

ON THE NATURE OF

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

by

ALLAN W. ANDERSON

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REQUIREMENTS FOR CLASS: PHILOSOPHY, THE CONCEPT
OF EXPERIENCE INSTA: PROF. JUSTUS BUCHLER

Prof. Bachler,

A note re p. 69: "... the function of thought in religious experience is to translate the cosmos of feeling into a metaphor --- "

This is not well stated. I do not mean to suggest, as does James, "a Thought thinking itself." I believe it is closer to the case of religious experience to offer a triadic relationship "self," thought, feeling, rather than the duadic; but this is a problem I am now working on, and I did not think it immediate to the paper. Perhaps it is after all.

Respectfully,
Allen W. Anderson.

"You have I fear, got into this region too soon, but none the less you must get to be at home in it; for home as you may or may not know, is the only place where you can go out and in. There are places you can go into, and places you can go out of; but the one place, if you do but find it, where you may go out and in both, is home."

The Visionary Novels of
George Macdonald, ed. Anne Fremantle,
p. 13.

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Prologue

Philosophy begins in wonder.
Religion begins in love. Love was before wonder because love does not ask questions ^{of another.} Love is an act, not primarily a reflection or an estimation; it is an ongoingness without let or hindrance. It does not depend upon response as does affection.

When we say, "make yourself at home," we are not suggesting that the stranger use the house as an object of utility, though this invitation may follow later; rather, we invite him to the most universal/unique experience, that he live free to come and go, both in and out. We do not ring him about with excessive conventions. Neither do we subtly remind

him of his "place." He is free to go both in and out; he is free to love us in return.

We do not learn to love. We relearn to love. From our youth up we learn how to go out and but little of how to come in. When very small, we were in without "knowing" it, though acting like we knew it all the time. We remember the act, but not the ignorance; so we suffer nostalgia increasingly on the way out. It seems that we were happier then, when we were in, when we belonged. But the 'paradise' we seek was somehow lost and we turn our faces toward tomorrow and some promised land.

Religion, then, is born in love; in so far as we come into a world offered for acceptance. But soon we

come to say, "I am here, and the world is over there"

Until we learn to say, "I," the world "hangs together" all of one piece; and this unity, this wholeness contained me, and, in a sense, that me contained it all unawares. As Heidegger says of things as differentiated from objects, they "cuddle" together in a kind of mutual support and in this lies their thinghood. In the same way we are like such things in our pre-personhood, when we were "cuddled" into our world and grasped it in return.

This is our paradox, that we should have been born into the world of which we spend a life time learning to re-enter. The great mythologies play this drama for us, and our ritual and worship, when conducted

in the knowledge of what we are doing, partially plays out the role we live; our life-role is mastered only as it is played continually, over and over again, until, as we say, we die.

Religion begins in love, though from the start we did not know it; it began with our sense of something lost and some say often with James Stephens:

I would search until I've found
Something I can never find;
Something lying on the ground,
In the bottom of my mind. *

* James Stephens, Collected Poems,

In our goings out we learn fear, and
from fear, impotence, and from
impotence the myriad faces of power.

(v)

On returning we suffer love, and learn how inexorable it is, for, like the Hound of Heaven, it will not be shaken off.

I

The Religious Predicament

One may speak of an experience without, at the same time, implying the function of awareness; such an instance might refer to a rote function, such as the lighting of a cigarette. In fact it is a commonplace that people habitually smoke many cigarettes without being aware they had done so. The most common instances of such rote behaviour are often reported by long-distance drivers. Such is not the case with religious experience, though unquestionably much sensory activity may precede a religious experience and have a direct bearing upon it. However, 'preparation' for any religious experience no matter how ecclesiastically or sacerdotaly conditioned is not on that

account religious experience. Such an experience may be wholly aesthetic.

Religious experience is dependent upon awareness, not mere self-awareness of a spatial and temporal kind, but awareness of oneself in relation to another state of being from that which one comes to identify as his own. Therefore nothing could be more inimical to it than rote function as such. Repetition, however, may enhance it, provided the experienter perceives the unique in the habitual.

Communication of the fruits of this awareness has ever been notoriously difficult. The root of the problem lies in the fact that religious awareness is intensely personal, that is to say, it is unique to each individual.

person. As a consequence, religious tradition has provided initiatory rites into what in some instances is called esoteric knowledge, held precious by the initiate and more generally scoffed at by the uninitiated. Yet, only a most dull person would refuse the solitary aspect to religious experience.

Prof. Radhakrishnan has alluded to Whitehead's definition of religion in this way: "When Prof. Whitehead defines religion as 'what the individual does with his own solitariness,' he is urging that it is not a mere social phenomenon. It is not an apologetic for the existing social order, nor is it a mere instrument for social salvation. It is

an attempt to discover the ideal possibilities of human life, a quest for emancipation from the immediate compulsions of vain and petty moods. It is not true religion unless it ceases to be a traditional view and becomes personal experience.*

* A Source Book in Indian Philosophy, ed. S. Radhakrishnan and C. Moore,

One might make the case that religion without a social dimension is impoverished religion, but this is not the immediate concern of this study. Religious awareness, like any other awareness must necessarily begin with the individual. If we say that the crowd is aware of something, we do not mean that the crowd is exercising judgment as would an individual, but that the crowd is composed of many persons each of

Whom is conscious at the same instant of some stimulus common to all. It is not denied that the crowd as crowd can act, but in this case it is necessary that many individual persons first give over their unique seats of judgment. For this reason mobs are generally associated with acts of destruction. The mob is, as we say, unthinking, unperceiving, and may in the name of religion condone atrocities which individuals in their private devotions would readily condemn as such. This study, then, is concerned with religious experience as it relates to the individual person and those universal aspects of his unique experience that may rightly be derived from an awareness specifically religious.

