SCIENCE RELIGION AND REALITY

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THE SPHERE OF RELIGION

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1. Definition Difficult but Necessary

Because the world is one and known to our minds as one universe of discourse, no subject of study has absolutely determined frontiers. We have to draw them to meet the needs of our limited minds. We ought to do it according to real differences, but as there is no ultimate separateness in things, or in our experience, we are apt to leave matters out in a way to make our study one-sided, or to include what is alien and to make it confused. Even a subject so well defined as Physics has been shown in our day not to have escaped either danger; and in a subject like religion, enormously varied in its manifestations, both in respect of outward forms and of inward manifestations, and more widely concerned with the world as a whole and the mind as a whole, the difficulty is manifestly greater, and in practice the results have been more misleading. Some writers, in consequence, have abandoned the hope of finding any mark which shall be common to all religious phenomena yet distinguishing them from all else. Thus Professor Runge, in a recent work on the psychology of religion, after passing in review a long list of definitions of religion, concludes that no definition or description of religion can include all the manifestations of it, without being so general as to be utterly useless for distinguishing them from other phenomena as specially religious. Instead of attempting such a task, he proposes, as the better way, that we find guidance in the right kind of interest. The one requirement, he says, is to have a soul at peace with itself, so as to be responsive to the great things in life. Then, without being able to define its sphere, we shall have sufficient practical acquaintance with religion to know when we are within its special territory and when we are wandering into other fields. This may seem vague guidance, but every other central human interest, he says, is in the same position. And, moreover, he takes it to be a happier position than might appear. Natural science, for instance, can no more be defined, so that everything belonging to it shall be included and all else excluded, than religion, but, if we have a scientific interest and
a scientific habit of mind, we have no difficulty in distinguishing between what does and what does not belong to science. And, in like manner, if we have a religious interest and a religious attitude of mind, we shall know what belongs and what does not belong to religion.

This view contains at least an important truth. Our particular departments of study are determined rather by our particular interests than by any rigid divisions in the universe: and, therefore, if we ourselves are without the right kind of interest, we shall certainly lack an essential kind of guidance for determining them. Practically, moreover, the value of this criterion is seldom questioned, except in respect of the one subject of religion. It is not expected that anyone without scientific interest and a scientific attitude of mind can have much to say of value about the sphere of science, while it is fairly confidently assumed that, if he have these qualifications, he will not readily mistake for science anything outside its territory. Nor do we expect a valuable discussion on the sphere of art from anyone who is interested in it only as creating articles for sale at a profit or as a means of advertising. The significant facts in any subject cannot be discerned without the right kind of interest, however great labour be devoted to search for them; and that is quite apart from the difficulty of pursuing the study of any subject without interest.

Religion, more than any other subject, claims interest as its due, and more definitely affirms that it cannot be found or understood without something like enthusiasm for it; and practically it would seem to be even more dependent than other subjects upon interest for discerning its facts and carrying on the right kind of study of them. But this view is far from receiving universal acceptance. While students of other subjects are approved for regarding their facts as certain and important, interest in religion is frequently, forthwith and without further discrimination, identified with bias. Thus, not merely complete lack of interest, but a positive distaste for the whole business has at times been put forward as a necessary qualification for uncorrupted inquiry. Should the student affirm that he wishes to know the truth about religion precisely because it is to him of supreme interest, and to be rid of unreality because he knows by experience its essential reality, he would be in great danger of being regarded as a hopeless obscurantist. Instead of interest in religion to sustain his labours, he is expected to work with interest in the curiosities of history and the aberrations of the human mind.

As these interests are unfortunately more easily satisfied by what we may call the psychological imagination than by patient objective investigation, those who work with them are certain to concern themselves more with the abnormal than the normal, and to feel themselves more helped by the clever than the conscientious labours of previous inquirers. The result is too frequently on the same level of intellectual achievement as some studies of the mind of Germany during the war, for which it was a disqualification to have had experience of Germans by living in their country, or sufficient interest in their minds to have mastered their language.

In the study of religion, as in all other subjects, as a wise Greek has said, "Not to know what was done in the world before we were born is always to remain a child." In this also, as in all other subjects, lack of bias is not to be won by the easy method of lack of interest. Lack of bias is not an absence of interest or even of experience, but a very active interest in truth, which requires so high a sense of the value of the subject that no labour or cost can be esteemed too great a price to pay for knowing the truth about it. Lack of interest, moreover, in a subject which deserves interest is itself bias and is sure to overlook or distort the facts to be considered.

Some religious people, it is true, have too frequently given cause for thinking that interest in religion is mere prepossession. They fail to realise that truth is the supreme religious interest, and they even seem at times to treat religion as a sort of germ which would die in the sunlight. But this does not disprove the fact that we cannot know an environment without interest in it, and we cannot know it is a reality without that interest being concern to know the truth about it. Moreover, a study which lacks interest in its own sphere exposes us to the still more serious danger of confusing the subject with the things in which we are interested, because, not being able to occupy ourselves long with what does not interest us, we must introduce what does, however irrelevant it may be. Thus persons who lack interest in poetry treat it as epigram or rhetoric or philosophy. And, in the same way, persons not interested in religion treat it as a kind of science, or as a popular philosophy, or as a useful buttress of morality, or as a bond of the social order. This is no rare occurrence, and few
other causes have introduced more confusion into the study of the subject. Thus there is a sense in which we could ascribe to lack of the right interest nearly all the mistakes about the sphere of religion.

Even for practical purposes, nevertheless, it does not suffice to say: Have a soul at peace with itself and be responsive to the high things of life, and you will know. It does not suffice for two very practical reasons. The first is that no one can determine when this condition is fulfilled; and the second, that, in actual discussion, we could not bring our differences to the test of this criterion, even if we had it. Moreover, the history of past discussion shows very plainly that the workers in this field are not agreed about what they mean by religion and that the matter cannot be so easily determined.

Nor is the difficulty of riding the marches so great, either theoretically or practically, as Runze affirms. It is true that there is only one world, known in one experience. But it is equally true that, the more fully we recognise the world as one, the sharper are the distinctions we draw in it and the more we see the reality and significance of things by themselves; and that, the more we bring it within the unity of our thought, the more the nature of our minds compels us to concentrate on one aspect of this experience at a time, and, the more we do so, the more sharply we distinguish one part of our knowledge from the rest. Thus all advance in knowledge has meant discrimination and differentiation.

Religion is no exception, for it has, with the process of time, been more clearly distinguished from other concerns in practice as well as theory. Thus, in primitive beliefs and practices, it is extremely difficult to say what is religious, and still more what is not: while, as we advance, it becomes ever clearer that religion has its distinctive sphere, for, though it touches ever more widely all aspects of human life, it does so in a way which is quite distinct from the ways of science or social custom. But difficulty does not save us from the necessity of trying to distinguish even primitive religion from primitive science, or magic, or social custom. On the contrary, the greater the confusion and the more difficult it is to distinguish, the more the attempt is necessary. And, supposing that the confusion were throughout so great that it seemed, from first to last, impossible to discover any mark by which we could define religion so as to include all its phenomena and exclude all else, a discussion of the problem would be all the more necessary, because, on matters on which we are apt to err and on which we differ because we are not all considering the same object, the more discussing of our differences may be valuable, even if the result should still leave much to be desired.

Of this we have an example in the recent discussion of the sphere of Physics. Though it seems to the superficial observer a definite enough subject, the problems of whether it works with facts of nature or ideas of mind, and of what is meant by its abstraction from mind and from changing incidents in nature, are far from having been finally determined. Nevertheless, the discussion of them has cleared away many errors which have sometimes been elevated into dogmas. And if the sphere of religion is less definite than the sphere of physical things and the study of it touches many wider interests, and if this makes its sphere more difficult to determine than the sphere of physics, so much the more imperative is it to distinguish as clearly as we can, and to discuss the difficulties which hinder our further progress in definiteness.

