

University of Kent at Canterbury

Rudolph Otto's Theory of Religious Experience in The Idea of the Holy:
A Study in the Phenomenology and Philosophy of Religion.

Thesis Presented by Leon P. Schlamm for the Degree of Doctor of
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This essay seeks to chart a largely unexplored psychology of religious experience in The Idea of the Holy, which is directly related to Otto's claim that one of the most important functions of discourse about religious experience is to evoke numinous feelings in a religiously sensitive audience. It will be demonstrated that Otto's concepts of schematization of the numinous, the numinous and the rational a priori, and divination cannot be understood by phenomenologists and philosophers of religion except in the light of this claim, and that Otto intends that his concept of schematization (profoundly influenced by Fries's transcendental idealism) be identified with his law of association of analogous feelings which explains how the excitation of numinous experience is produced. Moreover, this theory of religious experience rests upon an assumption about the relationship between religious language and experience which requires elucidation and evaluation. Otto's claims about numinous experience being inexpressible and yet, paradoxically, made intelligible through the use of analogy will be critically examined in the light of recent philosophical discussion concerning the relationship between all language and experience, and it will be shown not only that Otto's ineffability language is not unintelligible, but also that he offers a sophisticated theory of analogical language which may do much to extend the boundaries of our understanding of religious experience. Furthermore, an assessment will be made of the cognitive status of numinous experience; and it will be argued that, in spite of Otto's failure to establish its cognitive certainty by appealing to his account of the numinous a priori, he successfully demonstrates that, whatever its cognitive status may be, it is a distinctive experience which cannot be confused with any other and is easily identifiable as unmistakably religious. Finally, an attempt will be made to clarify Otto's standing within the history of phenomenology of religion.

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Chapter I

Introduction: Identifying the Issues

(i) A Summary of the Argument

(a) One of the principal aims of this essay will be to chart a largely unexplored psychology of religious experience in The Idea of the Holy, which is directly related to a strand of Otto's argument that has not previously received the attention it deserves. This is the claim made by Otto that one of the most important functions of discourse about religious experience is to evoke numinous feelings in a religiously sensitive audience, and that his law of association of analogous feelings explains how this excitation of religious experience is produced. Otto's interpreters have generally failed to recognize this practical aspect of much of the argument of The Idea of the Holy, and in particular of Otto's search for analogies to numinous experience. By constantly drawing his reader's attention to experiences which are similar to numinous experiences, Otto endeavours, through the operation of the law of association of analogous feelings, to lead them to discover the distinctive, irreducibly religious features of numinous experience for themselves.

I will also show how influential this claim is on the remainder of the argument of The Idea of the Holy. In particular, I will demonstrate that Otto's observations concerning his concepts of schematization of the numinous and the numinous and rational a priori cannot be understood except in the light of this claim. Indeed one of the most important functions of Otto's concept of schematization of the numinous, previously overlooked by his interpreters, is to provide a mechanism which allows analogies to numinous experience to arouse that religious feeling itself. It is clear that Otto connects his concept of schematization with his law

of association of analogous feelings and that he intends his schemata to be understood as being capable of arousing numinous feelings. Thus when he speaks about the tremendum moment of the numinous being schematized by means of the rational ideas of justice, moral will and the exclusion of what is opposed to morality, we must understand this statement as meaning among other things that these rational ideas evoke tremendum numinous feelings. Again, when he speaks of the fascinans moment of the numinous as schematized by means of the ideas of goodness, mercy and love, we must interpret this claim as meaning among other things that he believes such ideas to arouse corresponding numinous feelings. Or again, when he speaks of the mysterium moment of the numinous being schematized by the absoluteness of all rational attributes applied to the deity, we must understand this experience of the absoluteness of rational attributes as being capable of evoking numinous feelings.

I will also be drawing attention to another strand of meaning in Otto's concept of schematization. It is clear that he does not identify schematization with all examples of the arousal of numinous feelings through the law of association of analogous feelings, but only with instances of religious experience where the connection between the numinous analogue and the moment of numinous experience is a necessary rather than a contingent one. The function of Otto's concept of schematization here is to explain the feeling of the necessity of the connection between the schema and the moment of numinous experience, and in particular to explain why, whenever someone experiences the schema, he necessarily experiences the numinous feeling as well.

Moreover, I will argue that the concept of schematization cannot be completely understood until we grasp what Otto means by rational schemata. Otto's understanding of the 'rational' in The Idea of the Holy is so profoundly influenced by the transcendental idealism of Jakob Fries that it can hardly be equated with ordinary discursive reason. Rather, it is

an unusual form of reason with a distinctive psychological dimension that is informed by Fries's unorthodox psychological interpretation of the a priori categories. Fries suggests that the a priori categories are not logical constituents in our awareness of objects of sense experience, but are elements in our cognitive psychology that exist independent of sense experience. Similarly, Otto argues that not only the numinous a priori must be understood in this way, but also that the rational a priori must be as well. Just as the numinous a priori, lying in the mind independent of sense experience, is a hidden substantive source from which religious ideas and feelings are formed, so the rational a priori also produces ideas completely independently of sense experience. Rational schemata arise fully formed in the mind, completely independently of sense experience and with a feeling of certainty and authority that is absent in the case of all other mental activity.

Finally, I will argue that this distinctive psychological interpretation of Otto's rational schemata provides an explanation of why schemata necessarily arouse numinous feelings. Because rational schemata turn the attention of the religious believer away from sense experience, they have the power to evoke numinous feelings; as a result the religious believer is able to pass over from one a priori experience to another without any intervention of sense experience. Here lies the psychological explanation for the felt necessity of the connection between the rational and the numinous in Otto's account of schematization.

(b) I will also show that Otto's psychology of religious experience in The Idea of the Holy presupposes a particular interpretation of the relationship between religious language and experience - and indeed between all language and experience - which requires elucidation and critical evaluation. Otto's insistence that numinous experience resists literal description and can only be approached through the use of

analogical language, together with his repeated claims as to the inexpressibility of numinous experience, suggests that he assumes the existence of an enormous gulf between language and experience. All experience, both religious and non-religious, transcends language because language is incapable of reproducing and communicating the subtleties and intensities of experience.

However, many recent philosophers have criticized this type of account of the relationship between religious experience and language because it presupposes that a 'pure' or 'raw' experience can be identified which is distinguishable from all language or interpretation. According to this view, and contrary to Otto, all experience is mediated by previous language about, or interpretation of, such experience, so that it is impossible to separate such language or interpretation from experience in order to compare the one with the other. Since language about, or interpretation of, experience is actually a constituent of experience, it can be argued that Otto is not entitled to propose either that language shuts us off from experience or that experience transcends its cultural situation and interpretation. If we accept this argument, we are forced to conclude, on the one hand that Otto's claims about the inexpressible nature of numinous experience - and his experiments with analogical language with the aim of attempting to convey the distinctive flavour of such religious experience - are unintelligible, and on the other hand that the concept of numinous experience as transcending and dominating all religious traditions is incoherent.