As said earlier, religious experience is dependent upon awareness of oneself in relation to another state of being from that which one comes to identify as his own.

One cannot take seriously the notion of 'states of being' without, at the same time, allowing for the relations between these states. On a personal level these states are categorized as 'better' or 'worse', not in terms of their relativity - which may be the object of some Olympian observer - but in terms of personal privation or transcendence. No one denies the awareness of biological illness or well-being, and the question, what is the state of your health is taken very seriously. But there is more

involved then a biological reference, in the conventional greeting, "How are you?" The state of the body is, of course, referred to, but only in the sense that the body is one aspect of the total person. The question is directed to the whole man and may elicit a various answer, but the fact to be noticed is that a serious reply depends on an awareness of a state of being — one person's being — and this state is subject to change as is any biological or social status. Such a state has the aspect of status precisely because it stands in direct relationship with an absolute and in interdependence with other statuses or conditions. There could be no worse foolishness than to dispense with the absolute in this case — on the pretext of being an Olympian

observer - since no amount of fantasy can possibly alter the perhaps painful fact that one cannot speculate himself into another state of being. Nor can he undertake to move into another state of being without risking violence to the components of his present state, and no amount of Olympian talk is of any comfort to the individual who requires to make this movement, namely, from one state of being into another. He is necessarily "on his own," because his problem is unique to himself and therefore requires a unique solution. States of being may be phenomenologically classified, but in so far as they are individual, and they are always so ultimately, they are suffered or overcome by individual

persons. The interdependence of states of being is possible because individual persons are capable of unique action and not because the interdependence is the static absolute. (Following this, is the ^{or misuse} problem of the increasing usage, [^] of the word society to represent something culpable).

The word status in medical parlance refers to an abnormal condition and signifies a 'separation' from the state to be desired. In the same sense a state of personal being apart from God-manhood is experienced as separated from what is ultimately to be desired, though just what is to be ultimately desired can not be formulated upon anything but fantasy drawn from the sense of

some nameless privation. It is this that gives rise to the fantastic element in religion. But it is not, on that account, the ultimate source of religious experience. The notion of an ultimate concern cannot but remain vague, for the ultimate cannot be formulated precisely, and the concern, which is most concretely experienced, as a sense of privation, is, in consequence, itself nameless, since one cannot state explicitly just what one has concern for. One is no better off for having called it God-concern, because God himself is nameless. "I am that I am" and "Self" are not true marks of identification. They transcend the ontological by first of all stimulating the question,

"Yes, but where and who am I, and what is myself?" the answer to which is either not forthcoming or, if it is, will fit no ontological category that does not prompt the query all over again. And so the notion of ultimate concern fits all states of being that include this sense of privation; but just on this account it tells nothing in particular about particular states of being. This is precisely the problem of religious experience — how to come to know my particular state of being, so that I might offer a meaningful reply to the question asked in all seriousness, "How are you?"

The answer necessarily requires a description of my states in being

not as interrelated with other statuses, but as related directly to the absolute, which is to say, with a state of being beyond that of which I can either ask or think.

("Eye hath not seen, ... neither hath it entered into the heart of man ...")

It was to an aspect of this problem that Socrates spoke when he reminded Protagoras that the difficulty was not in being good, but, rather, in becoming so. The notion of the "Wholly Other," is not without experiential foundation, although it is ontologically meaningless. It is wholly other as a state of being which is not my state of being, and though I am related to it directly as the individual to the absolute, the distinction is

qualitative and, as such, exclusive. Nothing could be more irrelevant to a famished private than to remind him that his general (was) feasting sumptuously at a luxury hotel, and, since he and the general are members of the same army, the general is representing him too — and so all that is needful is for the hungry soldier to participate vicariously in the banquet.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to excite an awareness of states of being — states of being in or out of love with one's world and God, now that the age has such little regard to secular status. The attitude often recommended is something like this: if Jack is not

as good as his master, then we must do everything possible to shield him from the humiliation that might attend the discovery. So far from ameliorating suffering in states of being this alternative increases it by diverting attention from the cause of privation and shifting it to the devising of methods to allay the symptoms. We live in an age when psychoanalysts can say in all seriousness that no individual is truly normal. Now this statement is at once absurd and true. It is absurd when from the mouths of those who decline to advocate what is normal, and it is true in so far as it describes the fact that all of us suffer some degree of privation. But this is not a privation that

can be treated by a system which ultimately subsumes the individual under the group, but a privation that must be treated in terms of the individual qua individual as he is directly related to the absolute by reason of his personal uniqueness, his personhood. It is his privation of uniqueness that qualifies his individual state of being, and the achievement of this uniqueness is directly proportional to his relation to the absolute. There is an infinity of states of being, but these derive wholly from a single relationship, namely, that between the individual person and the absolute.

