real, then it is difficult to see what, if anything, he would consider real. The refusal to acknowledge the reality of what is both worthy of and the recipient of an ultimate commitment could be tantamount to having a "blik" against the ultimate reality of what is really ultimate.

Fulfillment as a Test for Reality.--One more test for the reality of the object of religious experience may be suggested, namely, fulfillment. Not just any kind of fulfillment but ulti-

mate fulfillment. For if the object of one's religious experience is completely adequate to satisfy his ultimate need, then we may assume that its complete adequacy in this regard is an indication of its reality. That is, if a man finds ultimate satisfaction in the ultimate object of his devotion, then we may conclude that the object is really ultimate. And, as has already been argued, if it is really ultimate then it is probably ultimately real. The assumption of course is that nothing but an ultimate can satisfy ultimately. And so we may argue conversely that whatever satisfies ultimately must probably be ultimate. That is, nothing short of finality will satisfy finally. Or, in theistic terms, if man has a God-sized vacuum in his soul, then nothing short of God will be able to fill it completely. If man has a capacity for unlimited happiness, then nothing short of unlimited happiness will fill it. If man needs to transcend ultimately, then nothing short of ultimate transcendence will fulfill this need.

Another way of stating this test for the reality of the transcendent is that whatever really enables man to transcend himself is really transcendent, and whatever is really transcendent is transcendentally real. For it seems reasonable enough to conclude that if an object of religious experience enables a man to transcend his own subjectivity, then this object must be objective to man. And since we have already decided that what is objective is real, then it would follow that that ultimate object which enables a man to transcend himself is real. That is to say, if man really has the need to transcend in an ultimate

way and if he finds a way to do this, then we may assume that the transcendent by which he transcended himself is real.

If, for example, to transcend ultimately be taken to mean the ability to overcome man's feeling of alienation, then the transcendent object which can bring this unity into one's life will be considered real. Or, if by transcending ultimately one means the forgiveness of sins, then that object which provides a sense of ultimate forgiveness will be considered real. And if by transcendence one means a self-transcending love which enables one to overcome his own egocentricity, then that object which is itself transcending love will be considered real. That object of religious experience which does not fulfill the very drive of religious experience will not be counted as adequate, and whatever is not really adequate to enable a man to transcend ultimately will not be counted as the ultimate reality. It may be real, of course, but it will not be the ultimately real. Only what is really ultimate, ultimately needed, and/or ultimately satisfying will be considered to be a real object of religious experience.

The meaning of ultimate fulfillment or ultimate transcendence often has two sides in one's religious experience. There is the inward side which is called variously unity, peace, harmony, forgiveness, etc. There is also an outer dimension which is manifest in character, conduct, love, saintliness, etc. In this outer sense of transcendence it would be proper to conclude that the ultimate object of one's religious experience which

enabled him to manifest the ultimate in saintliness is real. For it would be strange indeed if that which produced real perfection and completion of character were itself completely without basis in reality. In other words, the reality of a religion can be judged by its fruits. If there is ultimate transcendence in the fruit of the religious experience, then there is no compelling reason why we should not conclude that there is ultimate reality in the root or basis of the religious experience.

But even if it is granted that the object of religious experience which could ultimately fulfill man's need for self-transcendence would be real, it does not follow from this that it is an easy task to determine which object can do this or, indeed, whether any object can do this. That is, the problem with this test is that it is difficult to determine whether or not a man is really transcending in such a way as to be completely satisfied or ultimately fulfilled. What are the earmarks of ultimate fulfillment? Can one see them from the outside, i.e., in the life of another? Can one even recognize them in his own life if they were to appear?