Runze is so far right that, if we look at theories of religion historically, we can usually see that they have been largely determined by other interests than religion. As they were produced by intellectual persons by the process of argument, this interest has usually been intellectual, with the result that religion has been conceived as a kind of reasoning. Thus the Rationalist view of religion, as concerned with proofs about God as the maker of the world, providence as the direction of it, and immortality as compensation for its injustices and imperfections, and as mainly a matter of “evidences,” was due to preoccupation with scientific discussions which had determined the interests and temper of the age for the religious as well as the non-religious people. But discovery of the influences which have affected the theory does not deliver us from the necessity of discussing whether religion is of this intellectual quality or not. The value of such a discussion appears in the work of the greatest sceptic of the time—David Hume. The rational element, he pointed out, is a very small part of religion as it has appeared among men. Most of the rest he regarded as superstition, judging it very much after the fashion of his time; but he also saw that religion was life, and that it was so much the true greatness of man that, without it, man would scarcely be human. And one of the chief causes of the barrenness of the
study of religion for so long was that this suggestion fell at the time on barren ground, so that there are many who to this day continue to treat religion as though it were purely an intellectual inference from the visible world to an invisible, or supernatural information made known by certain revelations in the past. But, if this be wrong, no account of the causes which introduced it will spare us the necessity of giving a better account of what religion is and what part it has played in human experience.

A consideration both of what religion is and what it has done is necessary. We may not ignore its manifestations in history, for they may correct and enlarge our conception of religion. Yet without any idea of religion to determine what are manifestations of religion, we shall not know what part of history is concerned with them. Nowhere is this clearer than in what has sometimes been offered to us as presenting, in purely objective form, the simplest and most unquestionable elements of religion—the study of primitive religion. Little discrimination being used, religion is sometimes regarded as including every outlived idea, though plainly many of them are science and many ethics, none the less so because they are not our science or ethics. Justification might be offered for identifying outgrown ideas with religion in the fact that primitive science and custom took to themselves religious sanction and with it entrenched themselves against progress. Then religion is taken to be essentially conservation and reaction, a view which may not have been often formulated, but which has been the fundamental assumption of many discussions of religion.

It might be possible to show that such a view of religion springs from lack of interest in the higher concerns of the human spirit, but it is more profitable to consider why religion is thus conservative, and to take along with that the other question of why it is also the most revolutionary of all forces. In history the latter aspect has been at least as prominent as the former, because it is religion which has produced the faith and courage and self-sacrifice which have combated traditional ideas and customs, and dared, in face of every kind of social ostracism, to stand alone in defence of what seemed truer and higher. And this raises a larger question: Why is religion the chief, if not in the end the only, power in the might of which man has denied self for goods the self may never realise? And this question also we cannot answer without considering the nature and sphere of religion.

While there are still persons who regard religion as an intellectual phenomenon, there is more recently been a tendency in the opposite direction. It was not left to our time to discover that the proper study of mankind is man, but, in our time, the conception of this study has altered. The notion of normal human nature has retired into the background and man is studied as a creature of life-impulses, instincts, and complexes. This has tended to confirm a treatment of religion which is by no means new, which ascribes to religion in particular much that is due to human nature in general. And this is particularly easy to accept, not only because it is the same human nature which works in religion as in all else, but because religion tends to magnify its defects as well as its virtues.

This, too, is an error we might explain by saying that we are not at peace with ourselves and responsive to higher things. But, if we left the matter there, we should miss some considerations of the greatest importance for the study of religion.

In religion, as in all else, we ought to try to distinguish what belongs to it as such from what is merely imported into it by imperfect human nature. Mass opinion, for example, has often assumed the authority of religion, and even cruelty has invoked its sanction. But we ought to be able to distinguish religion as such from mass opinion and cruelty, just as we ought to be able to distinguish government as such from graft and wire-pulling. In a general study of the subject we have to conceive religion widely enough to include both St. Francis and the Grand Inquisitor as religious men, just as, in a general study of politics, we must include Abraham Lincoln and Boss Croker as politicians. Yet we ought not to regard devotion to the Church as a state, which is not really different from devotion to any other social unit, as belonging to religion in the same way as devotion to the poor and ignorant, any more than we should regard political corruption for party or private ends, which is essentially the same as in the other kind of selfish business, as belonging to the conduct of government, in the same way as courageous devotion for patriotic ends. Yet it is most necessary to remind ourselves that it is the same human nature, with all its errors and imperfections, with which we have to deal in religion as in all else; and that, therefore, there is bad religion as there is bad business or bad science or bad politics or bad morals. Forgetfulness of this fact and the expectation that every-
thing offering itself as religious ought to be admirable merely gives an air of unreality to the whole subject. A vast number of things profess to be religion, and our conception must be wide enough to include consideration of them, just as a vast number of doubtful doings profess to be politics, and our study of politics must not be too prudish to admit them. But we ought also to have some standard of what is genuinely and normally and rightly religious, just as we should have a standard of the ideal originally expressed by the word “politics.” Or if a standard be too exact a measure to obtain, we must at least discuss what religion ought to be as well as merely what it is.

For all these reasons, therefore, we must consider the theories of religion, and not be superior to any serious thought upon the subject.

2. Religion as Belief in Gods or Observance of Cults

Theories of religion may be divided according as they seek the essential distinguishing mark in its outward beliefs or practices, or in its inward faiths or emotions. Thus one is more historical and the other more psychological; one considers what men worship, the other how they worship; one what they believe, the other how they believe. It will be convenient, even though it cannot be done with absolute definiteness, to divide theories accordingly, and to consider these types in succession, beginning with the former, which emphasises gods or cults.

Probably the view which has found widest acceptance is that the distinctive mark of religion is the belief in gods. This is taken to belong to all religions and to belong to them only; and, in that case, it would be what we need for marking off the sphere of religion.

It cannot be questioned that this belief is a very prominent element in most religions. But, if we keep strictly to the idea of gods as personal beings, there is at all events one religion without it. Primitive Buddhism replaced at least all effective idea of gods by a rigid law of retribution; and we may not exclude a religion which has claimed so many adherents for so long a time. Nor can we include all the objects of worship in other religions under the conception of personal gods or even of their dwelling-places.

But, on the other hand, should we define gods more vaguely as unseen powers, while our definition would then cover all religion, it would include much else. Magic is also belief in unseen powers, and magic has been sharply distinguished from religion by the most profoundly religious persons, such as the Hebrew prophets. Further, there is a wide range of belief in vague unseen influences, such as has recently been called the “numinous,” which may be merely the “spooky” and have no necessary connection with religion.

More recently the observance of some kind of worship or cult has been regarded as the distinctive characteristic of religion. For example, it has been argued that there is no common element in all forms of Christianity except that Jesus has been the centre of all forms of its cults, and that, so long as this continue, it will remain, in spite of all its variety, one religion. And this importance of the ritual could be maintained with still more certainty for other religions, such as Confucianism or Brahmanism.

But, even if the cult could be regarded as the mark of a particular religion, it could not, by any narrowing of the meaning of the word, be made to exclude all that is not religious. There are elements in many cults which are mere social traditions, and not in any strict sense religious. Still less can it, by any stretching of the meaning of the word, be made to include all that is religious. There have been beliefs which have been the more religious for remaining a secret of the heart, except in so far as they may work a visible change in the believer; and there are practices which have been the more religious for turning attention from public ceremonies to common human relations. The most conspicuous example in history is the religion of the Hebrew prophets, who constantly declared that a religion marked only by the cult was mere profane trampling God’s courts, and who made no attempt to replace the existing cult by a better, but declared that true religion was to do justly and love mercy and to walk humbly with one’s God. Nor, though Jesus visited the synagogue and the temple, can it be said that his religion had much to do with either. In face of these examples the contrary, it cannot be, as has been maintained, that what makes doctrines religious and not merely philosophical, and practices religious and not merely ethical, is their relation to the cult.
3. RELIGION AS A SPECIAL TYPE OF THOUGHT OR FEELING OR ACTING

More recently the tendency has been to define religion, not by the object, but by the manner of its belief; not by its cults, but by its piety. The reasons given are, first, that such inward marks of it are simpler and more certain than any attempt to combine the multitudinous outward forms; and, second, that the special quality of religion concerns a person's faith or piety and not the objects of his belief, which may be merely accepted from tradition.