The philosophical expression of the ground of religious experience

is perhaps best summed up in the Upanishadic affirmation: Thou art that, (tat tvam asi). But of what comfort is such a phrase to him who does not know it as experienced, for such a generalization is unable to convey upon mere utterance the very state of being in which such a realization comes to pass. In point of fact the necessary state of being may be within his immediate grasp, but for all that he is able to do about it, upon that given moment, it might as well be infinitely removed. Again, the best devotional expression "God is love," is also meaningless to one who does not experience it. Such knowledge is not predicated upon a creed or

theological system — as relevant as these may be to any who have arrived at a state of being to which such mytho-theological statements have the deepest significance. Such knowledge, on the contrary is pathic knowledge — a knowledge not about or of, but an action, a state of being which is in a certain tension between one's present state and that state of being as yet unrealized; as a lover seeks to maintain the tension between himself and the beloved in order to evolve through successive stages of relationship toward the ideal. In the religious tension, God, (or the absolute), and the individual are the lover and the loved — and so the soul has generally been

described as feminine in mythology and mysticism.

The religious predicament, then, when viewed as predicament, may not escape a soteriological reference. Anything less is irrelevant. Knowledge about the situation in the form of descriptive notes is of no immediate assistance to solving the problem of overcoming the situation — and this requires action. As well imagine a medical staff that spent its whole time preparing specimens and slides and enriching the card files whilst, in the meantime, the patients died with a terrifying regularity; or, as Kierkegaard once adduced, a patient who brings

his case before a physician, persuading himself that an accurate diagnosis of his disease was the main thing after all — now that he knows what is wrong with him he rests secure!

Religious experience is not a phenomenological datum in the last analysis, and such knowledge-able and academic approaches to it as tend to regard it so, remain essentially superficial. They are unable to represent the state of being of the observed, though they may describe symptoms of states of being with wondrous detail. They succeed in describing what the devotee looks like — not so much to himself, as to them. Yet, his state of being must include what he feels like.

For this reason the arts are more revealing in this field than academic studies, though an account of religious experience in the hands of a great novelist, while it may offer us a share in vicarious being, must fail to investigate the meaning of the experience if the novelist is to remain true to his art. His gift of vicarious being is his artistic achievement.

A philosophical approach to religious experience is also beset with limitations which are rarely conquered. Two major philosophers, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, succeeded in representing states of being through a profound knowledge of 'symptoms,' but their peculiar power was not merely descriptive. It was essentially

divinatory; and such power is not satisfactorily explained by categorizing each as a poet. Both men were singularly oriented to an absolute claim upon them, though their relationships to the claim was far from identical. It is not extravagant to see both as among the great religious thinkers of all time. Each brought himself into an active or manipulative relationship with the absolute and in so far as he did so he energized his divinatory powers.

It is possible for a philosopher to recognize and turn from such a claim. Santayana's Sonnet I is such a confession, in which he tells us he turned from Golgotha to his Mother Earth and the sea. It would

show a want of understanding on the part of any critic should he state that Santayana essentially trivialized religious experience; for this philosopher was acutely aware of the aesthetic factor in cultural expressions of religious experience. But precisely as he turned from an absolute to a relative claim, he so changed the quality of his vision that he essentially blinded himself from divining the source of religious experience. Between the relative and the absolute, the choice is itself absolute. Santayana stands to Socrates in a relationship full of Socratic irony: Santayana, who was so pious toward the relative, the impulse in matter, is

himself, in his work, so abstracted from the green thrust of life; whereas Socrates, so committed to his daimon, to a god, revels in the spontaneity and animal "madness" around him. Socrates divined that no rational explanation was equal to the problem of how the imperfect could derive from the perfect, that the solution was discovered in action and not in speculation; and so he chose to die toward "life" rather than, as most of us, to "live" toward death. Clearly, even more absurd, from the standpoint of religious experience, is the notion that the perfect derives from the imperfect, or that every thing is neither perfect nor imperfect. And, yet,

there is that dimension of religious experience which is acutely conscious of progression to a 'better' state of being, and, in this sense, one is interacting as the imperfect with the perfect. This in no way negates the qualitative difference between one state of being and another. To hold an acorn in one hand while touching an oak tree with the other may appear to demonstrate a final relativity. But the crucial point for this discussion is that the acorn in one hand is not the oak tree touched by the other - nor will it ever be. "Religious experience" which is not grounded in the anxious awareness of this fact as analogous to one's own being and transformation, is not religious experience at all,

though it be both aesthetic and ethical in its origin. This sine qua non of religious experience - the transformation from one state of being into another - was lost upon Santayana whose notion that religion is the highest poetry ^{of a kind} led him to believe that its function was to illuminate our past by positing the impossible in the future.* Clearly, this description begs more

* G. Santayana, Interpretations of Poetry and Religion, p. 284.

than it offers. In any case, what can "an impossible future" do by way of illuminating the past? When one allows for Santayana's literary mastery - and his baroque charm is very considerable - it appears that he is not saying anything at all which deals with the situation from any point of view other than an olympian observer's

whose observations have been obscured by the smoke of incense. Certainly religion is never practiced without some emphasis upon the aesthetic, even if it be by way of negation - but the aesthetic is very often the component of an experience that is not rightly called religious.