In attempting to offer suggestions which answer this problem it would seem wise first of all to agree with James that religious fruits must be judged on the whole, rather than on the basis of trying to judge the value of specific acts which are alleged to flow from specific attitudes.¹⁵ Indeed, Schleier-

¹⁵William James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 268.

macher was probably correct in saying that specific ethical acts don't follow from specific religious beliefs. Rather, "Religion produces action only as a sum of activity flows from a sum of feeling But while a man does nothing [specifically] from religion, he should do everything with religion."¹⁶ Now let us agree with James, who calls this collective fruit of religious experience on the whole, "Saintliness," that it includes such things as felicity, purity, charity, and self-discipline.¹⁷ Or, in other words, by fulfillment is meant an inner unity and tranquility which enables one to live in harmony and charity with the world around him. The purpose of ultimate fulfillment is to overcome or transcend the internal and external dichotomies which separate a man from himself and which separate him from other selves. Fulfillment, then, will be the achieving of wholeness in one's life as a whole. It is a whole-ness of life which results from a commitment of one's life as a whole to the whole which alone can wholly satisfy it.¹⁸

The outward characteristics of this wholly filled life should be obvious from a man's ability to transcend. That is, if one is able to overcome the barriers that divide himself and other men, then he is transcending. And if he is transcending himself, then he is having his need to transcend fulfilled. And

¹⁶Schleiermacher, On Religion, pp. 57-59.

¹⁷James, Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 280-285.

¹⁸This "whole-ness" of life is what is commonly referred to as "holiness."

this fulfillment in his own life of transcendence can be counted as evidence that there is a transcendent which made his self-transcending possible.

As to the inward characteristics of fulfillment, only the individual will know for sure whether or not he has a sense of unity with himself and with the transcendent. If he experiences peace and harmony of soul; if he has no struggle of soul but rests in the resolution of tensions made possible by the higher harmony to which he has committed himself, then he can be assured that he has fulfillment. Of course, self-deception is always possible. Only constant self-examination and self-scrutiny can guard against this possibility.

But if a life is wholly unified, always capable of transcending the limitations of itself and the hindrances in its environment, then there is reason to believe that it has fulfillment. Not fulfillment in the sense that it has finally 'arrived' nor in the sense of a final static goal, but in the sense of the continual ability to find unity within and to unify without. That is, fulfillment is the ability to maintain a fullness or wholeness of life, despite the constant attempts from both within and without to divide it. And if the object of one's religious experience is able to bring him this kind of fulfillment, then there is no good reason why he should not consider this object real. For it would be strange indeed if that which can really unify man is not itself real. If the ultimate source of unity and fulfillment in human experience is not real, then either we have a

wrong concept of the real or else it would seem that the question of reality loses its significance.

But we have already carefully defined what is meant by reality, and we have concluded that the reality question is significant. The thinking person does want to know if the object of his ultimate commitment is nothing more than a projected or unrecognized part of himself or whether it is something really other than himself. So, we can only conclude that if there is an object of religious experience which can bring ultimate fulfillment, then it must be real. Of course, if an object of religious experience does not bring unity and fulfillment into one's life, then there is no basis therein to conclude that it is real. But in any case fulfillment is still a key to reality.

Analyzing the Criteria for Testing the Reality of the Transcendent

Now that we have suggested several tests for determining the reality basis for the transcendent, we should analyze more closely how it is that these tests function in relation to religious experience and in making a decision about the reality of its ultimate object. Just what is the role of these tests or criteria and how do they relate to the traditional proofs?

The Relation of These Tests to Traditional Proofs

Each of these three tests bears some relationship to at least one of the traditional proofs. The test of need bears a similarity to the traditional Cosmological and Teleological arguments. The test of ultimacy is similar to the Ontological

argument. Also, the test of fulfillment relates to the ontological argument. But in all cases there are crucial differences. Let us examine them briefly.