However, I will argue that there are good reasons for questioning the veracity of this account of the relationship between experience, language and interpretation. Although interpretation always enters experience as a constituent of it, this fact does not - contrary to many recent philosophers - justify the further conclusion that experience (composed of 'raw' experience and previous interpretation) cannot be distinguished from

and compared with its retrospective interpretation. For there to be an interpretation there must be a separate experience to be interpreted. There is therefore nothing incoherent in Otto's claim that numinous experience can indeed be distinguished from, and compared with, the particular interpretation it is given in any religious tradition; nor in his claim that numinous experience transcends all religious language about it while at the same time being accessible to some limited degree through analogical language. Also, because experience and interpretation can be distinguished, there is strictly no reason why the contribution of a religious tradition to a particular numinous experience could not be a relatively minor one - although evidence would need to be produced to demonstrate that this in fact is the case.

I will also be arguing that Otto's use of analogical language in The Idea of the Holy has more than one function. It is intended not only to evoke numinous experience (through the law of association of analogous feelings), but also to extend the boundaries of our understanding of it. Otto, like the poet, restlessly seeks to extend our language about religious experience beyond what it is at present capable of conveying, and far from being complacent about the limits of reason with respect to religious experience (as some of his critics have suggested) he was in fact continually striving to transcend those limits. Analogical language in The Idea of the Holy can in fact help us considerably to understand aspects of numinous experience which are elusive, transient, shapeless and unfamiliar. When confronted by religious experience, we use the better known to elucidate the less familiar; and the moment of insight into the relatively unknown numinous feeling occurs at the same time as the choice of analogy for it. In this way analogy gives numinous experience greater definition and helps us to remember such religious feeling, which might otherwise be more easily forgotten. This memory of the nature of numinous feeling may in turn produce a greater sensitivity to future

numinous experience. Also, Otto's analogies to numinous experience may have profound significance for those who have had numinous experiences but now find them difficult or impossible to remember. Clearly, if Otto's analogies to the numinous help his readers to recall numinous experiences which they had partially or completely forgotten, this would offer some explanation for the astounding popularity of The Idea of the Holy.

Finally, I will argue that there is no inconsistency in The Idea of the Holy between Otto's interest in analogical language as it relates to numinous experience, and his repeated claim that numinous experience is ineffable. Firstly, Otto's claims for the ineffability of numinous experience are in fact all qualified, rather than radical, claims, in spite of the frequency with which he speaks of numinous experience as 'wholly other'. Secondly, his ineffability claims tend to be directed at the mysterium moment of numinous experience, whereas his search for analogies to numinous experience is confined to the tremendum and fascinans moments of such experience.

(c) Otto has often been criticized for not showing enough interest in the varieties of religious experience. In fact, however, I shall demonstrate that this criticism is misplaced, and that it is due simply to the way in which, as the literature of phenomenology of religion has grown and the term numinous has been gradually adopted by that literature, the term has tended to be identified with devotional as opposed to mystical religion. It is now assumed by most phenomenologists of religion that in The Idea of the Holy Otto was insisting on the fundamental differences between prophetic and mystical religion. Indeed many phenomenologists today speak without inhibition about numinous and mystical experience.

However, these interpreters are mistaken about the relationship between numinous and mystical experience. Nowhere in The Idea of the Holy does Otto explicitly identify numinous experience with only

devotional religion as opposed to mystical religion. On the contrary he insists over and over again that numinous experience includes mystical experience and that devotional and mystical experience are not opposed to each other. It is perhaps the supreme irony that, in formulating his ideas on the numinous, Otto was in fact attempting to do precisely the opposite to what most of his interpreters have taken him to be doing. At a time when the trend in Protestant circles was to contrast prophetic and mystical forms of religion, Otto was attempting to redress this trend by drawing attention to similarities between mystical and devotional experiences, even arguing that many familiar features of devotional religion are just as appropriate to mystical religion. It is in this light that we should understand Otto's insistence that 'self-depreciation', 'creature consciousness' and the ascription of ultimate value to the 'wholly other' are applicable to many forms of mystical experience as well as to devotional religion. It is in this light, also, that we must understand Otto's definition of mysticism as the strongest stressing and over-stressing of those non-rational elements which are already inherent in all religion - that is, as the emphasising of the 'wholly other' aspect of the numen before which the response of the mystic is stupor. And finally, it is in this light that we must also understand Otto's assertion that the tremendum moment of numinous experience is to be found in some forms of mysticism.

(d) I shall argue that there is in fact no justification for claiming that the cognitive status of numinous experience is similar to the cognitive status of ordinary perception. On the contrary, the evidence concerning numinous experience suggests that it has a unique cognitive status, and is anomalous with regard to the distinction between objective and subjective experiences.

However, I shall also argue that this conclusion, concerning Otto's failure to demonstrate that numinous experiences are veridical, should not be construed as damaging to religious life or religious experience, and that Otto is wrong to think it should. I will propose, in spite of Otto's failure to establish the cognitive certainty of numinous experiences by appealing to his account of the numinous a priori, that an approach to numinous experience be adopted which 'brackets out' questions concerning its cognitive status and concentrates instead on its practical significance for inner religious life. If such a position (which I will call non-cognitive) is adopted, the scholar can then focus his attention on the value of Otto's challenging psychology of religious experience without having to accept the epistemological claims for this kind of experience which Otto makes. In this way the scholar can continue to be interested in the cognitive claims of Otto's exciting religious psychology - including the claim that numinous experience contains powerful feelings that the experience is noetic and invulnerable to doubt - without either accepting or rejecting such claims. In particular, he can continue to be interested in the fascinating issues raised by the psychological features of Otto's numinous and rational a priori by reading such claims non-cognitively. The psychological aspects of Otto's numinous and rational a priori continue to be of significance to a non-cognitive reading of his cognitive claims.

Accordingly, I will conclude my discussion of the cognitive status of numinous experience by arguing that although Otto can be said to offer a valuable theory of religious experience, this is not in fact the theory that he thinks he is offering. The theory that he thinks he is offering must be rejected for the simple reason that he fails to provide the empirical evidence necessary to demonstrate that numinous experience is veridical. Instead, what the scholar will find of value in Otto's work is a different theory based on a non-cognitive account of religious

experience. This theory is only testable insofar as it can be demonstrated, on the one hand that numinous experience does possess the life-transforming properties which have been claimed for it (religious bliss, moral purpose, etc.), and on the other hand that it really is a distinctive, irreducible experience which cannot be confused with any other and is easily identifiable as unmistakably religious.

In fact, I will demonstrate during the course of this argument that, in spite of some difficulties in distinguishing between numinous and sublime experiences, Otto's analyses of the distinctive features of the different moments of numinous experience are generally sufficiently detailed to convince the phenomenologist of religion that such experience really exists and is not just the result of misinterpretation of some non-religious experience. In qualitative terms numinous experience is unmistakably religious, and, contrary to Otto's critics, there is no evidence that it lends itself to non-religious interpretation.

(e) Finally, I will argue that on the one hand Otto cannot be called a phenomenologist of religion because he did not specifically speak of himself as one; but that on the other hand his methodological observations on the study of religions have been profoundly influential on the discipline of phenomenology of religion. He can in fact be regarded as a phenomenologist of religion in all but name because of his much celebrated and impassioned opposition to reductionism in the study of religion - an opposition that is widely assumed to be a methodological presupposition of the discipline. He insists that the study of religion must not import explanatory theories which are foreign to it, in other words which fail to identify what is unique in religious life and experience. The study of religion should not be concerned with seeking

non-religious explanations for religious phenomena (which is the presupposition of all reductionist scholarship), but rather with describing their distinctive features.