With Nietzsche the case is very different. He was not satisfied with the relative, despite his notion of 'eternal recurrence'. He attempted to do away with the absolute in grand atheistic fashion and so took theism very seriously. But he bastardized the relationships of the individual to the absolute by doing what is inevitable for one who takes his position. If God is dead, then one settles for the relative or, as Nietzsche did, one attempts to fill the shoes of God. If one is to

remain in the religious predicament
one of the alternatives is necessary*

* An objection may be raised here, namely, why should one of the alternatives be God. The term "God" is not used in any partisan sense in this essay and that is one of the reasons the term "absolute" has been employed. Despite the difficulties encountered in historical usage of the term "God," that fact remains that it is a concept sufficiently flexible to bear wide interpretation and it is to date the best English expression for the purpose. A pedantic quibble would not likely shed light for the purposes of this discussion.

- one can neither have it both ways nor half-way. If one could there would be no religious predicament. An abandonment of the predicament is an abandonment of religious

awareness, *

* Note Swenson: Something about Kierkegaard, p. 172 f: "If the ethical ideal were possible of realization, no scope would be found for the religious life. This means that the religious life begins with a discovery that there is something wrong with the personality, that it is not yet ready to essay the ethical task, but needs a period of preparation, of preliminary transformation, before the ethical task can be begun. The more deeply this discovery is made, the more profound and decisive the religious life."

II

Religious Knowledge

The previous discussion was an attempt to show that an awareness of states of being is based upon the recognition that the separation between states of being is qualitative from the point of view of the sufferer and overcomer of these states. Religious experience is, among ^{its} other characteristics, a consciousness of change, but change of no mere mechanical order. It is not merely a change in being, but a change of being. A change in being is a reversible process. Aristotle points this up in Alpha the less, 2, with his illustration of water and air as interchangeable.

Boy and man, however, are not interchangeable. The biologist must agree to this. But clearly there is more than biology, more than protoplasmic function involved. Boy and man are not

interchangeable, because man is a transformation of boy requiring an additional factor to molecular distribution. This additional factor X is referred to when we say that a certain man is not manly, for though he be physically magnificent he may possess less ἀρετή than a boy, and is consequently less than a boy, for a boy he can never be again and a man he is not.

Factor X becomes the subject of religious knowledge when it refers to one's awareness of his state of being, his inwardness, which is equally a subject for nourishment as is his physical self. This inwardness is the seat of all choice and decision but until it is consciously manipulated in the interest of a state of being it is not functioning in a religious dimension. Now this emphasis is upon consciousness

can be misleading for religious knowledge is not predicated upon the notion that "forms of human thinking are the true being," as rationalists would hold, nor that "the states of human consciousness are the true being" as stressed by the empiricists.* On these

* Erbert Munzer, Solovyev, p. 7f.

views the "wholly other" becomes fixed in a dualism which is neither true to experience nor possible of communication. That God is "past finding out" is wholly true but he is not on that account uninvolved in the transformational continuum through which the individual is related to him, and religious experience maintains that it is in him (that) we live and move and have our being"*

* Acts 17:28

Prof. C.I. Lewis' notion that "the pure concept and the content of the given are mutually independent - neither limits the other,"* causes us to

* C.I. Lewis, Mind and World-Order p. 36f.

ask in what then consists their relation. Continuing the same discussion Prof. Lewis goes on to say that some theories of knowledge "emphasize the given and some the active mind. Immediacy is thus emphasized by the mystics..." But, surely, this is not at all what the mystics stress - as though the immediate were the agent of transmission and the knower a mere receptacle. The terms subject, object, tend to complicate rather than clarify the expression of religious experience but in so far as they are used continuously in the traditions

here held up to criticism the discussion will be conducted with them in use. Contrary to Prof. Lewis' opinion, the mystic is not primarily concerned with something 'known' as the given - a term he would likely not employ - but rather with the followings:

1. A relationship exists between the 'given' and the perceiver: neither subject nor object remain mutually independent.

2. The relationship between subject and object is 'shared' by both and varies accordingly as either or both vary. On this is built the notion of 'self' which is not atomic and cannot be defined exclusive of its mutual participation in the being of other objects and selves.

3. The experience of the so-called

immediate is the apprehension of subject-object in a context of multiple and mutable 'location' within which the relationships, (the participation) of subject and object is intentionally controlled by the subject. It is important to note that it is the relationships that is controlled and not the object. The object is affected indirectly. Because the relationships is the direct object of attention, it hereby becomes the subject of care. The only immediacy the mystic refers to is that which is, in reference to himself, his own creation - namely the state of relationships over which he assumes control. (In this sense "the work of his hands" is immediate to him).

For the mystic, love and

Knowledge are intimately related and he does not question the reality of discursive creations but holds that they are not the ultimate reference of being. The question for him is not: "How do I know that I know?" He says simply: "I cannot know fully except I love," which is to say that the question of importance for him concerns the nature of love, the answer to which, he believes, will answer also the problem of knowledge.

From the above considerations it would appear that traditional epistemological considerations are not primary tools for investigations of religious knowledge. It is certainly questionable whether such tools are adequate to an analysis of the general concept of experience; in any case they are inadequate to determine the nature

of religious experience on the following grounds.