The first reason, however, does not seem to be justified by experience, because there never has been any agreement even on so broad a question as the department of mind to which religion is to be assigned. If the marks are simple, this question ought to be elementary. Yet the answers given to it by the profoundest thinkers have radically disagreed. Kant held religion to be essentially belief in the reality and sovereignty of the moral order, and, therefore, to be dependent, in the last resort, upon a right attitude of the will. Schleiermacher denied that such an appendage to morality was of the nature of real religion at all, and found the sphere of religion in piety, which he described as a feeling of dependence that is absolute because it places us in immediate relation to the absolute, universal, final reality. Hegel rejected both views and regarded religion as intellectual exaltation into the region of eternal truth. Thus Kant placed religion in the sphere of will, Schleiermacher of feeling, and Hegel of reason. Such wide divergence between thinkers so serious and profound does not encourage the hope that the essential mark of religion will be easier to discover in the peculiar quality of religion in the soul than in its manifold outward manifestations; and, in point of fact, the question of what belongs to religion in history has never received quite such divergent answers as the question of what belongs to religion in psychology.

The second argument, that the essential quality of religion belongs to the soul that cherishes it, rests on the fact that no kind of religious belief would be of any religious value unless it were entertained by a conviction of a peculiar quality, and that no rite is truly religious except as it is done with piety. And, without doubt, when personal belief and reverence are wanting, religion is an unreality: and our chief difficulty in studying the religions

of the past is that their monuments embalm only their outward forms, while the spirit has fled.

But that would not be in any sense a distinctive mark of religion. Nothing is really true for us except as it is our own conviction, or beauty for us except as we truly perceive and feel it, or goodness except as it is good to our own insight. Truth, without our conviction of its truth, would be mere facts in an encyclopedia; and morality, without our own conscience of right, mere rules of good form. Nevertheless, the special quality of truth is to be objectively valid and of goodness to be concerned with the actual moral order. And, in the same way, the special quality of religion is to be concerned with what is regarded not merely as real, but as the ultimate reality; and this is in no way altered by the importance of our personal relation to it.

This, as a matter of fact, is the only point on which Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel are agreed. The difference in their opinions about the seat of religion in the soul is as complete as the possibilities admit, seeing that there is only intellect, feeling, or will to which it could be ascribed. But they are at one in seeking religion where they think they discern the creative element in experience. Their real divergence does not concern religion, but has to do with the point where ultimate reality touches the human spirit, because for all alike the intercourse with the universe which creates all our experience is, so to speak, a religious intercourse.

Schleiermacher definitely held this view. The universe is a great aesthetic unity all of which touches us in the creative moment before intuition divides into thought and feeling. We may call this intuition feeling, because feeling is the stem, yet it is not feeling in the sense of conscious emotion, but is that moment before consciousness divides into thought and action which is the contact between the universe as one and the soul as one. This is so essentially a religious intercourse that religion would naturally develop out of it alongside of the reality which comes in by the channel of it, were not the progress arrested by false worldly prudences. To say generally that for Schleiermacher religion is feeling is to miss his central conviction that its source is the peculiar feeling or intuition which is the contact with the universe that creates all experience of reality.

Hegel, though denouncing Schleiermacher's view of religion, as confusing it with mere personal emotions, does not really differ
from him in his way of relating it to the creative element in experience. For Hegel this is reason, as the channel of the universal reason, which thinks in us and through us. Philosophy is the highest and purest manifestation, but religion also is philosophy, even if it be in popular and picture form: and its task, too, is to emancipate the spirit from the merely individual, and to show, amid the changing shadows of time, the calm and steady sunshine of the eternal light.

Kant is somewhat less definite in stating this relation of religion to the creative source of experience, but it is quite as deeply embedded in his theory. The necessary forms of the Theoretical Reason, he held, are imposed by itself, and, therefore, may not be valid beyond its own ordering of phenomena. The real world is the world of freedom, which approves itself to us as we deal with it in freedom by obedience to our own moral reason. And to this world of reality, this realm of free moral ends, religion belongs, and indeed its reality is one with the existence of such a realm.

All these theories, therefore, though ascribing radically contradictory origins to religion in the mind, agree in seeking them where reality manifests itself to us. Their views of what religion is also differ with the set to which they ascribe it, yet all agree that it is, or ought to be, victory and peace through providing for us a right relation to the ultimate reality. For Kant this reality is the moral order, for Schleiermacher the artistic harmony of the universe, for Hegel the cosmic process of reason; but, for all, it is that which is absolute in its claim, and, for all, religion is the recognition of this claim and, through it, is emancipation from the fluctuating values of sense and victory over all that is changing and accidental.

These three theories having exhausted the possibility of finding a special aspect of mind which would be the characteristic mark of religion, several more recent writers have maintained the view that the mark of religion is the absence of limit either in the activity of our minds or in our dealing with all reality.

Thus James defines religion as our total reaction to reality. In a sense this is true, but it is not true in any sense which would mark off religion from other experiences. Each of us might be summed up as our total reaction to reality: and from this relation to ourselves our religion does not escape any more than anything else which belongs to us. We may go still farther and say that religion is the spring of all efforts after harmony both in our souls and in our conscience. Yet even this would not be of any value as a means of distinguishing religious from non-religious phenomena. Religious phenomena are not, as a matter of fact, all reality, but the very special and limited part of it which we call sacred; and, moreover, we respond even to that by a very specialised kind of reaction. Finally, in any case, it is not a test we could apply to anyone's religion except our own; and it would require a self-knowledge few possess to apply it even there.

The other form of this generalising view of religious faith is that it is the harmony of all our powers. Though different in form, this theory is an attempt to express the same truth about religion, that it is very widely concerned with experience and touches our minds in many ways. Both theories are probably rather judgements of what religion ought to be than definitions of what it is; and this latter view in particular is the expression of minds more anxious to shun excess than to understand enthusiasm. As a psychological mark, who is to say when the powers of mind are in harmonious balance? And if we succeeded, would not a vast amount of very vital religion be excluded? And with this care about the balance of our powers, would what remained be particularly religious?

 Probably both theories are determined by the same idea, which is not so much to find a mark of religion, as to discover a standard of validity. Thus, they are rather theories of knowledge than theories of religion, or only theories of religion in so far as they agree with the theories discussed above that the source of religion must be one with the source of the knowledge of reality. What the theories really set forth is the view that we have a right to believe in anything which has on its side our whole experience and which we have tested with all our mental powers. This is important in its own place, but it is not a mark by which we can distinguish religion. It is rather a confession of inability to find any special aspect of mind which would serve as such a test, and it ends, as the other theories do, in directing attention to the objective reality with which religion deals as the essential mark of religion.

4. RELIGION AS A FORM OF ILLUSION

A still newer type of theory claims to determine the whole character of religion psychologically by denying its validity. It
does not deny that this objective reference belongs essentially to it, but it denies all reality to the reference, and professes to explain, from the mind itself, how this peculiar kind of illusion has arisen, and to make psychology in consequence sole arbiter.

On this point all forms of the theories seem to agree. But it is precisely on this point that all need to be questioned. Illusion is not confined to religion. Therefore, if all religious beliefs were proved to be illusions, this would not, in any case, make illusion a distinctive mark of religion, but the distinctive mark would still be in the objects about which the illusion exists. And, further, the reality or unreality of its objects can no more be determined purely psychologically in religion than, say, in commerce. For psychology an object is real when it is regarded as existing outside of the mind; and the determination of whether it is actually real or not is a matter of evidence and not of psychology. The judgement that the object of religion is an illusion is merely a negative conclusion about the existence of an outside reality, and must go as much beyond mere consideration of purely mental states as the most positive.

As a matter of fact, there is no psychological difference between the theories of religion as concerned with illusion and the theories of it as concerned with ultimate reality, for we can divide them in exactly the same way. Thus we have (1) theories of the Hegelian type, theories which ascribe religion to intellectual aberration; (2) theories of the type of Schleiermacher's, theories which consider religion a delusion of feeling; (3) theories of the Kantian type, theories which regard it as a practical prepossession. The sole difference concerns validity, which quite clearly is not a matter of psychology; and, in point of fact, the actual reasons for the different judgement about reality are not psychological, but are drawn from physical science or empirical philosophy.

(1) Of the theories of the Hegelian type, that most akin to Hegel's is one which regards religion as an illusion due to a peculiar mechanism of the human mind, because it is just the process of mind that Hegel makes the measure of the universe.

This theory of religion as illusion from a necessary mechanism of mind is taken to be the most radical way of determining religion by psychology. But that is quite obviously itself an illusion, because, just as Hegel's postulate that the process of mind is the form of the process of reality is not psychology but metaphysics,
of a particular biped, like, for example, a smooth skin. And this again is a metaphysical question not to be evaded by turning a convenient abstraction from mind into bad metaphysics.