It is this opposition to reductionism in the study of religion that has been so influential not only on phenomenologists who, like Otto, advocate the use of religious sensibility by the scholar in his study of other religions, but also on those scholars who avoid using their own religious experience in the phenomenological study of religion and argue that personal religious commitments should be 'bracketed out' when studying the commitments of others. I will in fact argue that those scholars who regard Otto's opposition to reductionism as simply a strategy for concealing a substantial religious commitment and therefore as inhibiting the furtherance of scholarly understanding of religious materials, have failed to recognize that the effect of explanatory reduction is bound to be to divert attention away from the distinctive features of numinous experience and indeed of all religious materials.

Nonetheless, I will also draw attention to a major weakness in Otto's methodological position concerning the study of religion which has in fact been eliminated in more recent discussion of the subject by phenomenologists of religion. This weakness is his mistaken assumption that there is a connection between opposition to reductionism in the study of religion and what Otto conceives of as the scholar's ability to use his numinous sensibility to discover the numinous in other religious traditions. The problem with Otto's position is that he thinks that the scholar's numinous sensibility provides privileged access to the numinous experience of other religious traditions, supposing that because of this sensibility the scholar is capable of understanding the experiences of other religious traditions as an insider rather than an outsider. In fact, however, this privileged understanding is not possible, for the simple reason that numinous experiences outside of the scholar's own

religious tradition are never directly accessible to him. All that the scholar has direct access to are the reports of numinous experience, or the means of expression of numinous experience - not the numinous experiences themselves. Accordingly we can see, not only that Otto's refusal to distinguish between the religious experiences of the believers whom he studies and his own experiences is quite unjustified, but also that his identification of this methodological position with his opposition to reductionism is actually disastrous for an understanding of the discipline of phenomenology of religion. Later phenomenologists are wise to reject such an identification.

However, we are not justified in concluding from all this that Otto's observations on the role of numinous sensibility in the study of religion should be completely rejected; nor should we conclude that his position cannot be reconceived in a way which avoids the problems raised above. I will in fact demonstrate that a revision of Otto's understanding of the function of the scholar's numinous experience in the study of other religious traditions is possible. The scholar can use his numinous sensibility to discover inductively numinous experiences lying behind reports of such experience, while at the same time acknowledging that there is a distance between himself and the religious believers whom he studies which can never be eliminated. However, this distance is far shorter than the distance separating the believer from the position of reductionist students of religion. Accordingly we can conclude that this reconceived methodological position succeeds in establishing its independence from the endless conflict between religious believers and reductionist students of religion. This independence, I will argue, should be a distinguishing feature of all phenomenology of religion.

(ii) The Background: A Survey of the Most Significant Criticisms of Otto's Theory of Religious Experience

The Idea of the Holy displays a tangled network of phenomenological description of religious experience, theological argument for the cognitive status of such experience and philosophical argument about the relation between that experience and religious language. A handbook of comparative religion, theology, philosophy of religion and psychology of religion, The Idea of the Holy has been almost all things to all men, and because of this has been subjected to considerable criticism from scholars from several intellectual disciplines, generated by many conflicting theories about what Otto really wanted to convey in this work.

For instance, many commentators argue that Otto's principal problem is to find an explanation for what he sees as the necessary connection between the numinous and the rational in the history of religions. Otto's concept of holiness unites two types of human experience which are qualitatively different and in origin unrelated, numinous experience and reason (including morality).⁽¹⁾ However, it is Otto's evolutionary theory of religion, and particularly his desire to show how higher forms of religion are progressively rationalized, which leads him to commit what many critics take to be the cardinal error of assuming that religion and morality were at the beginning of religious history quite separate. Indeed, because of this Otto is held to claim that primitive religions have no connection with ethics,⁽²⁾ and even more importantly he appears to disconnect religious (numinous) experience totally from all other forms of experience, rational, moral and aesthetic. As Davidson forcefully argues:

To establish the autonomy of the sacred, he is willing to sacrifice its comprehensive character; to distinguish religion from metaphysics and ethics, he describes it as essentially non-rational and non-moral in nature. The life of the spirit is thus compartmentalised and disunited; science, religion and morality are set at odds with each other; and no pathway is left from the world of sense experience to the world of religious conviction.⁽³⁾

Furthermore, there is a real risk that, in emphasizing the 'wholly other' nature of the numinous and particularly its non-rational quality, Otto is in danger of transforming religion into something sub-rational rather than supra-rational,⁽⁴⁾ especially in the light of the importance which is attached to the tremendum aspect of the numinous⁽⁵⁾ and the insistence that religious intuitions are beyond the reach of rational criticism.⁽⁶⁾ It is because of such tensions between the numinous and the rational, generated by his theory of religious autonomy, that Otto attempts to combine the numinous and the rational artificially in the concept of the holy through the dubious mechanism of the Kantian theory of schematization. Without exception, Otto's critics agree that his use of Kant's concept of schematization, rather than solving his problem concerning how to unite the rational to the numinous, only generates further misunderstanding of the meaning of his work and emphasizes the spurious nature of the association of the numinous with the rational.⁽⁷⁾ Whatever Otto means by schematization of the numinous, and there has been much disagreement concerning this,⁽⁸⁾ critics agree that his concept of schematization cannot function in anything like the way it does in Kant's account of the epistemological conditions for empirical perception. Otto's work would have been far better understood had he not introduced this formidable Kantian concept.

In fact, critics have generally felt uneasy about Otto's heavy dependence on Kantian ideas, and in particular have been concerned about the precise nature of the numinous a priori and the a priori of the holy. What can Otto mean by a religious a priori? Is it a genuinely Kantian principle of understanding? Is it a transcendental precondition for the experience of a religious object in a way precisely parallel to the way a rational a priori category is the transcendental precondition for the

experience of a sensible object? Critics are divided about how genuinely Kantian Otto's a priori categories of the numinous and the holy really are.

For instance, whereas Davidson understands the numinous a priori as a Kantian category of judgement of meaning and value parallel to Kant's a priori of aesthetic taste and thus axiological rather than epistemological,(9) Baillie argues that Otto's concept of the religious a priori is, like that of Troeltsch, epistemological and meant to demonstrate that particular religious ideas are genuinely self-evident.(10) By contrast, Holm observes that we understand Otto better if we give up the attempt to interpret Otto's numinous a priori in a specifically Kantian way and instead construe it as a unique type of experience independent of sense experience.(11) This theory of numinous sensibility is supported by Otto's references to the numinous a priori as a 'mental state... perfectly sui generis and irreducible to any other'(12) and a feeling which 'cannot be expressed by means of anything else, just because it is so primary and elementary a datum in our psychical life, and therefore only definable through itself'.(13) Clearly here we have echoes of Otto's Romanticism and perhaps even a 'religious instinct' theory as was suggested long ago by Flower.(14)

However, the majority of critics still insist on some parallel between Otto's numinous a priori and the Kantian notion of the contribution which understanding brings to experience, and, for example, Reeder plausibly argues that Otto retains one of two possible senses of the Kantian a priori. Whereas he discards any parallel to the notion of the a priori as a logical constituent in our awareness of any object of empirical experience, he retains the notion of the a priori as an element in our cognitive psychology independent of sense experience.(15) Certainly, such an interpretation is supported by Otto's reference to the numinous a priori as that which 'issues from the deepest foundation of

cognitive apprehension that the soul possesses', (16) a 'hidden substantive source from which the religious ideas and feelings are formed, which lies in the mind independent of sense experience'. (17)