Relation of Need to the Cosmological and Teleological Arguments.---First of all the need criterion is similar to the Cosmological argument and Teleological argument, since they both imply that there is a need to explain the world which we experience by something beyond it. In the Teleological argument there is a need to explain or account for the apparent design in the world, viz., the adaptation of means to ends, etc. The argument is built on the premise that the order and arrangement of things as we see them does not explain itself; the design in the world is in need of something else to justify it. Likewise, the Cosmological argument is built on the premise that something is needed to account for the existence of things as we experience them in this world. That is, we experience things that are (i.e., that exist) but need not be (i.e., do not have to exist). We experience things that are 'may-bes' but not 'must-bes,' that are contingent but not necessary beings. On the basis that these beings really exist when there is no necessity that they exist (for they are not necessary beings) it is argued that they need an explanation as to why they do exist rather than do not exist. So in the Teleological and Cosmological arguments there is an appeal to the need for an explanation for the facts of design and contingency.

But as we have already seen, this need for an explanation is not a logical necessity (i.e., in the sense of rational

inescapability) for an explanation beyond the things experienced. That is, it is possible that they just are (or, exist) but that there is no need to explain why they exist. In other words, their existence could have just happened or simply be given; it could simply be there or gratuitous. Since this seems to be a logical possibility, then if one is going to raise the question as to why they are there or exist when they do not have to be there, then he must justify asking this causal question. He must explain why he is asking "why?" That is, he must explain why he feels that an explanation of their being there (i.e., their existing) is called for.

It is not sufficient simply to say that man is the animal which asks causal questions, for this gives only a psychological explanation of how it came about that men ask questions like this about anything. Rather, it is necessary to justify the application of the causal question to things that exist but might not have existed. At this point there seems to be one basic answer: these kinds of beings need an explanation; they don't explain themselves. But here again we have made a complete circle, for to affirm that they need an explanation is precisely what is to be proven. There is no rational need (i.e., logical necessity), for there are definitely other logical possibilities (viz., they might just be without an explanation or they might just happen to be by chance).

But what kind of need is this? Surely it is not merely the

psychological need in the individual to ask the question why, regardless of the fact that there is not any rational necessity for asking this question about these things which exist. For mere psychological need of asking causal questions (i.e., rational curiosity) is not a sufficient ground for demanding an ontologically causal explanation. It would make sense, however, to raise the question of need for an explanation if man has an existential need to know, i.e., if it is a matter of his very existence. In other words, if man has a need to justify his very existence, an ultimate need to explain why he is rather than is not, then it would make sense to ask the causal question of existence. That is, the Cosmological and Teleological arguments would make sense (even though they are not demonstrative proofs) if the basic sense of need which prompts one to elaborate these arguments is an objective need rooted in a sense of cosmic contingency.

In brief, we might say that if there is a real need at the basis of the Cosmological argument which can adequately explain why men posit a first cause as necessary, then it is not a logical need but an existential need; it is not a rational need but an experiential one; it is not cognitive but cosmic. For nothing short of a 'life and death' sense of cosmic contingency is adequate to explain the necessity and ultimacy which religious men attribute to the transcendent. Certainly no mere psychological curiosity about causes adequately accounts for the motivation to posit a necessary cause of everything which exists. If, however,

a man feels a sense of absolute dependence on the universe for his very existence, then it is understandable how this existential need could be the basis for concluding an ultimate and necessary cause from premises which fall short of rational inescapability. That is, it is not difficult to see how the religious man could move (without rational necessity) from the existential necessity of explaining his own being to the logical necessity of postulating an ultimate cause. If there is a need for an ultimate cause it is basically an experiential need arising out of the fact that a man finds himself, and perhaps his world, utterly and inexplicably contingent or dependent.

And if this sense of ultimate need is not merely a subjective psychological phenomenon of certain men but is really an objective need of all men (whether they subjectively sense it or not), then it is reasonable to assume that the object of this need is real. For if there is a real need for the ultimate there is no reason why the ultimate should not be real.