(2) Of the type skin to Schleiermacher's theory, the best-known is Feuerbach's, which not only resembles Schleiermacher's view of religion, but was in fact based on it. Religion is for Feuerbach illusion caused by feeling. Feeling in this case has no longer any relation to reality, but is pure wandering desire. Man's gods are the mere emotional reflexion of what he himself would like to be, the mere projection of desire by fantasy.

Once again it is plain that the essential religious part is the objective reference, and that the ground on which reality is denied to it is not any kind of psychology. So far as psychology goes, there is no reason why the "infinity, perfection, might, holiness we seek in ourselves and have not" should not have a reality corresponding to them. The true ground for the denial is empiricism, the denial of any kind of knowledge except what comes through the senses or is inferred from their data. The professed rejection of metaphysics does not alter the fact that this is merely a very questionable metaphysical conclusion. Moreover, it is a conclusion which turns a great deal more than religion into illusion, for, if desire of every kind is, as Feuerbach maintains, pure egoism which stains our whole life so that it becomes a desolating hypocrisy, can we rely even upon our senses, seeing that the use of them also depends upon our interests? The observed phenomena of the senses do not enter our minds as water by a pipe into a cistern, but become conscious knowledge as we think them; and we think them as they are of value for us.

(3) The more recent theories of religion as illusion are mostly of the Kantian type. All of them profess to settle the matter on psychological grounds alone, but all of them, once more, make it plain that religion is a reference to an external environment, and that this reference remains characteristic of religion whether the environment be real or imaginary.

Of this type there are two distinct forms, one ascribing religion mainly to the struggle for survival, and the other to the requirements of society, but both making it essentially an affair of will.

Leuba's theory we may take as an example of the first type. As with Kant, the central place in the creation of experience is given to will, though the reason for it is different, being determined by the Darwinian theory of evolution by the struggle for survival. Religion is a way of asserting this will to live. Though very different from Kant's will to live well, religion would still, as with Kant, be connected with will as what is primary in experience. And, if the struggle for survival is the principle of evolution, what the will proceeds upon seems to be as real at least as anything else with which we have to deal. Religion too for Leuba, as for Kant, is essentially belief in a personal order, and, as he seems also to hold with Kant that it is by purpose that we deal with reality, even if it be only the purpose to survive, it is difficult to see how he escapes Kant's conclusion that a realm of purpose is the most real. But to Leuba science proves this personal order to be non-existent. Yet belief in it persists, and it does so because it is a useful illusion in the struggle with environment. Environment apparently is wholly mechanical uniformity, but to conceive it in that way would crush man's spirit. Therefore, he cherishes the illusion of a being who gives him companionship and backing in the battle of life; and this is of the utmost value for bucking him up in the struggle for survival. Further, the idea of having to deal with spirits and not with mere dead things stimulates intelligence and feeling, while the sense of superiority from associating with superior persons creates an optimism and confidence of high dynamic value.

Here again it is apparent that the essential religious element is an objective reference. The unreality of this reference Leuba professes to determine psychologically. But, as a matter of fact, on his theory the personal order, which he says religion affirms, has every possible support from psychology; and it is on the ground of physical science, not psychology, that Leuba rejects it as illusion.

But, in that case, it cannot be religion alone that is thereby called in question, for if our knowledge is all developed in the struggle for survival, and if illusion will work better for it than reality, we have not even a pragmatic test of reality. Real knowledge we might perhaps not hope to obtain with powers which have been evolved for so purely practical ends, but if we could believe, as might seem natural, that success in the struggle would be determined by the extent to which our real environment was accepted, and that illusion about it would be the most certain of all causes which blot the living creature out of existence, we might have assumed that the processes of our mind, even if they did not rise
to the level of knowledge of reality, must run an effectively parallel course with it. But if a vast illusion about it prove to be the most effective way of dealing with our environment, even this confidence is baseless.

Apart from this idea of the unreality of its reference, Leuba’s theory of religion is not very different from Ritschl’s view that the beginning of religion is a distinction in value between personal beings and extended things, and that its concern is to secure this worth in face of the mechanical forces of nature or society, or in other words, that it is essentially personal victory over the mechanical world. And it is certainly not any kind of psychological argument which would prevent us from concluding with Ritschl that, if this victory is possible, it can only be because there is a reality in the world and above it akin to the personal.

The second form of this theory of religion as an illusion of the will ascribes religion to man’s social consciousness. Leuba also adds that the ideas of the community are unified, socialised, consolidated by being embodied in gods. This is, however, only a slight extension of his theory, for society is considered by him mainly for its value as support in the struggle for survival. But the French anthropological school of which Durkheim is the best-known representative, makes the authority of the social group itself the source of all religion.

Religion, Durkheim says, has been too enduring and dominating a factor in human history to be regarded as a mere mental illusion. Some objective reality, he thinks, it must have. This he finds in the sanction of the social group. The authority of the group is what makes anything sacred, and so distinguishes its sanction from all other sanctions of various degrees of force.

But, first of all, a social sanction is not the kind of sanction which religion itself claims, and in point of fact a social sanction is not by itself more sacred than a personal one, nor is it recognised, at least by any advanced religion, as being so. This theory, therefore, would seem to reduce religion to illusion quite as much as Leuba’s.

It also quite as definitely raises the question why such an illusion should have wrought so long and so effectively. If there is actually a sacred world and man belongs to it, human relations may be sacred and sacred obligation be the pillar and ground of them; but if society is merely an extension of the herd instinct, the idea that its relations are sacred is an illusion, the rise of which is difficult to explain and the obligation of which all progress in understanding must undermine.

The recognition of the sacred as the religious element is important, but it is precisely this sacredness which is, on the theory, illusion. And the question is how such an illusion could arise out of mere mass feeling, and still more, how it could later develop into the only sanction which could be set up effectively against the mass mind. If the sense of the sacred were already there, it would naturally attach itself to the society in which we live and by which we live; but how, out of mere social, variable, and comparative values, could the idea of an absolute value, in the might of which man can stand alone over against his whole society, ever arise? Nothing is more certain than that the sacred claims to have its sanction in itself and to be corrupted when it is accepted as submission to public opinion.

All these theories, therefore, direct attention away from merely psychological marks of religion. Quite as clearly, by regarding it as illusion as by regarding it as the ultimate reality, they show that the essential quality of religion is the claim to deal with a special kind of environment, which has its own particular sanctions. If this environment do not exist, religion has no basis. And, even so, it would not be a mere psychological state to be described as illusion, but would be a wrong objective reference, due to misunderstanding, not about our own minds, but about our environment, so that it ought rather to be described as delusion. Wherefore, any theory of religion as illusion also brings us back to the view of religion as essentially a dealing with an unseen environment of absolute worth which demands worship. If this environment were proved to be non-existent, religion would be shown to be baseless, but its essential character would still depend on this supposed objective reference and not on some peculiar quality of belief, or pious feeling, or practical trust. And, as it is the same human nature which deals with all environment, if the environment do not exist, we should the less expect anything peculiar in man’s way of dealing with it, because, while every real higher environment stirs higher faculties and affords larger opportunities for displaying them, an imaginary one cannot be the source of such a development as the sense of the sacred.
5. THE FACTORS OF EXPERIENCE

Our discussion so far has tended to show that, whether this environment be real or not, religion is an affirmation of what we may call broadly the supernatural, and that its quality is determined by this outward reference and not by any particular kind of subjective feeling or attitude, while its validity wholly depends on whether such an invisible world exist or not. Now this would seem to bring us so near to the Rationalist view of religion, as a matter of evidences for the existence of God, providence, and immortality, that the difference might not seem worth discussing. Even where difference does exist, the advantage may appear to be on the side of a theory which states what its supernatural is and establishes the existence of it by inference from the natural. And undoubtedly we have in its insistence that the essential question about religion concerns its truth, the reason why the rationalist view of religion has been so widely held and why it endures to this day, for unless its object is real, nay, the ultimate reality, religion is a vain and most unnecessarily distressing illusion. Moreover, Rationalism was right in insisting that this question may not be evaded, and also that we may not escape the demand to answer it for ourselves.