However, even if we accept this interpretation of Otto's numinous a priori, all kinds of other problems hide behind the term. To begin with, the cognitive status of this numinous a priori must be questioned. (18) Not only is it obvious that the incidence of genuine religious experience is not universally accepted, but Otto himself admits that it is not innate. The numinous a priori is merely a capacity for numinous experience. (19) Moreover, it could be argued that because of the profound influence of Fries on Otto's work, (20) his a priori is exaggerated in two connected senses. In the first, there is the danger that both the qualitative and structural aspects of religious experience will be treated as wholly the product of our a priori cognitive constitution, with the result that we are led to observe that there is nothing in religious experience which is a posteriori. (21) Indeed, this might be the case even if numinous experience must await appropriate stimuli from the empirical world to call them forth; and this danger of exaggerated apriorism is not mitigated by Otto's references early in The Idea of the Holy to a numinous object outside the self, (22) nor by his high praise for William James's now famous religious 'sense of presence' so vigorously defended in his The Varieties of Religious Experience, since these statements later give way to others of a decidedly more idealistic nature. So, for instance, it is in this light that we must understand the statements of Otto quoted previously in notes 16 and 17 and his assertion that

The proof that in the numinous we have to deal with purely a priori cognitive elements is to be reached by introspection and a critical examination of reason such as Kant instituted, (23)

a clear reference to the crucial influence of Fries's idealism on Otto's thought in this work. As Bastow has recently pointed out, Otto is undecided about whether numinous experience is something we manufacture by actively interpreting and evaluating our earthly surroundings, or whether it is something which happens to us and is produced by an agent independent of us.(24) Put another way, Otto gravitates between the position that events are holy in themselves, which implies that God is known in, not merely through, his actions, and the position that God is merely conceived by us as standing behind earthly events and indirectly experienced through them.(25)

The ambiguity in Otto's position over whether we can meaningfully talk about a genuine numinous object over against a passive experiencing subject is perhaps nowhere more manifest than in his discussion concerning the nature of religious 'signs'.(26) Here he compares the growth of religious consciousness, which he identifies with divination (the ability genuinely to cognize and recognize the holy in its appearances or signs of the holy), with the growth of aesthetic taste. Just as when aesthetic taste is still crude and immature the a priori category of the beautiful is applied, or rather misapplied, to an object or person which is not genuinely beautiful, so the same process can take place in religious life where the a priori of the holy is applied, or misapplied, to an object which is not really holy. However, as aesthetic taste matures, so the a priori of the beautiful is properly applied to a thing which is genuinely beautiful. What happens here is that a man comes to reject with strong aversion the quasi - beautiful, but not really beautiful, thing, and becomes qualified to see and judge rightly the genuine correspondence between the outward beauty in the object and the inward standard of beauty which he bears within him. Now the same process is involved in

distinguishing genuine from false signs of the holy, and it is in such a way that a man will come to recognize scripture as a genuine sign of the holy.(27)

However, the problem with this account is that it offers no answer to the question, whether holiness actually resides in the sign of scripture as an identifiable quality or substance which actively overwhelms us like electricity, or is only mediated by scripture, in which case it is we who interpret it as holy because it is instrumental in our finding holiness within ourselves. Alternatively, if we interpret Otto to be intending to posit numinous objects in the world in addition to empirical objects, as some early passages in The Idea of the Holy suggest,(28) then the proposed analogy between experiences of holiness and beauty simply disappears.

However, Otto's epistemology, already confused by the issues just presented, is further bedeviled by the second sense in which his a priori may be said to be exaggerated due to the influence of Fries. Fries had argued that absolute certainty is always given in a priori judgements and never in a posteriori experience, so inverting Kant's critical idealism. Now this Friesian transcendental idealism, and the felt certainty it brings to a priori experience, is implicit in many passages in The Idea of the Holy, and especially in the remark that 'this feeling of reality, the feeling of a numinous object objectively given, must be posited as a primary immediate datum of consciousness.'(29) This statement together with others suggests that Otto retained his confidence in the Friesian assertion that a priori experience offers absolutely certain knowledge free from all doubt, a confidence which was previously enthusiastically announced in his work explicitly devoted to Fries, The Philosophy of Religion. Although in The Idea of the Holy Otto does not explicitly spell out this dimension of the Friesian transcendental idealism, it is clear that the work depends on it, as is demonstrated by the remark in the foreword to the first English edition which warns the reader, after

mentioning Naturalism and Religion and The Philosophy of Religion by name, that 'no one ought to concern himself with the numen ineffabile who has not already devoted assiduous and serious study to the ratio aeterna.' The ratio aeterna is a clear reference to the Friesian a priori in both senses in which it has been discussed.

However, this feeling of certainty accruing to knowledge acquired through the numinous a priori raises profound problems for Otto's epistemology. This is because Friesian idealism, or any other idealism for that matter, cannot guarantee the genuine cognitive status of any feeling, no matter how intense or vivid it may be. Feelings may be very deceptive, and certainly the feeling of immediate, uninterpreted, numinous presence is no proof that there is, in fact, such a presence which is the source of the feeling, nor that the feeling is uninterpreted. Feelings cannot reveal any immediate knowledge of their causes, and this means that numinous feelings are not cognitive when immediately experienced, but only become so by being reflected upon and interpreted within a specific context. The truth of such interpretation must be tested by whatever further means of verification are necessary beyond the experience itself. This means that Otto cannot claim that the feeling of objectivity within numinous experience guarantees the objective reference of that experience, since there are several kinds of experience of objectivity which do not, in fact, refer to things or events in the physical world, and feeling alone renders no basis for discriminating between what is real and what is unreal. For instance, the so called numinous object may be merely an object of thought or imagination, and if believed to be real may become the focus for feelings as rich and varied as any that Otto finds in religious life. In other words, Otto's numinous feelings are vulnerable to Feuerbach's projectionist criticisms, and the Friesian idealism cannot release Otto from the obligation of demonstrating the ontological status of such numinous experiences.(30) Similarly, Otto's vivid description of

religious experience is not an adequate philosophical argument for the existence of God, as Diamond has pointed out,(31) since it is at least conceivable that a man may have a powerful religious experience which he finds no need to interpret in terms of the deity known to the Judaeo-Christian tradition.(32)

Otto has simply placed too much emphasis in his argument on the importance, indeed the primacy, of religious experience in religious life. Thus he erroneously assumes that religious ideas tend to be generated by religious feelings in a quite uncomplicated way. This naivety of Otto concerning the complex relationships obtaining between religious ideas and feelings, and his inability to understand that there can be no uninterpreted religious feelings, indeed no uninterpreted feelings of any kind, accounts for his view that theology should be largely an expression of religious experience. Now apart from the strains this places on many of the articles of faith of Lutheran theology which are incapable of verification through any numinous experience, this theory of the primacy of religious feeling fails to take account of the reciprocal influence of feelings and ideas in any religious tradition and, in particular, involves a misplaced trust in the absolute cognitive value of feeling.(33)

Religious feelings can be misleading or ambiguous or confusing, and can direct attention away from religious truth rather than towards it. In this context, religious ideas are meant to clarify religious feelings or even to correct them. Thus Otto has simply underestimated the importance of religious ideas as a creative influence on personal religious life.