(i) Mystical experience as recorded by the great religious mystics, is experience which is not so private as some theologians wish to make it appear - we have a considerable body of mystical literature representing the works of many human beings. However, such qualitative awarenesses are not transmitted from one person to another like goods over the counter. Therefore a criticism of mystical experience by any but a mystic is necessarily limited to outward effects. Absurd though it is, these effects - psychological phenomena - are very often mistaken for the experience itself by crude observers, but these do not hesitate to fill pages of commentary and "field notes" about an experience they have never personally known. Furthermore, the greatest mystics have

repeatedly warned against identifying "ecstasy" with religious awareness. The following from Eckhart is a case in point: "There is moreover, the effect or expression of love. It often appears like a bright light, as spirituality, devotion, or jubilation, and yet, as such it is by no means best! These things are not always due to love. Sometimes they come of having tasted nature's sweets. They can also be due to heavenly inspiration or to the senses, and people at their best are not the ones who experience them most. For if such things are really due to God, he gives them to such people to bait and to allure them on and also to keep them away from [worse] company. But when such people increase in love, such [ecstatic] experiences will come less facily, and the love that is in them will be proved by the constancy of their fidelity to God, without

such enticements.

"Supposing, however, that all such experiences were really of love, even then it would not be best. We ought to get over amusing ourselves with such raptures for the sake of that better love, and to accomplish through loving service what men most need, spiritually, socially, or physically. As I have often said, if a person were in such a rapturous state as St. Paul once entered, and he knew of a sick man who wanted a cup of soup, it would be far better to withdraw from the rapture for love's sake and serve him who is in need." *

* Meister Eckhart, trans. R. B. Blakney,
p. 14.

Likewise, one is reminded of the story told concerning St. Anthony, how he cautioned one of his disciples as follows:

"If during prayers you are vouchsafed a vision of the Lord, just pray a little longer and it will probably go away."

Religious knowledge is not derived from suffering a species of psychopathology.

(ii) Religious knowledge is volitional before it is cognitive. This is a bald assertion, it is true, but if religious experience is to be distinguished from general experience, the first and crudest distinction must lie here. It is not without profound significance that the "beatific vision" is an act-ing an ongoingness depending, in part, upon right action.

In this connection, an instructive comparison may be made between religious awareness and the

account of experience in general as offered by Purce: "It is the special field of experience to acquaint us with events, with changes of perception. Now that which particularly characterizes sudden changes of perception is a Shock. A shock is a volitional phenomenon. The long whistle of the approaching locomotive, however disagreeable it may be, has set up in me a certain inertia, so that the sudden lowering of the note meets with a certain resistance. That must be the fact; because if there were no such resistance there could be no shock when the change of note occurs. It is more particularly to changes and contrasts of perception that we apply the word "experience". --- It is the compulsion, the absolute

constraint upon us to think otherwise than we have been thinking that constitutes experience. Now constraint and compulsion cannot exist without resistance, and resistance is effort opposing change. There therefore must be an element of effort in experience; and it is this which gives it its peculiar character. But we are so disposed to yield to it as soon as we can detect it, that it is extremely difficult to convince ourselves that we have exerted any resistance at all. It may be said that we hardly know it except through the axiom that there can be no force where there is no resistance to inertia. Whoever may be dissatisfied with any statement will do well to sit down and cipher out the matter for himself. He may be able to formulate

the nature of the oppositional element in experience, and its relation to ordinary volition, better than I have done; but that there is an oppositional element in it, logically not easily distinguished from volition, will I make no doubt at all, be his ultimate conclusion." *

* The Philosophy of Peirce, ed. J. Buchler, pp. 88 ff.

Peirce has been quoted at length in order to allow for the structure of his whole argument which rests on the case that "experience" derives from changes and contrasts of perception which are received as shocks and that these shocks are volitional phenomena. He cautiously offers that the oppositional element in experience is not easily distinguished from volition. Even if it were demonstrated beyond doubt that

the oppositional element is volitional
the point for a comparison with
religious experience lies precisely in this:
the religious movement is dialectically
related to that which Peirce describes
is the ground of changes of perception
in general experience. At best, usual
changes of perception are generated less
intentionally than habitually and one
is tempted to think that the element of
"Shock" is, in most cases, conditioned response.
Since, with few exceptions, one's adult life
is measured with few surprises worthy
of the name. This is not said to argue
away the so-called "volitional" element
but to point up that the habit pattern
of experience equips one marvelously to
handle the rudiments of change. If Peirce
is correct, then our fundamental
means of experiencing the sensory world
is reactionary rather than directly
exploratory or manipulative. But
religious experience which is not confused
with ritual habit and aesthetic

response is manipulative in high degree. It is not, absurdly, that one manipulates God, but that one controls his habitual reaction, that very oppositional element, in such wise as will permit a more continuous awareness of himself as creative agent, if indeed he has mastered himself sufficiently to, as Socrates advised, 'know' himself. Without this knowledge one never gets free of the "round and round business" of consecutive sensory and intellectual rote function.

Of course, it is not suggested that a man interfere with the physiological functions of his person in order to enhance whatever religious awareness he thinks to obtain, although many have attempted this to the point of operating on the lunatic fringe - phenomenological studies

are rife with accounts of such misplaced zeal. What is intended is to show that whereas the inertia that sets up a certain resistance to change is wholly salutary in its function - since without it we should be deprived of that cognition of change which is of a more intellectual kind - the movement productive of religious awareness is resistive in its effort to overcome the seduction of the commonplace, the so called "tried and true".