But, while men are religious according as the world which religion affirms is, by their own knowledge, the ultimate reality for them, it is equally certain that religion is not a matter of evidence from nature, or life, or moral principles, and that men are not religious as they reason or even reason cogently. Most religions have held some belief in God, but the religious element in the belief has not been an inference from the order of the world; usually they have believed in a providential order, but the religious element of it has not been a deduction from the happy ordering of our existence; with few exceptions they have held the hope of personal immortality, but never, religiously at least, on an argument about a juster reward than this world provides.

Rationalism proceeded on the assumption that the world with which religion was concerned needed to be proved, and this by evidence not depending on itself. Religion came so badly through the test that the supernatural seemed reduced to the shadow of a shade, leaving naturalism triumphant through pure lack of a rival. Then naturalism was taken to be unchallenged as the only self-consistent, scientific, and comfortable theory of the universe.

Yet the theory was plausible only to those who overlooked the fact that the natural had been subjected by Rationalism to the same test, and that its reality had been left in even greater dubiety. From Descartes onwards the task was attempted of proving the existence of a material world by other evidence than the way it enlivens us. The result of this test was certainly no more reassuring for the reality of the natural world than it had been for the reality of the supernatural, and the questions raised were even more embarrassing. The natural world is also known by feeling and value, and surely that has even less to do with the reality of a material physical world than of a metaphysical, which might be of that mental structure. If we are not content with the meaning and order of experience, and try to get behind it, we find nothing but a stream of impressions, amid which knowledge and reality are indistinguishable from dream and fantasy.

This sceptical conclusion was as inevitable in the one case as in the other, and in both for the same reason, which was neither remarkable nor recondite. It is simply that we cannot prove the reality of any environment while omitting the only evidence it ever gives of itself, which is the way in which it enlivens us. If this count for so little to us that we need to have its existence proved, it would not seem to matter much whether it exist or not: and, in any case, no environment presents further testimonials besides its own witness. So far is reality from feeling obliged to meet all our objections that it only dimly unveils itself to our most sympathetic and far-reaching insight.

It is an inadequate statement of the position to say that such methods of proof left men's belief in the visible world no more certain than their belief in the invisible, because, when we betake ourselves to this kind of proof of reality, the world of the senses is necessarily called in question earlier and more radically than the world of the mind. All things, even though known by the senses, are known only in thought, whereas thinking is at least a direct experience. Hence, for many centuries, the Indian philosophy, making use of this method, has denied all reality to the world of the senses. Its only external reality is a sort of nightmare of Brahma, and the witness of our senses about it is maya, illusion. Yet, with all this scepticism about the natural world of the senses, the
existence of a great spiritual, unseen reality, both without in the universe and within, in the soul, has never been so much as questioned.

To us practical people it may seem impossible that any sane person should regard the visible world as more unreal than the invisible, but the fact remains that there are such persons and that their conduct proves this estimate to be no pretence. As practical people we give a practical reason for our conviction. We go about our business in the world sensibly, and that leaves us in no doubt about the world’s reality. Were we asked to explain why the Indian is not equally convinced, we should say that, having withdrawn from the world, he has deprived the world of the power to witness to itself by its uses. That is to say, we take the reality of the visible world along with the employment of its natural values, and do not go on to ask for some reason outside of what it means for us whereby to establish its reality.

But while we accept in this way the natural world, it seems reasonable to many to require a quite different kind of proof of the supernatural. Instead of asking, what is the relation of this environment to us and our relation to it, which is the essential religious question, it is thought necessary to require evidence of it quite apart from considering whether it does any business in life. What is new never comes in, however, in any other way than by making a difference to our environment, and we cannot discover it by reasoning from something else.

At the same time no environment comes in as mere crude importation like our furniture, or, indeed, by any mere impact or impulse. All environment deals with us and we deal with all environment as meaning, and for that our thinking about it is of the utmost importance. We know a reality not, as some seem to suppose, when we do not think about it, but only when we think about it rightly, which is when our meaning corresponds to its meaning. Thus a vast amount of thinking and valuing, which is a kind of science, is embedded even in our perceptions. And, in the same way, a vast amount of thinking and valuing, which is a kind of theology, interpenetrates our higher intuitions. For this reason we can argue ourselves out of any experience and, without right thinking, we cannot rightly receive the plainest facts. This is sometimes obscured by the difference between our speculative and our practical thinking. Just as we may be sceptics with regard to the material world in profession while all our actions in it prove our theory to be mere intellectual gymnastic, so we may be materialists in theory while we show that our real faith is of quite a different quality. But this does not make theory of no importance, because it always in time works back into our experience and comes to determine the kind of experience of which we are capable. If we are not continually seeing our theory through our experience, we shall come to see our experience through our theory. Thus the theory of the Indian about the world of the senses being illusion, makes the world to him in time a dream and paralyses his practical dealing with it. In the same way, what we may call our theology is of vital importance, for though our practical spiritual world may long continue very different from our theoretical, the theoretical will gradually bring it to its own level, so that, as a matter of fact, nothing has more determined the history of the race than men’s conscious, though not necessarily their formulated, theologies, meaning by that their ideas about the supernatural. Thus, even for seeing the highest, we may say that the greatest need of every age is a true theology.

Yet, while we cannot have a true experience without thinking rightly, we cannot have a new experience by any kind of thinking. Therefore, the idea that theology is religion merely puts all religion in the air. Like every other science, theology is never more than the interpretation of what is otherwise given. It must, to be of profit, be science within experience and not instead of it.

Here we have the other side which gives interest and some appearance of truth to the subjective theories of religion. Religion does not deal with its environment by way of metaphysical inference, but by way of feeling and value. From this it is concluded that the main question must concern our feelings and practical purposes themselves. But they are not more subjective in religion than they are in our dealing with the visible world.

It is plainly not possible to go with any fullness here into a matter which would involve us in a whole theory of knowledge, and it must suffice to make some statements which may seem to be no more than assertions. We know all environment, not as impact or physical influx, but as meaning: and this meaning depends on (1) the unique character of the feeling it creates; (2) the unique value it has for us; (3) the immediate conviction of a special kind of objective reality, which is inseparable from
this valuation; and (4) the necessity of thinking it in relation to the rest of experience and the rest of experience in relation to it.

In all experience these four aspects are indivisibly joined in one, and each loses its significance in isolation. The feeling depends on the value, and the value on the feeling; the conviction of reality is not an additional inference, but the valuation depends on the conviction of reality, and the conviction of reality on the correctness of the valuation; the thinking of it in its place in our whole experience is not after we have received it, but is necessary for receiving it, and essential to the conviction of its reality. These elements are the same for the experience of things physical as for the experience of things spiritual. What does distinguish religion from all else is the unique quality of the feeling, of the valuation of the nature of the object, and of the way of thinking things together.

There is, however, a constant necessity to distinguish what we may not divide, nor is it specially difficult with the world of religion, because, as with every other environment, there is (1) a reflection of it in a feeling of its own special quality; (2) an immediate judgment of worth of a kind different from all others; (3) a conviction of a peculiar kind of reality; and (4) a special way of thinking it all together as one experience. For the first two I propose to distinguish two words which are only vaguely distinct in our language, and, as is often necessary in the use of terms for more technical purposes, to differentiate them somewhat more precisely than is done by common usage. These words are the "holy" and the "sacred." The "holy" I propose to use for the direct sense or feeling of the supernatural, and the "sacred" for its valuation as of absolute worth. The special object I shall call "the supernatural," and the thinking together "theology," both words, however, having a somewhat more definite meaning than they have in popular usage. By the sacred, in particular, all religion is distinguished, and all religious thinking is right thinking as it is about what is truly sacred. The supernatural is not a further inference from it as from effects to a cause, but is felt and valued in it; and, when separated from this manifestation, it is without content and deprived of all reality, because it no longer deals with an environment, but is mere abstract argument about the universe.

The Sphere of Religion

6. The Sense of the Holy

Holy and sacred are only vaguely distinguishable in ordinary usage, and that rather by some difference in the feeling associated with the words than by any clear difference of application. But here, as has been explained, it is proposed to use them more definitely, making the sense of holiness apply to the special feeling of awe or reverence which certain ideas or objects evoke, while excluding from its meaning the valuation of them as of absolute worth, for which the term sacred is reserved.