Furthermore, it is not just theologians and philosophers who have complained about the unjustifiable emphasis Otto places on religious feeling. Phenomenologists of religion have also complained that, despite Otto's avowed interest in non-Christian religions, he fails to take account of the complex institutional forces and patterns within religious

traditions. Thus, for instance, Sharpe takes Otto to be (among other things) putting forward an historical argument for the origin of religion on the basis of numinous experience, in other words, a hypothetical historical description of how man discovered religion in some prehistoric time. This is, of course, what anthropologist Evans-Pritchard has called an 'if I were a horse story', a story which admits of neither proof nor disproof since the earliest data of religion are inaccessible to the researcher. We do not have any records about how prehistoric men felt,(34) and no Victorian imaginative sympathy can compensate for the lack of such concrete evidence. Furthermore, Evans-Pritchard has drawn attention to a problem inherent in all theories of religion which are based on the primary importance of religious awe in the way that Otto's theory is. He asks:

What is this awe which some of the writers I have cited say is characteristic of the sacred? Some say it is the specific religious emotion; others that, there is no specific religious emotion. Either way, how does one know whether a person experiences awe or thrill or whatever it may be? How does one recognize it and how does one measure it?(35)

The question of sociological measurement, in particular, can find no place in a theory of religious experience such as Otto's.

It can also be argued that Otto's The Idea of the Holy is more an abstract philosophy of religion than a concrete historical account of actual material religious development in any religious tradition, in other words, scientific study of religion. Otto manages to describe numinous experience only at the cost of separating it from any particular concrete religious tradition, and he emphasizes the importance of religious experience at the expense of what some would see as the more important communal and institutional dimensions of religion. Some phenomenologists of religion argue that the history of religions is not primarily concerned with religious individuals and their experiences, but with religious traditions and with the communities which live, and are guided, by them,

the religious experience of the individual being fundamentally conditioned by the religion of the community to which he belongs. There is no primordial non-temporal religious feeling, but only concrete religious emotions which are the product of, rather than precede, material religious institutions.(36) Religious rituals, social organizations and mythologies are less a result of religious experience than its principal formative agents. Finally, Otto has been accused, as William James was before him, in his concern for the 'wholly other', of presenting the rare exceptions in religious experience as typical, so greatly impeding our understanding of most historical religion as we actually find it,(37) and, in particular, of having given undue emphasis to ecstatic and mystical types of experience at the expense of more common everyday emotions that we find in religious life.(38)

Clearly, as a phenomenological handbook, The Idea of the Holy has not provided later scholars with the proper anthropological foundations for a balanced 'science of religions'. Clearly, also, as a theological handbook, it rests upon epistemological foundations which are extremely unstable. The Idea of the Holy is so confused, that it is not surprising that critics should assert that once we have thanked Otto for reminding us of the unique qualities of religious feelings, and for ensuring that we do not lose sight of them by giving them a special name, the numinous, we can bury his work because there is nothing more to learn from it. Otto reminded theologians and taught phenomenologists of religion that religious experience is irreducible to other forms of experience, moral, aesthetic and rational. It is sui generis, and he hammered this point home, on the one hand, by providing a penetrating psychological account of the numinous in terms of the distinct qualities of the mysterium, the tremendum and the fascinans, and on the other, by insisting that numinous experience is a value experience, a recognition of objective numinous

worth independent of all moral or aesthetic value;(39) but once we recognise all this, say the critics, we can safely assume that we have isolated all that is of lasting significance in Otto's work.

(iii) Otto's Neglected Claim that Religious Discourse Evokes Numinous Experience.

However, it is apparent that several important themes in The Idea of the Holy have not received adequate attention from Otto's critics, and it is the purpose of this essay to attempt to rectify this omission. In particular, Otto's interpreters have generally failed to recognize that one of the most important dimensions of the argument of The Idea of the Holy is its avowed intention to evoke numinous experience in its readers.(40) The work has a practical orientation, since it attempts to help the reader to experience the numinous for himself, and this accounts for some of the difficulties in the language and the style of the book. Indeed, we can begin to understand, not only some of the causes of ambiguity in the work, but also its astounding popularity. One might almost argue that the less one knows about contemporary systematic theology, philosophy of religion and phenomenology of religion, the more one will find in The Idea of the Holy which is exciting and provocative. This is far from being substantial recommendation that the work has any intellectual or spiritual depth, but it does explain why almost all of Otto's intellectually sophisticated interpreters, in their attempts to avoid superficial, ill-informed criticism of his work, have allowed the epistemological difficulties of the numinous a priori to obscure all recognition of the evocative nature of his language in the book. In their desire to locate Otto precisely within his intellectual and spiritual tradition, in their desire to clarify the influences of Kant, Fries, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Marett, James, Troeltsch and others, his

interpreters have unfortunately overlooked this important practical aspect of the work, and in so doing have failed to recognize that Otto sought in The Idea of the Holy to transcend the many competing and conflicting intellectual traditions which he had inherited.

For instance, Davidson presents a valuable account of Otto as a great theological synthesist bringing together many conflicting strands of 19th Century German theology, but his scholarship fails to take account of Otto's desire, in writing The Idea of the Holy, to transcend the work of all his predecessors, to step out of all time bound intellectual traditions, in order to emphasize the significance of raw religious experience. Of course, Otto seeks to use his predecessors as all systematic theologians attempt to do, in order to improve upon them; but with him this attempt has a special significance, since he believes that it is he who has rediscovered the sensus numinous and with it holiness. Kant had confused religion with morality, Fries had confused numinous feeling with aesthetic feeling, Ritschl had erroneously excluded mysticism from religious experience, and not even Schleiermacher had rediscovered the sensus numinis despite Otto's essay with this title in the collection Religious Essays, (A Supplement to The Idea of the Holy), because he had restricted religious feeling to a sense of absolute dependence, so reducing the unique reality of religious feeling to one of degree (absolute), rather than of kind. It was not Schleiermacher who rediscovered authentic religious feeling but he, Otto, himself, and in this way he saw himself as transcending all the strands of theological tradition before him. This, I suggest, is what accounts for the urgency in The Idea of the Holy and its consequent popularity among those who have little interest in the history of systematic theology; and this, I suggest, is what also lies behind Otto's most audacious and naive desire in a professional theologian and academic to evoke numinous experience in his readers.

To repeat, one of the principal functions of The Idea of the Holy is to stimulate religious experience, a task that Otto intended for none of his other works, and this is surely supported, rather than contradicted, by that extraordinary remark at the beginning of page 8, where the reader is invited to direct his mind to a moment of deeply felt, religious experience and told that, if he cannot do this, he must read no further, since he can learn nothing about religious life from the book without prior inner experience.

This is clearly a challenging remark which can have no place in any other of his works, even in Mysticism, East and West, and yet I know of no critic who has directed any serious attention to the evocative dimension of The Idea of the Holy other than Harold Turner.⁽⁴¹⁾ And even he makes little of it, after pointing out that Otto's technique of arousing numinous experience resembles Plato's theory of education, where either the teacher is the midwife who merely brings to birth what already exists in the pupil, or he gets the pupil into the right position from where he can point out the light, for instance, of a star, so that subsequently the pupil can see it for himself.⁽⁴²⁾ Otto's theory of religious experience is certainly similar to Plato's doctrine of recollection as Turner points out; but after remarking (on commenting on Otto's 'direct means of expression of the numinous') that religion is 'caught rather than taught, awakened in the individual's experience rather than communicated through instruction', Turner loses the thread of Otto's argument, by taking his distinction between what can be taught through instruction in concepts and what 'can only be induced, incited and aroused'⁽⁴³⁾ as referring to the justification of religious discourse in spite of the ineffable nature of religious experience. Religious discourse expresses what can be taught and is a supplement to religious experience, 'otherwise there would be little point in his (Otto) writing (his book) or (in) our studying this book.' Such writing and study is not the usual way of disseminating

actual experience of the numinous and this is not the primary purpose of such study; on the other hand, there may be secondary effects of this nature.(44)

What is wrong with this passage is that, because Turner will only allow numinous experience as a secondary effect of theological writing and study, secondary, that is, to what can and should be taught through formal instruction, he fails to recognize that Otto intends much of his theology in The Idea of the Holy primarily to evoke numinous experience, and thereby underestimates the importance of theological discourse functioning as a Platonic 'midwife' in this process.(45) This is one of the fundamental aims of this work, which is inadequately acknowledged by Turner and entirely overlooked by other interpreters of Otto's work.