Were this not so the category of faith would lack justification. It is necessary to determine what is meant by "faith" since the term suffers ambiguity. There are, broadly, two definitions current; for instance, someone asks an acquaintance, "What is your faith." He will probably reply by naming the Church of his choice showing that

"faith" so understood means something like the following: that sum of experiences and "tested" doctrine or dogma making up his general frame of reference. Yet, this "faith" is merely an historical term. It connotes for him the sum of many things "proved" to his satisfaction, notions postulated as possibly verifiable, and, most significantly, what he accepts but never tries.

This is not the Pauline definition, or more accurately, that offered by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews: "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." If this be true then "faith" as an historical term has nothing synonymous with it and, unless it should function as a homonym, a new word, it should be discarded from use.

The distinguishing mark of

faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen is simply this, that it can never be antecedently possessed; indeed, none may 'sell it away.' It is an act and not an understanding. It is the alternative to depending upon things to remain as they are. After all, it is absurd to say one has 'faith' that the sun will rise tomorrow - so far from this being a matter for faith it is not a fit subject for gambling. Faith is the trial of an unknown within an unforeseen circumstance - a living, firsthand circumstance and no mere conception. This is, as put by Zen Buddhism, "the walk off the cliff with hands free." There is no other but to act or faith our way toward union with the loved One. Love, then, is the supreme risk. Clearly,

as regards means to a continuing knowledge of the loved One, the priority is given to acting, to movement of the will, and not to understanding.

Such an act is not a resistance to change, but a seeking after it, that is, a search for a change of being, a new relationship with the absolute. It is a response of a different order, which, by resisting the comfort of habit and the trust in the security of that wisdom Eve gained from eating of the fruit, opens itself gladly to the uncalculated. What else would Original Sin be but a capitulation to the ordinary, "the tried and the true"?

Gabriel Marcel refers to this response as an absolute commitment. He says: "I see it like this. In the end

there must be an absolute commitment entered upon by the whole of myself, or at least by something real in myself which could not be repudiated without repudiating the whole - and which would be addressed to the whole of Being and would be made in the presence of that whole. This is faith.

Obviously, repudiation is still a possibility here, but cannot be justified by a change in the subject or object; it can only be explained by a fall.
An idea to work out.

"Another thing that I notice is this. There is ^{down} no commitment purely from my side. It always implies that the other being has a hold over me. All commitment is a response. *

* Gabriel Marcel, Being and Having, p. 45

It has been necessary to describe faith in order to lay down the first movement toward any awareness or knowledge that might rightly call itself religious. This is not to say that religious experience begins in faith. By no means. Religious experience begins in that sense of privation, described in the first Chapter, which must now be said to be a man's need to love. His need to love is met by his response to love, for nothing is truer to religious experience than that a man is necessarily loved before he learns to love in return. His response to love is faith. This is his first movement toward a knowledge of God which is consummated, in the expression of his love, in áyatún - which he holds toward God and the world, perhaps at long last. The history of religion might be approached from a study of traditional practices revealing themselves as expressions of every man's need to love.

But he begins this expression in faith, for as St. Augustine observed, the object of faith may be evil as well as good.* For

* St Augustine, Enchiridion, p. 15.

instance, a man may worship power, rather than love, but in doing so he admits the existence of love in so far as fear is opposed to love dialectically.

In conclusion, then, two essentials of religious knowledge appear more than a little removed from the concerns of Western epistemological theory. The first, that religious awareness is directed toward discovering states of being which cannot be experienced other than individually and ^(Empathically; var. below) empathetically, is demonstrated by the express testimony of the mystics. The second, that religious experience is impossible of attainment without the movement of faith indicates the major role played by volition.

There is a curious bond between faith and love. Love is the object of religious knowledge, but the first movement toward it is faith. Yet, St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians was explicit that faith might exist without love — "if I have ^{all} faith, so as to remove mountains, but I have not love, I am nothing." (I Cor. 13:2).

Faith is a method; but on that account it is not the object of the method, and if the object of the method is lost sight of the methodology, no matter how vaunted, must be in vain. The exercise of love, which is the knowledge of love, necessarily includes faith — and hope — but the object of faith need not be love. Because of the former, there is no necessary split between method and object but because of the latter the method is not fool-proof if misdirected. This complication has led to a pernicious variety of theories of religious knowledge.

III

Metaphor and Religious Experience

Metaphor is the middle term of experience, the vehicle of participation between ourselves and others; it is the original expression of relationship between subject and object and therefore the primary ontological datum. Ontology, as the science of being, can never really transcend beings except we project a universal called Being. But this universal has never fooled the majority of men into thinking that 'being' has concrete existence — we should raise an eyebrow if one came declaring he had just had a chat with 'being'. If, then, the religious life is to be affirmed as something else than "normal madness" and illusion, one can do nothing less than assert that God

has a personal dimension and that we commune with him even unawares. Our gods then are indicators of our relationships with God, who, rightly, cannot be represented in the sense that no man has seen God.

The word metaphor in the Greek, μεταφορα, suggests a carrying from one place to another. It bears the sense of verging to or towards, leading or tending to an end or object and so on. Three meanings, at least, are embodied in the expression: betweenness, passage and goal.