In our language the "holy," used by itself, would mean something which stirs moral reverence. But, in such expressions as the "holy edifice" or the "holy sacrament," it is still used to express a vague feeling of an awe which is not of an ethical quality; and the history of religion shows that this is its original meaning. Even a "Holy God" did not originally mean a "God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," but an awe-inspiring being, with the sense of holiness not unlike the feeling evoked by countless material objects. These different types of feeling may be distinguished as the "awesome holy" and the "ethical holy."

The more primitive form of the sense of the holy is here called the "awesome holy," because it is an awe so near akin to fear as to give colour to the theory that fear was the source of all religion, that, according to a very ancient theory, timor fecit deos. What is at least most immediately obvious in it is dread of some mysterious dangerous force, though a closer study shows that this is only the negative side of the sense of it as exalting, stimulating, re-enforcing. But even this seems to be conceived almost as a material fluid, and to have no spiritual and at least no ethical significance. In view of this there are writers who maintain that this primitive awesome holy has no connection with the ethical holy; and there are some who regard them as distinct to the end. This awe, which is held to be quite apart from moral reverence, is then taken to be the distinctive religious feeling. In this way, we are told, we keep religion and ethics to their own departments.

That they ought to be kept to their own departments might seem to be shown by the unfortunate history of their amalgamation, for religion has been made to depend upon ethics and ethics on religion in ways which have wronged both. Religion has been made a mere sanction of morals, whereupon it ceases to be religion;
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and morals a mere announcement of commands of the Deity, dependent on the blessing and ban of religion for its sanctions and motives, whereupon it ceases to be morals. Religion, if it be worth anything, must stand in its own right; while good is good to be done for its own sake and not because an omnipotent person has laid down rules and will maintain them by rewards and punishments.

But, though this is true, it is far from being the end of the matter. A religion which is not ethical is in danger of being superstition and not religion; and an ethic which has no appeal except to the visible and the useful is business, not morals. Historically, too, the religious sense of the holy becomes an ethic feeling. On the one hand, the natural evolution of the awesome holy is into moral reverence; and by that very thing we measure it as progress. On the other, morality has always been a religious development, directly related to the sense of the holy, and a real moral feeling can never be wholly divorced from something at least akin to its awe.

Professor Otto, more perhaps than any other writer, has put the emphasis on the awesome holy as the essential religious character, and he divides it entirely from the ethical, which he regards as a quite separate development alongside of it. Yet so undeniable is the close and apparently necessary connection, that, after distinguishing them sharply, in the interests of his theory, he maintains, in the interests of experience and common sense, that they are related a priori.

Such a position hardly needs refuting, and would not have been taken up had it not been necessary, in order to afford support to a non-ethical and non-rational view of religion, without denying, as a consequence, the dependence of all higher religion upon both ethics and reason. But how two quite separate developments should be connected a priori is difficult to conceive, for it does not seem to be in accord with any known form of development. In every development, it matters not what may be added in the course of development, when we look back, we can detect the germ of it long before it appeared in separate, clearly distinguishable form. And, when we thus look back on this evolution of the sense of the holy, it is not difficult to discover, in every stage of it known to us, the germ at least of the moral development. What, but something akin to our ethical feeling, distinguishes the sense of holy awe from mere fear? We may, it is true, fail entirely to discover as yet our particular ethical ideas and ethical values, but, if the feeling of

the holy is a sense that man stands in presence of a reality before which he may not seek his own pleasure or walk after the imaginations of his own heart, has he not in that the well-spring of all ethical progress? For this reason, holy awe, even when most akin to abject fear, is never utterly abject, but, if it crush man with the sense of being the creature of a day, it also speaks to him of the eternity “God has set in his heart,” so that the most primitive man who responds to it could say with the poet, “I felt myself so small, so great.” And, just as there is in the poorest awe a certain quality of moral reverence which distinguishes it from fear, so, at the other end, there is in the highest moral reverence an element of awe which distinguishes it from a purely intellectual judgement. At the lowest stage the object of this awe may be so confusedly conceived that we may discern little but crude dominating feeling; at the highest, its object may be so clearly conceived through the true, the beautiful, and the good, that Kant could regard it as delivering us from the domination of all feeling whatsoever. Nevertheless, the feeling throughout has its own essential quality, and affects us quite differently from any other series of feeling; and there is no break anywhere in the evolution. Being original, it is not to be described by something else, but, being the same feeling throughout, all the stages of its progress shed light on each other.

Professor Otto, on the other hand, divorces the sense of the holy from any sense of an environment which is becoming for man an ethical reality, and relates it to what he calls the “numinous.” The mark of the holy, he says, is throughout the sense of a mystery at once tremendous and fascinating, the “numinous” being this kind of half-light shadow, at once forbidding and attractive.

Three points may at once be conceded. First, the earliest religion was, probably enough, largely the sense of mysterious moving things in the world about one. Second, this feeling is common and exercises a powerful influence in all primitive forms of religion. Third, there is a sense in which a living nature must remain the basis even of the highest religion.

Of this highest stage of the sense of the “numinous” we cannot find a better description than Wordsworth’s:

A presence that disturbs me with a joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.
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And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things.

To this feeling or mood or intuition the sense of the holy is certainly akin, and there are times when they are practically one. Yet this aesthetic sense does not necessarily have religious quality, nor has the religious sense necessarily aesthetic quality. As mere feelings, however, they would be difficult to distinguish, and an account of the difference would be impossible to give. Both are exalted responses to what is taken to be more than a mechanical environment. But the real difference is much less in the mere feeling than in the quality of this reference, much less between an artistic and a religious feeling than between the artistic and the religious valuation.

And if it be difficult, as mere feeling, to distinguish rigidly between the higher aesthetic sense of the numinous and the higher sense of the holy, it is still more difficult to distinguish, purely as feeling, the awed sense of the holy from the lower type of numinous dread. That they are quite distinct is plain. No sense of the holy is ever the merely shuddery, spooky feeling. This latter is the basis of magic, but not of religion: and at all stages the feelings connected with religion and magic are distinct. Yet, if we confine attention to the feelings themselves, the distinction is almost impossible to see and quite impossible to describe. Both are vague, awed feelings, and both accompany what Leuba calls an anthropopathic view of the world, but which, in its numinous form at least, is also theriopathic, and, in all forms, is something more immediate than anything to be described as a view. Views might only be wrong inferences, but this is the practical sense by which apparently life has always conducted its business of living: and just for that reason it is difficult to draw distinctions in it, and they would be impossible to convey to others. Ideas we can explain more or less successfully by other ideas, but feelings are more direct experiences and are not to be described from other feelings. Yet we are not, for this reason, incapable of speaking about them. Only we must speak about them through the values they at end of the object to which the values are referred. There is little success in describing feelings, because, the moment we start, we are dealing with ideas,

not feelings. But, when we speak of an object which makes a unique impression, we have common ground in our feelings about it for mutual understanding. Now the sense of the holy at every stage is peculiarly easy to distinguish in this way, because it is stirred only by what is valued as sacred. From this sacred or absolute valuation it has its special quality as feeling, a certain absolute quality of awe or reverence, which at once distinguishes even its lowest forms from the merely uncanny or magical. The feelings both of the uncanny and of the magical are attached to our fears and wishes, and are to be subjected, as best we can, to our uses; whereas the holy is a feeling neither to be run away from nor to be put in subjection. Thus, if the feeling is attached to a sacred value, then it is the sense of the holy; but if to one of merely comparative value as it satisfies our desires or suits our convenience or our profit, the feeling with which we respond to it cannot be so described.

This valuation, we shall see later, is not necessarily a moral valuation, but may be of a curiously material quality, so that there is a material and moral sacred, which reflects the difference between the awesome holy and the ethical; and we shall also see that, just as the holy, in the sense of exalted moral purity, is continuous with the holy as the sense of awe akin to dread, so is the ethical sacred continuous with the material.

7. The Judgement of the Sacred

The sense of the holy, we have seen, has its own peculiar quality as feeling, being a direct response to a special kind of environment. But we have further seen that it goes inseparably with the valuation of this environment as sacred, and that the feeling can only be described through the values to which it is attached, the unique character of the feeling being made plain only by the absoluteness of the sacred with which it is bound up. The sacred, as used here, means this valuation as of absolute worth, and not anything less, being that which may not be brought down and compared with values of pleasure or ease or any visible good.