Relation of Ultimacy to the Ontological Argument.---The Ontological argument, it will be remembered, is based on the premise that in the one unique case of an absolutely perfect being, existence or reality must be attributed to it. This necessity for predicating existence of an absolutely perfect being arises out of the fact that such a being cannot be lacking in any perfection, since it is necessarily perfect by definition. And even though the argument is formulated around the logical necessity of concluding that a necessary being must necessarily be or

exist, yet the conclusion does not really follow with logical necessity. It is not a rationally inescapable argument. This fact is admitted by both some friends and by most foes of the argument. Malcolm admitted that it is possible that the very concept of an absolutely perfect being is contradictory, in which case one cannot consider the argument conclusive. Plantinga argued that it was possible that a necessary being might just happen to have existed or might just happen not to have existed, either alternative of which would invalidate the logical necessity of the conclusion that this Being must exist.¹⁹

But if it is not logically necessary--if there is no logical need--to conclude that there is an absolutely perfect being, then why do men come to this conclusion? Or, what is even more basic, why do men even come up with the concept of an absolutely perfect being? Here again the need must surely be more than a rational curiosity, for at best that would only explain why the question is raised but not why it is answered the way it is. That is, curiosity might ask whether or not there is such as an absolutely perfect being. But this doesn't explain why men conclude that an absolutely perfect being is necessary. There must be some more compelling reason for this conclusion than the psychological. And we have already seen that such a reason is not logical, for there is no rational necessity for concluding that such a being exists.

¹⁹See discussion above in Chapter Four.

Here again the basic reason or need for postulating a perfect being can be supplied from experience. That is, some men feel that they not only have an ultimate need but that they also have a need for the ultimate which can satisfy or fulfill that need in an ultimate way. Whether or not this need is objective or merely subjective is not for us to decide here--that is the task of applying the tests or criteria of ultimacy and fulfillment--but simply to note that religious men do feel this way. And the fact that they possess this tremendous conviction that the object of their religious experience must be ultimately perfect (if it is to be worthy of an ultimate commitment and if it is to be capable of ultimately fulfilling them) indicates at least that they feel a need for an object which is ultimately perfect.

It is in this way that the tests of ultimacy and fulfillment are the experiential bases of the Ontological argument. For at the heart the Ontological argument is a conceptual attempt to show the logical necessity (i.e., rational need) for what is really at the base an experiential need. And to the degree that one feels that he has come in contact with this ultimate perfection so as to satisfy his life completely, to this degree his experience of ultimate fulfillment may also be at the base of his concept of ultimate perfection.

But just how does this concept of an ultimately or absolutely perfect being arise from experience? Malcolm suggests that it may arise out of such experiences as a feeling of guilt

"a greater than which cannot be conceived."²⁰ Anselm argued that one could arrive at the concept of an absolutely perfect being by building the concept gradually from the less perfect through the more perfect until he can arrive at the concept of the most perfect.²¹ Smith says that it is derived from the experience of the Christian revelation in which God is depicted as the absolutely exalted.²² But neither of these latter two explanations shows why men conceive this as a necessary way to view the transcendent but only (at best) how the transcendent can be viewed in this way. Unless these latter explanations intend also to point out that somewhere someone must have had an experience of ultimate need before he would have been prompted to view the transcendent as ultimately perfect, then they really do not account for the actual origin of the idea of an absolutely perfect being. It does make sense, however, if the concept of an ultimately perfect being arises out of the sense of ultimate need which religious men experience. For only an ultimately perfect being is adequate to fulfill an ultimate need for perfection.

In fact, anything short of ultimacy in perfection is a religiously inadequate concept of the transcendent. For nothing short of the best being possible is worthy of the best devotion

²⁰Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," The Existence of God, p. 66.

²¹Anselm, "St. Anselm's Reply to Gaunilo," The Ontological Argument, p. 24.

²²John E. Smith, Experience and God, p. 129.

possible. Nothing short of ultimacy in perfection is worthy of ultimacy in concern. Nothing short of what is totally perfect is worthy of a total commitment. And since a religious experience by its very nature involves an ultimate commitment, then the recognition of the ultimate perfection or worth of its object is necessary in order to make the commitment a worthy one. In this sense we agree with Findlay who, despite his futile attempt at an Ontological disproof, argued that a God limited in perfection is religiously inadequate. "An object of this sort," he wrote, "would doubtless deserve respect and admiration, and other quasi-religious attitudes, but it would not deserve the utter self-abandonment peculiar to the religious frame of mind."²³ In brief, it is idolatrous to be totally committed to any object which is less than ultimately perfect.