The religious awareness sees Nature as among us, in a sense between us and God. She favours us with pictures and living symbols through which we effect our relationships with

him. We are always in company with her for she participates with us in his worship. She is his tabernacle and his temple.

That which we call the soul functions as our relationship, our bridge to God. The quality of this relationship is expressed in metaphor. Mythology expresses the relationship between man and God. All gods, then are symptomatic of our states of being; for we exist in a transformational continuum and as our souls, our relationships to God are transformed, so do our religions bear witness, so do our awarenesses of metaphorical truth within any religious tradition, for though it is often hard for some Christians to confess, the Word is the

"light that lighteth every man."
The parable was Christ's method of instruction for the most natural reason that it is the language of the soul, the relationship to God. Had he spoken otherwise his words would have been conformable to the rational conceits of any hearer. No theological system can contain fully the complexity of one person's relationship to God, but any person may be questioned by a flower. "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

The fundamental category of our religious experience is growth toward... a transformation of being.

The space between the what-is and the what-might-be is the province of metaphor. The movement from the what-is to the what-might-be is through the μεταξύ, the intermediate means. * Religious metaphor always

* Cf. Simone Weil, Notes on Love, p 21, "Precious things are quite rightly μεταξύ"

refers to the sense of destiny. The space between is a during. The duress of existence lies not in what-is, in fate, but in the space between the what-is and the what-might-be. The contemplation of destiny is conducted through metaphor, the glass through which we now see darkly; through which we divine but imperfectly that Kingdom of Heaven we are invited to enter, now. Yet it is

well to heed the warning so very familiar to all Christians, "except ye become as a little child ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven" - which we are also told is in our midst.

How does a child see the world, how does the child divine? Objects are, for the child, really subjects. In fact it might well be argued that the idea of 'object' comes to the intelligence rather late in development, for even during adolescence some of the wonder and magic of natural things remains - if as nothing else, then at least they live in memory.

An image refers to the selfness of some other. When a child looks upon a flower, he comes to it directly - the flower for him is also a subject. A conjunction exists between himself

as subject and the flower as subject
When he grows older he becomes
aware that "things are not what
they seem," and what was conjoined
becomes confused, for the flower as
image slowly achieves reality. Indeed,
it is the image which becomes the
object of utility, and this image
recalls the selfness of the flower that
disappeared long since. In time our
nostalgia is accepted for the experience
of the flower, and the subject, flower,
so far from being revealed is embalmed
in memory. This is the first experience
of the aesthetic which is a datum of
recollection and not of presence.

Re-presentations become the reality
of experience as the sense of wonder
is progressively blunted. "What is it
good for?" supplants "what is it?"

The aesthetic as "a datum of recollection" is an attempt to describe the polar relation between the divinatory and the aesthetic. There is a difference between one's "seeing something for the first time" in a picture one has looked upon many times and a casual stroll through an art exhibition. Such a stroll may excite many memories of former divinations and, as such, elicit intense emotional response. The art objects function as more than souvenirs, of course, but unless one is brought to presence, through the mediacy of objects one, has not divined. One is overwhelmed by the divinatory. The vision derived has a claim upon one which is difficult to refuse. The aesthetic may move greatly, but nothing in the experience need put a claim upon the sufferer of that experience.

The interdependence of the divinatory and the aesthetic is a study which is not in the immediate province of this paper; but unless one admits of such an interdependence he is hard put to give value to religious experience as other than merely psychological, or to give value to the physical and emotional context as negatively contributive, at least. It does not seem likely that an analysis of religious experience which neglects the role of the aesthetic can be much more than fragmentary.

And so the child divines what we merely recollect once the Songs of Innocence are subjects of memory and we take to Choring the Songs of Experience. This divination is not to be confused with that of the seer or prophet whose function it is to relate the Songs of Innocence to the Songs of Experience - but divination it is never the less. It would be extravagant to claim for the child more knowledge than for the adult. Rather, a new dimension of experience is entered by virtue of a different state of being.

Generally, the metaphor, 'to enter,' has traditionally been employed in myth and fairy tale to render the occasion of new experience. Enter rather than sense. In so far as this distinction is useful, we may say that objects, images, are more often

Seased then entered. Alice in Wonderland entered a new world - she fell down, down into. Another common image is the door behind which --- Again, there is the mirror through which one may pass to the other side.

The mirror reflects things as they are thought to be. One must pass even through the image of oneself, which is but an image among other masks reflected by the looking glass. The image may function as a symbol but only by virtue of a reference to something other than itself. It is this other which is entered into.

There is a very clear reason why what is entered into cannot be adequately defined by classification. In point of fact entering is a continuous movement and halting

to examine the subject of entry as object, or image, prevents further entry at that moment. This is not to suggest that an encounter with the object qua object is 'bad' or an inferior experience. It is an experience of a different order — a very necessary one to science. Sooner or later, though, a return to the 'inward eye' is called for. Very often such a call may go unheeded for an indefinite length of time, whilst the memory of former entrances is relied upon in lieu of a truly present communion.