The interaction between this sense of the holy and this valuation as sacred is not at all in one direction. On the one hand, the valuation may immediately follow the feeling, or, on the other, the feeling may immediately follow the valuation, though it is not, in either case, mere sequence. We value things because they
appeal to our feelings, but we also feel about them largely as we value them. Yet, more frequently perhaps than any other feeling, the sense of the holy follows and depends on its value; and, on the whole, this becomes increasingly the case as the mind develops. We might even regard it as at least one mark of progress, that while the more primitive the life, the more the feelings determine the value; the more advanced the development, the more the values determine the feelings.

The sacred, as defined above, might seem to afford a very exalted test of religion, entirely different from the feelings which mix themselves up with all kinds of crudities. But, unfortunately, history is far from confirming this expectation. Even as an absolute valuation, such as we have defined it, we still find that it includes the most weird and even debased objects, and, moreover, to such an extent that even the problem of the most dread sense of the holy is easy, compared with the problem of the grossness of the sacred. The task of conceiving how absolute value should have been ascribed to birds and beasts and creeping things, even by the most primitive minds, entirely baffles, not merely our knowledge, but our imagination. Of how the vault of heaven and certain aspects of the spirit of man should be sacred we have some understanding, because, with Kant, we revere the starry heavens above and the moral law within, and that because they speak to us by what cannot be measured by mathematics or the categorical imperative. But, for the very reason that we have attained so exalted an idea of the manifestations of the sacred, we have difficulty in understanding how it could be embodied and expressed in cows and cats.

This inability to explain why the sacred was embodied in such strange forms should not, however, blind us to the enormous significance of the entrance into human life of a valuation not to be weighed or bargained with, a valuation which spoke to man of another reality than that he knew by his senses and judged by his appetites.

But the problem of these queer, gross sacreds still remains, and it is impossible to be satisfied with the usual explanation that the whole scale of values of primitive man was different from ours. As the surest measure of progress is the higher quality of our values, this is doubtless part of the answer. But it cannot be the whole, because, on the one hand, primitive man had much more reverence for the higher things of the spirit than the material forms of his worship would show, and, on the other hand, as mere material objects, his reverence for his sacred things does not seem to have been much greater than ours.

The reason for their sacredness was quite apart from their actual value even for him. What he valued them for can be explained by a quasi-material presence, and the explanation would be right enough, because the mark of the primitive mind is inability to think except in material forms. But, if that were all, we should have expected him to see it only in the highest material forms. We have to ask why the objects might be at once trivial and yet so sacred as to be valued above life itself. Only the sense of a higher world could have required from him such surrender of what embodies all natural values. This must have meant intense and deep experiences. But he embodied them in such crude forms, because, as a matter of fact, they came to him in this context of strange objects. Even in our own better ordered minds, our deepest feelings and our highest thoughts are often stirred by the trivial and not infrequently by the repellant, and are by no means rigidly reserved for sublime occasions. The experiences of primitive man apparently were much more accidental, sporadic, unarranged and uncriticised even than ours: and to the extent in which this was so, the difference in his view of the sacred depended on different experiences. Yet it was only to this extent. The real difference was not due to anything in the experiences themselves, but to the absence of power to deal freely with them. The main reason why his higher experiences remained embedded in crude material things is simply that, lacking free ideas, he was unable to separate any part of his experience from the whole context in which it happened to him. Our emancipation entirely depends on this freedom, which enables us to set our ideas at liberty from their accidental associations. Without this power, we too should have had few sacred things free from bizarre material associations, and even as it is, we are, perhaps, not quite so superior to the savage as we imagine. But the lack of this power of free ideas, this power of selecting from his experience, and thinking it as his own generalised thought and finding what is to be revered in it apart from its material embodiments, is precisely what makes man primitive. His experience, being as it were solid with its context, was necessarily material in form. Moreover, this form was cherished,
because his sole method of seeking to revive his experience of higher reality was to return as much as possible to the material conditions in which it first came. This explains not only why primitive religion has many crude sacred objects, but why it is so much occupied with particular places, marking them with pillars or stocks or such-like. It was in order to return to the exact spot and thereby to revive the presence of the sacred formerly felt in it. Our imagination may still remain baffled before its amazing pantheon, not only of the sky and the hosts of heaven and of river and mountain, but of birds and beasts and creeping things; yet, when we think of the way of arriving at it, we should not be wholly without understanding. But, above all, we ought to see that the experience may concern high matters which are really and truly sacred, while the embodiment of it is, so to speak, rather gargoyle than seraph. And with that should go his queer and, to us at least, absurd and irrational taboos, for they are all ways of respecting the presence of sacred powers, of powers not at any cost to be brought down to the convenient.

This limitation, which tied his conception of higher ideas to material objects, is not at all confined to religion or to ideas of the sacred, because primitive man could no more conceive sharpness apart from a cutting instrument than sacredness apart from material embodiment. Yet as he knew, in spite of that, what sharpness meant, so he knew also what sacredness was. Therefore, if the absence of free ideas left the sacred unembattled from a sporadic and unreasoned and material experience, we ought not to conclude that there was nothing in it besides the accidental and material. On the contrary, the recognition of anything as sacred, as of an absolute value above desire and even above life, was the well-spring of all endeavour after emancipation from a material world merely appealing to his appetites, because this alone in his life was not measured by them. Manifestly, therefore, he was finding a higher power which made this victory possible, and this he made plain by revering it above all might of visible things and obeying its requirements at all cost of loss or hazard.

This valuation as sacred, therefore, we ought to esteem as the spring of all self-mastery and all mastery over the world, as the sublime attainment by which man became truly man. Man with a taboo, which he would not break for any earthly gain or even to save his life, was no longer a mere animal whose only inhibition was the threat of suffering or the fear of death. He might still fear what could only kill the body and his judgment of sacredness might still relate itself to that fear, but if there was something in his experience more sacred than life, the fear of death as the final ill was conquered in principle: and this victory is the condition of all progress, for there is no real spiritual good possible at lower cost than the hazard of our material life, nor any impossible at that price.

This relation of the judgement of the sacred to human progress is obscured by the frequent use of its sanction to defend reaction. A belief or custom is fixed with all its present material associations by being regarded as sacred. Then it becomes a sort of fenced city from which it is hard to escape and which can resist attacks both of right and reason. Instead of leading men into a world of free ideas in which the sacred liberates itself from material bonds, sacredness is invoked on behalf of these associations. Thereupon, we have an idolatry which is the worst form of reaction and a “yoke of bondage.”

But men can misuse anything, and the possibility of good is usually the measure of the possibility of evil. Moreover, it is on the steepest road that the temptation to make our progress the justification for resting where we are is strongest. Wherefore, the misuse of the sacred to arrest progress is no disproof of its importance as the spring of the specially human evolution. Nor does the fact that reaction is mainly a return to its material form, or at least a maintaining of it when greater freedom offers, disprove the importance even of the material sacred as a necessary stage of progress, because influences are like persons who have the more power to arrest progress if they have been effective to advance it.

Both results we can see plainly in the religion of Israel. The prophets, just because their higher truths were sacred and required all their devotion, emancipated religion from material associations, in a way unparalleled elsewhere. These associations, which were sacred in the popular mind and were defended as such, the prophets denounced as idolatry, and found it the chief hindrance to the discernment of spiritual progress and what they regarded as the true sacred: but, nevertheless, even the prophetic religion had itself travelled through a stage at which the judgement of a sacredness above life had been embodied in material objects like the ark.
The ark is a specially interesting example of the material sacred. It stirred an awe'd sense of the holy which made the touching of it sacrilege; and yet part of its contents could be destroyed when it became itself an object of worship. It represented a value which was above life and killed the profane person who would steady it as though it were a mere box, yet the natural life alongside of it was also becoming sacred and that through the religion embodied in the ark.