In summary, the experience of ultimate need is the basis of the Cosmological type argument (which includes the Teleological and the Moral arguments).²⁴ The crucial question is whether or not this need is objective or real. If it is a real objective need (as opposed to a wish or subjective need), then we would conclude that it argues for the reality of the object of this need. Further, by saying that man has an ultimate need one would be arguing that man has a need for the ultimate. For only an

²³Findlay, "Can the Existence of God be Disproved?" New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 52-53.

²⁴The Moral argument too is built on the premise that there is a need to explain the sense of duty or "oughtness" which men have.

ultimate can satisfy an ultimate need completely. And to be worthy of this ultimate commitment the ultimate object must be ultimately perfect. For nothing short of what is ultimately perfect can fulfill the requirements of being worthy of an ultimate commitment. It is in this sense that the absolutely perfect being of the Ontological argument arises from the need for an ultimately worthy object to justify an ultimate commitment. Of course, if this need is unjustified then the reality of the object may be brought in question. But if there is a real need and if there is an ultimacy about the object which can bring ultimate fulfillment, then these may be used as tests for the reality of the object of religious experience. The objective need functions as the experiential basis of the Cosmological argument and the ultimacy of the object serves as the experiential basis to the Ontological argument. That is to say, the sense of need for an ultimate is the experiential basis for men going on to posit the rational need for a cause to explain the world. And the feeling that the ultimate would have to be ultimately perfect to fulfill this need and to warrant an ultimate commitment is the experiential grounds which leads men to elaborate an Ontological argument. And whereas neither of the arguments is logically 'air-tight', yet they do have a basis in experience and are reducible to tests for the reality of one's religious experience. If there is a real need for an ultimate and if that to which one gives an ultimate commitment is really ultimate and is ultimately fulfilling, then one has no reason to doubt that the ultimate

object of his religious experience is real.

The Basic Assumption of these Tests Examined

Throughout the discussion of the tests it was asserted that if there is an ultimate need, or if the object of this need is really ultimate, or ultimately fulfilling, then it was more reasonable or probable than not to conclude that the object is real. But just what is the basis for asserting that it is more probable than not? What kind of probability is this? We have already called into question rationally inescapable proofs and disproofs. But if the reality of the transcendent is neither rationally impossible nor logically unavoidable, then what would be the basis for affirming that it could be more or less than merely possible? Would this probability or improbability a priori or a posteriority?

The probability or improbability of the reality of the transcendent is not a priori in the sense of being independent of experience, for the tests are based in experience and are designed to be applicable to experience. Nor, on the other hand, is this probability a posteriori in the sense that it depends on a statistical average of how many times human needs were fulfilled, etc. Rather, by probably we mean whatever within the realm of possibility can be reasonably expected to be so. But it is proper to ask just what is meant by "reasonable."

Perhaps we can best explain what is meant by "reasonable" by referring again to the principle of sufficient reason which was used in the Cosmological proof for God's existence. The

justification of the principle of sufficient reason given was that one could not deny the principle of sufficient reason without having a sufficient reason for this denial. For in this event he is using the principle of sufficient reason to deny the principle, which would be a contradiction. But in retort it was pointed out that this argument would be true of a universal denial of the principle of sufficient reason (for that broad a denial would include the denial itself), but it would not be true of a partial denial. That is, one could say without contradiction that he did have a reason for saying that some things do not have reasons and the world is one of them. Therefore, it is not rationally inescapable to conclude that there must be a sufficient reason to explain the existence of the world.²⁵ For, on this argument, the world is one thing which does not need a sufficient reason. That is, the world is a special case to which the principle of sufficient reason does not apply.²⁶

However, even though it is not rationally inescapable to hold that the rule of reason applies to the universe as a whole, nevertheless it is "reasonable" to believe that it does. That is, there is no reason why the universe as a whole cannot be reasonable, and in fact men rather generally tend to believe that

²⁵Richard Taylor makes this same point in a restatement of the Cosmological argument. See Chapter Seven of his Metaphysics, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 91-92.