In the aesthetic experience the image recalls former illumination. Aestheticians doubtless would revolt at such a definition yet there seems a clear formal distinction possible between the aesthetic perception and

the divinatory. It is a distinction made crudely between the passive and active, the scenic and visionary, the dream and revelation.*

* Cf. Santayana, The Sense of Beauty, p. 2347. "The aesthetic effect of objects is always due to the total emotional value of the consciousness in which they exist." Of course it is not suggested that Santayana uses the term 'object' in precisely the same way. He would not have agreed with so severe a distinction between the aesthetic and what I have called the divinatory. I would protest his "complaint" on the ground that his writings give no evidence of his concern (let alone awareness of) for the divinatory. Even his notion of the sublime derived not from communion but from a disinterested isolation. see pp. 236-7.

Wordsworth's "lines recollected in tranquillity" are, by description of the poet himself, the attempt to formulate the meaning of a remembered divination, or, failing that, they might as successfully state the memory of an aesthetic experience.

We require to have more than a 'sense of beauty' if the divination is to have any meaning at all. Cognition through the senses is a knowledge of forms, of images and so art is generally preferred above nature, hailed as an improvement upon nature — and this it undoubtedly is from the perspective of aesthetic comfort and exhilaration; for these as ends in themselves are less capricious than nature in the raw; but as ends in themselves they

eventually conduce to boredom when they are divined for what they are, namely, masks of masks. But once so divined they are then venerated for the sake of the holiness which informs them. And the awareness of this holiness illuminates the incarnational aspect of aesthetic objects. The sorrow of the incarnation of any human vision is the sense that it can never adequately duplicate the vision. Likewise Nature, the temple of God, is always an inadequate expression of his holiness and glory, of his 'unseen' beauty. A reaction to this awareness has produced two effects. One, of life-and-world-negation and the other, of life-and-world-affirmation. In the great religious traditions, religious practice, as testimony or inducement to religious awareness, has alternated between these points of view. life-and-

- world-negation stresses the 'degradation' of the holy in the physical whereas life-and-world affirmation praises the physical as a vehicle of the holy - both points of view when irrationally stressed lead to grotesque attitudes and behaviours. However, a balanced and sacramental life-and-world view exalts the metaphor as vehicle and worships the holy through the 'space between.' "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," was not said to disparage the vessels but to honor them as vehicles of the divine. The Puritan revolt against the earthen vessels was founded upon the desire to dispense with impediments that obstruct access to the divine - a worthy sentiment - but the notion that the divine may be approached unmediated was ill taken. When God is made ultimately transcendent

one must make frantic haste to catch up with him at all costs and a demolition squad is formed to clear the way.

The image, so far from being an obstruction is entwined by the mystery it contains and is the sacred door between the diviner and the divined. Indeed it is not the image that is fouled but our eyes, that over-filmed, fail to see. The image is never an obstruction but always an invitation, an expression of the modesty of God.

Conclusion

Certainly the thesis of this paper stands or falls on the acceptance or rejection of the notion "states of being." But if the notion is at least somewhat significant, then religious experience is first of all to be described as a particular awareness. This is to put it definitely within the limits of conscious activity, though to declare it derives wholly from a conscious occasion is to say something that requires more than the observations of this paper can support. However, if consciousness is to include more than conceptual manipulation (mentipulation) then the statement sounds plausible. However, with due regard to the enormous range of feeling associated with religious experience, it must be maintained that any religious vision that has an ultimate claim upon a man calls for the exercise of

continuous decision. Without the vision there is no religious action, without the action there is no increase of vision. The man of such vision has every reason to insist that he is conscious of the vision and the need to answer its claim through action.

The Jamesian notion of reality as an "experience-continuum" is more strikingly applicable to the conditions of religious experience. The awareness of, and experience of, states of being requires its field, namely, a transformational-continuum. (It might be more accurate from one point of view to speak of a transmutational-continuum, but this introduces a problem which is perhaps not necessary to the elucidation of this thesis).

The notion that religious experience is primarily grounded in feeling has some justification but it is a gross over-statement of the issue. It is to call

a part the whole. It would be much nearer the truth to say that the cosmos of feeling is related to the cosmos of thought; that the cosmos of feeling is much less formally explored than is the traditional epistemological problem but is nevertheless awaiting such exploration; that the function of thought in religious experience is to translate the cosmos of feeling into a metaphor of the progress and/or regress in and through states of being. This point of view brings alive such a myth as Hesiod's Theogony or the Fall of Genesis.

The world of feeling has its dialectical structure as has the world of thought and a religious thinker is, or should be, concerned to explore its polar-pathic dimensions. Relationships and interrelationships abound — such as love/fear, desire/hate, decision/resolution, and so on. To relegate

these to a purely psycho-physical level is to make them irrelevant to the religious activity, and in so far as religious activity is concerned in states of being, the cosmos of feeling has metaphysical significance. This is not to confuse the ethical with the metaphysical but to assert a reality in addition to them both in which the cosmos of feeling is an equal partner with the cosmos of thought. Neither is this a pantheistic point of view for pantheism cannot admit of the reality of an absolute claim.

Religious experience depends for its expression upon the highest degree of conscious activity in "fruitful" inter-relationship with the deepest feeling. This experience must necessarily be unique to each individual person but is on that very account not divorced from

Communal expression. It varies according to individual genius, capacities and historical situation. If one looks to its source it will be toward that primal tension between a person's exercise of moral freedom and his awareness of the absolute claim of his personal vision or, failing such a vision, the distress that attends the search for such a vision.

Between obedience to the vision and the search for "the one thing needful" one may traverse an undetermined number of states of being which, in this life, range from heaven to hell and from hell to heaven.

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