This singular connection between sacredness and life, so that to be above life in value is the measure of sacredness, while at the same time life itself becomes sacred, is only a material form of the singular relation to our own souls which goes with every valuation as sacred. This also could only be conceived materially as the life. Yet it is, in its way, a manifestation of the claim of the sacred by a worth within us which belongs to us, and which we only win by being ready to lose it. And even life was at first too immaterial an idea. Wherefore, the blood was taken to be the life, and was esteemed sacred. Other things, and above all the peculiar physical impression made by blood, and especially on primitive minds, went to intensify the experience, but that does not hinder the fact that in its sacredness was felt something of higher meaning and value than can be explained by mere blood, something which is the real explanation of the blood-sacrifice, the whole impression and valuation of which is not explicable by rational arguments about totem-animals or feasting with the god, or even upon the reasoned idea that life is the noblest gift of the gods and must be offered them again. None of these explanations suffice for a sacredness which is raised above all comparison. Above all a sacredness felt in the blood, and not the mere blood, is needed to explain human sacrifice, which confers sacredness on human life as well as sacrifices it to the god.

Later, man conceived this sacred nature in himself in the form of a soul, a half-material, vague, swifter, smaller image of himself. This again was necessary because of the inability to think without material association; but again, though there was more of argument and inference here, such reasoning does not account for the peculiar feelings about the soul or for the value set upon it, a value which, in its rudimentary way, is of the same quality as the estimate that it would not profit to gain the whole world and lose one's soul.

If this be a right account of the material sacred, there is no more difficulty than with any other higher development in explaining how it passes into the ethical sacred, which also had a long progress before it could be summed up as the absolute value of the true, the beautiful, and the good. The rudimentary presence of the higher in the lower form is not more difficult to discover, nor are the stages of the evolution of the lower into the higher less closely linked than in any other kind of human progress. First, the most primitive and material valuation of anything sacred manifests the three abiding forces of ethical advance: (1) the affirmation of a reality of absolute value; (2) the subordination of all else to it; (3) a tendency to regard its nature less materially. Therefore, ethical quality was there from the beginning. And, second, in ethical progress we have in all history a singular insistence that nothing is ever new, that it is in man's world and man's heart already, something he has always been rejecting and not something only recently brought to his notice. The prophet in all ages speaks as though he were merely reviving an old religion, and the more ethical the newness is, the greater is the assurance that it merely comes out of the old. Nor is this either convention or historical illusion, because there is no sacred which does not have the values in which the ethical is potentially present.

This is not hindered by the fact that it may, besides being material, also be irrational and immoral, because a possibility of good is, in all human uses, always a possibility of evil. And in this case we have an explanation in the very close dependence both of reason and conscience upon the sacred. This would require a fuller justification than can be given here, but how can we conceive them developing with no restraint upon desire beyond fear of consequence? And if that be so, religion could not use reason and conscience at the start for determining its character, but had to develop them in the process of exploring its territory.

Everything that is sacred is in the sphere of religion, and everything in the sphere of religion is sacred. Unless dogmas express beliefs valued as sacred, they are mere intellectual formulas; unless rites are the worship of a power valued as sacred, they are mere social ceremonies; unless God Himself embody all we value as sacred, he is a mere metaphysical hypothesis. Only when the valuation as sacred accompanies the sense of awe and reverence have we the religious holy, and only a reality having this absolute
value is the religious supernatural. Therefore, if there is any one mark of the sphere of religion, it is this valuation of everything within it as sacred.

8. The Existence of the Supernatural

If, as has been maintained, everything sacred is within the sphere of religion, and everything within the sphere of religion sacred, and this valuation interacts with a peculiar type of feeling to be described as the sense of the holy, we should seem to have discovered a mark by which the sphere of religion could be defined so as to include what belongs to it and exclude all else.

On that view, if, as has been further maintained, moral reverence is continuous with material awe and what we may call the ideal with the material sacred, when we speak of the sacredness of truth and beauty and goodness, we are, whether consciously or not, putting them into the sphere of religion. And there must be a sense in which this is right, because we cannot by any building up of natural values arrive at anything of absolute worth, and it is the sacredness of truth, in itself and for our own loyalty, which distinguishes it from mere facts in an encyclopaedia, while by the same mark beauty is distinguished from prettiness, and goodness from merely useful behaviour.

But, while the sacred to which they appeal and the reverence they stir are from the world of religion, it is vital to any right interest in them that each should be in a world of its own. We have the study of their norms or standards in logic, aesthetics, and ethics. Thus, on the one hand, even if their sacredness be in the same sphere as religion, they carry on their business in independence of it; and on the other, religion is not a mere combination of them, nor yet something merely alongside of them. In seeking truth, we may not be influenced by religious considerations, but must regard only the reality we would know. And beauty, too, must just be beauty, and goodness goodness. If religion try to control such judgements, it corrupts them and is itself corrupted. Wherefore, while we cannot separate true thinking, feeling, and acting from religion without losing the absolute worth by which alone they can be valued, it becomes necessary to distinguish the business of religion from the business of logic, aesthetics, and ethics as sharply as we can.

The distinction, however, depends neither upon the feeling of holiness nor the judgement of sacredness, but upon the reality to which these belong—the existence of the supernatural. The supernatural is the special concern of religion, and nothing else is concerned with it in the same way as religion.

As here used the supernatural means the world which manifests more than natural values, the world which has values which stir the sense of the holy and demand to be esteemed as sacred. This is the only way in which the distinction can be drawn, but in this way we draw it quite simply every day. We cannot distinguish the natural as the mechanical and the supernatural as the free, for we do not know how much freedom there is in the natural or how much law in the supernatural; nor can it be divided as between the ordinary and the miraculous, for nature is sometimes the more miraculous, and the supernatural the common stuff of our daily experience. The two are not in opposition, and are constantly interwoven, and there may be nothing wholly natural or wholly supernatural, but our interests in them are perfectly distinct, and very definitely distinguish aspects of our experience. Part of it is natural, in the sense that its values are comparative and to be judged as they serve our needs; and part of it supernatural, in the sense that its values are absolute, to which our needs must submit. We know the supernatural as it reflects itself in the sense of the holy and has for us absolute value, directly and without further argument, and henceforth we are concerned with its existence and its relation to us and our relation to it. We can make no more out of arguing abstractly about it than we should out of arguing abstractly, as men long did, about the natural. The supreme task, the task which has, more than any other, marked human progress, has been to discover the true sacred, and that means again to exercise the true sense of the holy. And, only on the basis of the right judgement inspired by the right feeling, can religion with profit ask: What is the sacred reality and how is it related to us and to us? Thus there is only one sound reason for saying it is personal, and this is, that, the more we have stood on our own feet and thought and felt and acted for ourselves, the more the whole universe has responded to us. In the same way, there is only one sound reason for saying the supernatural is in front of us and not something merely in the making, and this is that the sacred requirement is ever in front of us, something not existing yet always there to be realised.
Thus the awareness of the reality of the supernatural is not something added to the sense of the holy and the judgement of the sacred by some kind of argument, say from the natural world. The fatal misrepresentation is that, at this point, religion is identified with theology, and theology is hung up in the air without any world of its own to work in, so that it is expected to be its own reality, instead of being, like other sciences, the study of a reality already given.

It is here that we must recall that, though we may analyse them, we may not separate the elements of our experience. The awareness of the supernatural is not given apart from and in addition to the sense of the holy and the judgement of the sacred, but in them, because they are the experience of it as an actual environment. And in this it does not differ from the natural world in its way of manifesting itself. We know the natural world too as it reflects itself in feeling and has meaning for us by its values. But forthwith we are interested in it in itself and the world becomes an objective concern for us, its existence being itself the assurance of all values. And so it is with the supernatural, which must be inquired into, like the natural, as a world in which we live and move and have our being, if it is to be inquired into at all.

Nor can we so easily separate the reality of the natural world from the reality of the supernatural as we imagine. The reality of the former is not proved merely by the violence of its assault on the senses. The difference between us who take it to be the most solid reality and the Indian to whom it is maya is no mere matter of the senses, for the witness of the senses is the same for him as for us. The difference concerns a different valuation of the world the senses reveal and a keener response to it in feeling. And these valuations are not, argue as we may, exclusively by natural values, but consciously or unconsciously by a different sense of their place in our higher life, being far more a difference in our religion, and the place the natural world plays in it, than in our science. Did we betake ourselves to the same kind of religion as the Indian, we also should live in the world as in a vain show, and no kind of physics could in the slightest degree make the world appear less of a dream. But the existence of the supernatural world as a real world no more proves that we may not be misled by illusions in it than the existence of the physical world guarantees us against mistake about it. This, too, is a world in which we may err and