Rational discourse about the numinous or about religion in general is a powerful stimulus to numinous feeling in religiously sensitive readers. This is one of the most important themes in The Idea of the Holy. What is remarkable is that this provocative observation has not found its way into the main stream of methodological discussion taking place within the phenomenology of religion, especially since many scholars within this intellectual tradition, e.g. Van der Leeuw, Wach, Eliade and others, insist that the task of understanding any religious tradition demands a specific religious sensitivity in addition to all the other skills which are needed by any scholarly discipline. This challenging proposition, so neglected by students of Otto and more generally by all phenomenologists of religion, determines the direction of enquiry into Otto's theory of the growth of religious consciousness and the dynamics of personal religious life in chapter II of this essay.

Much has been made of Otto's psychological descriptions of the moments of numinous experience, the mysterium, the tremendum and the fascinans, but what is not generally recognized, which is of significance for chapter II, is that Otto provides considerable psychological material

about various patterns of growth of religious experience in individual life and, thus, also some account of varieties of religious experience. Not only are critics mistaken who assert that Otto showed little interest in William James's varieties of religious experience,⁽⁴⁶⁾ but we can also piece together a quite sophisticated picture of how diverse types of religious experience are aroused and are related to their stimuli within a wider religious context. It is this theory that chapter II will substantiate by re-examining some of Otto's major concepts which have not been hitherto fully understood.

(iv) Schematization

In particular, it will be demonstrated that the concept of schematization has not been adequately interpreted, because it has not been recognized that this concept should be (among other things) connected with the law of association of feelings and that schemata of the numinous should serve (among other functions) to arouse numinous feelings. Furthermore, the concept of schematization cannot be understood until we grasp what Otto means by rational schemata. The term 'rational' here is clearly coloured by Fries's transcendental idealism and his distinction between Wissen and Glaube, and the rational a priori is, I shall argue, an element of our cognitive psychology totally independent of sense experience in just the same sense that the numinous a priori is, as I suggested on pages 14-15 of this essay.

Now what is wrong with all previous discussion concerning Otto's rational schemata is that, while it focuses attention on how the numinous is filled out with rational meaning, how the numinous evolves into the holy and how and why, and even if, there is, as Otto claims, a necessary connection between the numinous and the rational, it overlooks the important psychological function of rational schemata. If rational schemata arise in the mind fully formed completely independently of sense

experience and with a feeling of certainty and authority absent in the context of all other mental activity, and if numinous feelings come into being in a similar way, then one can begin to understand, from a phenomenological point of view, how rational schemata might pass over into numinous feelings. Indeed even Otto's claim that there is a necessary connection between rational schemata and numinous feelings does not now seem quite so outrageous. To repeat, what has been overlooked here is the psychological dimension of Otto's a priori inherited from Fries and, in particular, the rather peculiar psychological operation of the rational schemata. But this neglected psychology may in turn help to explain how rational discourse about religious experience and more generally religious life may evoke powerful religious feelings.

Furthermore, this neglected psychological dimension, of what Moore called Otto's exaggerated apriorism,⁽⁴⁷⁾ should warn us that Otto is not only interested in the content of rational discourse about religion, but also the manner in which it is understood. It is clear to Otto that not everybody who listens to or reads religious discourse is filled with numinous feelings, but only the innately religious as opposed to the 'natural' man, in other words, the man of the 'spirit'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Now Otto poses the question why the listening of the man of the spirit is so potent and that of the natural man so impotent, and it is in answer to this question, I suggest, that the psychological dimension of Otto's rational a priori is addressed. Otto believes that there are several levels of intensity of understanding of religious discourse, and that that level of understanding of religious discourse which evokes numinous experience is a priori in the Freisian psychological sense just discussed. Thus if Otto really did intend, in writing The Idea of the Holy, to play Platonic midwife in bringing to birth religious feelings in his readers, then he clearly also intended to educate them psychologically towards a particular type of understanding of his writing as the proper route to such feelings.

(v) Divination and Direct and Indirect Means of Expression of the Numinous

There are also two other concepts which deserve some discussion in chapter II of this essay, in the light of what has just been said about Otto's theory of religious experience. The first is Otto's concept of divination, a mark of the influence not only of Schleiermacher and Fries but also of Theodore De Wette, the disciple of Fries. Divination (only introduced relatively late in the work in chapter XVIII) is an ambiguous concept, an aesthetic and mystical contemplative feeling (Friesian Ahndung*), paradoxically directed towards the factual in history.(49) Now it might be argued that such a concept of religious experience is incompatible with Otto's earlier presentation of numinous experience,(50) especially in the light of the epistemological ambiguity attaching to his theory of religious signs of the holy which I have already drawn attention to on page 16 of this essay and which actually introduces Otto's discussion of divination.(51) However, I shall argue, notwithstanding the epistemological problems concerning whether holiness is experienced in or behind history and whether it is independent of any experiencing subject, that divination has an important function for Otto in religious life, because it provides the religious background to profound numinous feelings. It is, in fact, a more persistent, if less intense, religious consciousness out of which more dramatic or impressive, but transient, numinous feelings arise. Indeed, Otto's concept of divination may offer a significant contribution to any study of the development of religious experience in personal religious life. Furthermore, we can better understand the important place of divination in Otto's theory of religious experience, when we recognize that this process is also a priori in the

* I have opted for the obsolete form of Ahnung (presentiment, suspicion) which Otto himself uses in Das Heilige.

psychological sense that I have already outlined in the context of rational schemata of the numinous. This means that, like a priori rational discourse about religion, divination may arouse numinous feelings.

The second concept which will receive consideration in chapter II is also related to Otto's ideas about the development of inner religious life as well as to divination, providing an important indication that he intended to grade different types of religious experience. I refer to his proposition concerning 'direct and indirect means of expression of the numinous' (52) and, what is synonymous with this, his ideas about direct and indirect means of transmitting or arousing the numinous. It is clear that 'indirect means' produce religious experiences which, if profoundly impressive, are still less valuable than experiences evoked by 'direct means'. The indirect means of expression and transmission of the numinous are for people who have had little or no previous experience of the spiritual life, whereas the direct means of expression and transmission of the numinous (e.g. holy scripture, rather than more potent religious stimulants such as the analogies in profane experience to the mysterium, tremendum and fascinans moments of the numinous) are for those whom Max Weber described as religiously musical. Otto's indirect means are for the majority of us, who are insufficiently religiously sensitive to be able to experience the numinous through its direct means of expression and therefore need these more potent spiritual stimulants, but it is clear that these indirect means are only a preparation for the more worthy direct means.