²⁶This objection goes back at least as far as Hume's Dialogues, IX, where Cleanthes asked, "Why may not the material universe be the necessary existent Being . . . ?"

it is reasonable. And even though there is no self-evident reason for holding that the universe is reasonable, there is some evidence for believing that it is. This evidence is not purely rational nor is it purely empirical. It is based rather in basic human expectations and is confirmed by the general behavior of the universe. In brief the evidence for holding that basic human needs are fulfillable is that men expect that they are and world events confirm that they are fulfillable. An examination of human consciousness supports that fact that men do have a native expectation that needs are fulfillable, even when their own particular needs have not always been fulfilled. And the course of cosmic events may be used to support the premise that the universe does not produce needs which it does not intend to fill. So both the expectation from within and the confirmation from without support the contention that purpose is at work in the universe as a whole, that this is not an absurd and irrational world.

In other words, there is no reason why the principle of reason should not be extended to the universe as a whole, even though it is not logically necessary to do so. And if the world as a whole does operate according to the principle of sufficient reason, then we may rightly conclude that whatever real needs there are call for a fulfillment which one can reasonably expect. The real question is whether or not religious experience is based on a real objective need or merely in a subjective wish.

Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

A religious experience is one involving an ultimate commitment to an object which transcends the individual. This transcendence may occur in many directions and on many objects and still be essentially religious in nature. However, if the object of an ultimate commitment is not really ultimate, then the experience is not adequately religious. For to be ultimately committed to what is less than ultimate is both unsatisfactory and unworthy, to say nothing of it being idolatrous.

Several tests have been suggested for determining the reality of the object of religious experience. First, if it can be shown that man really needs to transcend, then the transcendent is probably real. For it is not reasonable to suppose that there are basic human needs that are not some how fulfillable. Second, if the object is really ultimate, then there is no reason to believe that it is not ultimately real. For if the object is adequate there is no reason to suppose that it is not real. Finally, if the religious experience is ultimately fulfilling then the object which makes this possible is no doubt real. For if it can really ultimately fulfill, then it is reasonable to assume that the ultimate is real. In brief, if man really has an ultimate need, or if the object of this need is really ultimate, or if it can fulfill a man ultimately, then these may be taken as indications that the object of one's religious experience is real. And, on the contrary, if a religious experience

does not have an adequate object (i.e., an ultimate one) nor an adequate fulfillment, or if it can be shown that man really has no ultimate need, then these would be indications that the object of that religious experience is not real.

These three tests for the reality of the transcendent are the experiential bases for the traditional arguments for the existence of God. The Cosmological type arguments (including the Teleological and the Moral arguments) both involve the contention that there is a need for an explanation. But this need is neither that of psychological curiosity nor logical necessity; rather, it is based in the experiential need for the transcendent which is felt by the religious person. The Ontological argument, despite its logical form is really based in the need for an ultimately perfect object which alone is worthy of one's ultimate commitment. For less than an absolutely perfect object would not be worthy of an ultimate commitment and probably would not be fulfilling either. These tests, however, differ from the traditional proofs in that the tests are based in experience and they are not categorical approvals or disapprovals of religious experience but, rather, ways of determining which if any of the objects of religious experience are adequate and therefore real.

Since the tests do not provide any proof for the reality of the transcendent but only at best a probability, it is best to understand the basis of their probability as being neither strictly a priori nor a posteriori, but as being a probability which is based in basic human expectation.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Norman Geisler has been read and approved by members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 21, 1970
Date

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Signature of Adviser