In this way Otto presents a general account of the progress of inner religious life; and although he does not discuss how anyone can make the transition from indirect to direct means, I shall argue that it is plausible to connect this theme to his discussion of divination and the a priori rational schemata. In other words, it is reasonable to suppose

that the practice of divination and the application of reason to religious discourse according to the principles of Fries's transcendental idealism sensitize a man to the direct means of evoking the numinous. These religious processes can, thus, be understood as providing the means of passage between indirect and direct means of arousing the numinous.

This is a complex and sophisticated picture of religious life which, although not explicitly spelt out, can be pieced together from so many details in The Idea of the Holy which previous interpreters have either totally ignored or only partly understood. What will become clear from this study is that phenomenologists of religion are far from having fully digested Otto's theory of religious experience. In spite of Otto's insistence on the superiority of Christianity over other religious traditions, based as it is on an unfashionable evolutionary theory in the comparative study of world religions, he was acutely sensitive to the varieties of religious experience across religious traditions and to complex patterns of interaction between numinous experience and intellectual life in a way which has been altogether underestimated by both his friends and his critics among phenomenologists of religion, as well as by philosophers and theologians, who have all allowed the evident epistemological difficulties in his work to obscure the important psychological dimension of his intellectual endeavour.

(vi) Religious Language and the Inexpressible

I have argued that one of the most important themes in Otto's The Idea of the Holy is his demonstration of how religious discourse can evoke numinous experience among those who are religiously sensitive. However, Otto also supports this claim with a theory concerning the relationship between religious language and such numinous experience. Thus numinous experience is described as inexpressible and 'wholly other',⁽⁵³⁾ meaning not only that such experience is beyond our comprehension and beyond our

powers of conceiving,(54) but also that it is totally unlike all other types of experience. We cannot offer any literal description of such experience, but must approach it through analogy. By drawing the reader's attention to experiences which are similar to numinous experience, the reader can discover for himself what numinous feelings are like, providing he does not make the mistake of confusing a relation of analogy or similarity with one of identity. Thus the element of numinous awfulness in the tremendum moment of numinous experience can be elucidated by drawing the reader's attention to other awful situations, providing the reader does not forget that there is a numinous overplus in numinous awe, a quality in the feeling of numinous awe which is not replicated in any other examples of feelings of awe. Similarly, there is a numinous overplus to be found in the other moments of the numinous, the mysterium and the fascinans.(55)

Otto's account of the analogy of religious to non-religious feelings is important for his wider claims for the evocative nature of religious language. Otto asserts that religious experience is like this more familiar experience and unlike that one; it is similar to this experience in one respect but dissimilar to it in others; it is similar to different experiences in different respects, but has something extra as well. Now can you feel for yourself what numinous experience is like? Now can you not realize inwardly for yourself what are the distinctive qualities of numinous feeling?(56) This argument determines the direction of all of Otto's discussion concerning the relationship between religious language and numinous experience, and must surely provide the point of departure for any examination of such discussion.

Chapter III of this essay is devoted to this dimension of Otto's work, which has received to date only superficial attention from his interpreters. In this chapter I want to situate Otto's account of religious feeling, as a religious way of knowing in contrast to conceptual

reasoning,(57) within the wider context of contemporary philosophical discussion concerning the relationship between theological discourse and religious experience. Of course Otto's argument about the ineffability of numinous experience is indebted to Fries's account of aesthetico - religious feeling, Ahndung. Fries argues that although religious feeling, Ahndung, is positive, it can only be referred to conceptually through negation, that is through the negation of all empirical restrictions to this feeling. Such conceptual talk about religious feeling, Glaube, is the product of a priori reason, and although it cannot offer positive knowledge in itself, it indicates religious feeling which can communicate such positive knowledge. In Glaube the ideas of faith are not positive metaphysical statements at all but rather, as Fries says, 'incomprehensible mysteries'.(58)

Here in embryo we have many of the features of Otto's theory of religious experience. The concept of Glaube clearly informs Otto's insistence that there is an enormous gulf between language about religious experience and the experience itself, a claim which has much in common with William James's opposition between 'knowledge about' and 'acquaintance knowledge' and Bergson's contrast between 'intelligence' and 'intuition'. The Friesian idealism also influences Otto's arguments about the symbolic and evocative nature of theological discourse and the danger of making deductions which depend upon a literal interpretation of it. It is obvious that this argument about religious feeling and language owes much to Otto's deep interest in mysticism and, thus, needs to be situated within the context of recent discussion concerning the nature of mystical language.

Clearly Otto's theory of religious experience has much to contribute to such discussion, but the significance of his ideas about mystical language cannot be properly estimated until we acknowledge that behind his concept of religious feeling there is an implicit theory of the nature of

language, all language, and its relation to experience. This is a theory which needs to be unfolded, if we are fully to appreciate Otto's concept of religious experience and its significance for more recent studies of mysticism.

Renford Bambrough has recently argued that Otto, in claiming that religious experience is inexpressible, has put forward a theory that there are limits to reason and language beyond which we cannot go. Bambrough reproves Otto for this claim, on the grounds that he treats such limitations of expression as inevitable, and consequently persuades us to overlook unrealized potentialities for transcending the particular restrictions of language by which we presently feel ourselves constrained. Otto's error (as is indeed Eliot's concerning the 'raid on the inarticulate' in The Quartets where he complains that words cannot capture feelings with any precision) is that he treats what is a temporary limitation in language as if it were a permanent fault of language or of our conceptual apparatus. Otto forgets that beyond the boundaries of our present understanding there is not a blank, but only something further to be understood. The difficulty that Otto, and by implication many others, have with the limitations of language is not one of an absolute limit to our understanding, but only a problem of comprehending what is currently difficult to understand.(59)

It could also be argued that this view of Otto's problem implies that, when a writer, be it Otto, Eliot or anyone else, wrestles with words, he is, in fact, not demonstrating the limits of language at all, but showing just how effective the use of language can be, that is just how expressive language really is. Thus, in arguing in this way, what Bambrough is doing is to reject decisively Otto's agonizing about the inexpressible and, thereby, his fundamental assumption about the relationship between language and experience which is implicit in The Idea of the Holy. It is this assumption which will receive much critical

attention in chapter III, namely, the thesis that all experience, both religious and non-religious, transcends language because language, as such, is incapable of reproducing and communicating the subtleties and intensities of experience.

Now I shall argue that this assumption about language influences much of the discussion in The Idea of the Holy. In particular, it helps us to understand that Otto's primary problem is not that religious feelings are ineffable and other feelings are not, since all feelings are ultimately ineffable; but rather that we do not have a word or words for distinctly religious feelings which pre-exist all language, and because we have no words, or because a word such as 'holy' has been reduced to its purely moral meaning, there is real danger that we shall forget that such a feeling is a recognizably discrete form of human experience. Thus different words remind us of, rather than literally express, different feelings, and this is why Otto felt the need, on recognizing that the word 'holy' had lost its distinctly religious meaning, to invent a new word for the specific religious feeling, the numinous. The word numinous is meant to prevent us from forgetting that there is a unique religious feeling which, although similar to other feelings, is sui generis, irreducible to any other feeling.

This is one of the most important dimensions of Otto's argument about religious language, and I suggest that anyone who claims to have had religious experiences may find the introduction of the new term numinous valuable for several reasons. To begin with, the new term may help to prevent a confusion between religious and other profoundly moving experiences. It may also provide a category of interpretation which allows such potentially disturbing experiences to be integrated with the rest of life. And finally, the new term, in providing a discrete category of interpretation, may create a greater sensitivity to subsequent religious experiences, and thus ensure that both profound and subtle

religious experiences are consciously recognized for what they really are and then later remembered as religious or numinous experiences. This memory may then stimulate further numinous experiences. Indeed, this is one important reason why words for numinous feelings are so useful in religious life.

This is the perspective from which we should approach Otto's argument about religious experience and language; and this approach, to repeat, is supported by Otto's insistence on the positive nature of numinous feeling and the negative nature of language about the numinous,⁽⁶⁰⁾ by his account of the law of association of analogous feelings, and by his ideas on ideograms and the non-literal interpretation of theological discourse.⁽⁶¹⁾

There are, however, two fundamental problems, which Otto's argument about religious experience and language raises, requiring considerable attention, and I want to introduce them very briefly now. The first is that Otto's attempts to find metaphors for numinous experience can hardly be reconciled with his insistence that numinous experience is literally or rigorously 'wholly other', that is totally unlike other forms of experience. As Walter Stace has pointed out, there is a fundamental contradiction between arguing that numinous experience is analogous to other forms of experience and at the same time insisting that numinous experience is 'wholly other'. There can be no analogy between experiences which are 'wholly other' to each other.⁽⁶²⁾ However, I shall demonstrate that Stace is mistaken about a contradiction in Otto's work, since the sum of references to the 'wholly other' in the text of The Idea of the Holy do not suggest that this term was intended by Otto to be interpreted completely literally. In spite of the uncompromising nature of some language about the numinous, especially the mysterium moment of numinous experience, we shall see from Otto's extensive and varied discussion concerning numinous experience in The Idea of the Holy that he did not, in fact, intend to claim for it absolute ineffability.

Accordingly, it will be shown that Stace's criticism of Otto's use of analogy or metaphor is constructed upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the meaning and function of ineffability claims in Otto's argument.(63)

The second problem concerns Otto's concept of language as an inadequate expression of experience. Major objections to this theory of language have been expressed by several recent philosophers and theologians influenced by Wittgenstein apart from Bambrough, who argue that the very attempt to distinguish language and experience is unintelligible, since all experience is by nature linguistic. Experience simply cannot be abstracted from the linguistic context within which it takes place.(64) Put another way, it is impossible to separate pure experience from all interpretation of that experience. There is no such thing as pure uninterpreted experience. All experience is conditioned and shaped by interpretation, and interpretation is itself linguistic. Using William James's familiar contrast between 'acquaintance knowledge' and 'knowledge about' or Bergson's similar opposition between 'intuition' and 'intelligence', there can be no pure experience of the former without some knowledge of the latter. As many philosophers have recently argued, completely uninterpreted experience is impossible and mystical experience is no exception.(65)

Now clearly these issues present a profound challenge to Otto's whole theory of religious experience. However, (to anticipate here some conclusions of chapter III) it will be argued that, although there can be no pure non-linguistic or uninterpreted experience, no 'acquaintance knowledge' without some 'knowledge about', this does not mean that the parameters of experience extend only as far as the parameters of language or interpretation and no further. Accordingly, Otto's claim, that there are dimensions of experience of great subtlety or intensity which transcend language either temporarily or permanently, is not unintelligible, and helps us to comprehend our need for metaphor in order

to extend what we presently know or understand about our experience. Only once the significance of metaphor for Otto's argument about religious language is recognized and his ideas about experience transcending language understood, can we begin to inquire into Otto's claim that religious experience is unlike all other forms of experience, even aesthetic experience of the most sublime kind. In other words, only when we accept that for Otto there is a sense in which all experience is ineffable, can we begin to examine the question of the precise nature of numinous ineffability in The Idea of the Holy and the qualities which distinguish it from other forms of ineffability.

(vii) Otto's Contribution to the Phenomenology of Religion

Chapter IV of this essay attempts, in the light of what I have previously argued about The Idea of the Holy, to clarify Otto's general place in the history of phenomenology of religion, a task which needs to go beyond an unimaginative catalogue of Otto's failures in the use of critical methods in the scientific study of religion. It is not enough to call attention to Otto's methodological weaknesses. We must proceed from there to suggest the more enduring contributions which many of Otto's ideas, when situated within contemporary methodological discussions concerning the study of religion, can make towards enriching and deepening such study. In fact, there are two important dimensions of Otto's work which need clarification, in order to appreciate the significance of his ideas for the contemporary study of religion. The first is what perhaps should be called Otto's phenomenology of religion,⁽⁶⁶⁾ which needs to be separated from an implicit theology to which it is inextricably tied and with which it is often disastrously confused. The second is Otto's account of the relationship between mystical and devotional forms of religious experience. These are the general issues to be discussed in this chapter, but they demand some further explanation here.

Firstly, I turn to consider what could be construed to be a phenomenology of religion in Otto's work. Of course Otto's account of the historical development of holiness and its perfection after a long evolutionary history in Christianity can find no place in contemporary phenomenology of religion. As I have already indicated, the evolution of the numinous out of the daemonic, a pre-religious state of consciousness,⁽⁶⁷⁾ is improbable, and suggests the unfashionable ideas of Marett under whose spell Otto had come at the time of writing The Idea of the Holy. It is also not obvious to the phenomenologist of religion that the gradual filling out of the numinous with the ethical and the rational leads to a perfection of holiness in the history of religions, again in Christianity. Again, this is theology not phenomenology of religion; and yet in spite of this Otto has been one of the most important advocates for a unique religious consciousness this century. He has argued that this unique religious consciousness is at the heart of religious life and should govern the direction of all contemporary research into religion. It is here that we find perhaps Otto's most valuable contribution to later phenomenology of religion, and the reason for his rejection of reductionist approaches to religion by sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists.

In chapter IV I shall examine the work of two important later students of religion who share Otto's antagonism towards reductionism in the study of religion, and on whom he has been particularly influential. The first is of Gerardus van der Leeuw, who has spoken of the need for religious subjectivity in the scholar engaged in the phenomenology of religion, just as Otto insists on the value of religious sensitivity in the student of religion. As I shall demonstrate, van der Leeuw's phenomenological method in the study of religion (with its emphasis on enthusiastic appreciation of other religious traditions) is remarkably similar to Otto's phenomenological analysis of religious experience.⁽⁶⁸⁾

However, I shall also show that van der Leeuw's argument about religious subjectivity in the study of religion suffers from precisely the same methodological difficulty as Otto's. That is, that such religious subjectivity can never be abstracted from any particular religious tradition. Therefore, it is impossible to bring to the study of other religions a religious sensitivity which is not rooted in the scholar's own tradition, in the case of van der Leeuw and Otto, Lutheran Christianity.

The second scholar, who has been profoundly influenced by Otto and whose work I shall examine in chapter IV, is Mircea Eliade.⁽⁶⁹⁾ He speaks of 'the history of religions' rather than the phenomenology of religion; but it is clear that, like Otto and van der Leeuw, he wishes to challenge the reductionist approach to religion of sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists, and to create an academic discipline which will respect the intentionality of religious phenomena. In particular, he focuses his attention on what he conceives to be the distinctive feature of all religious life and experience - the opposition of the sacred to the profane - reflecting the influence of Otto's interest in the 'wholly other'. However, what is particularly interesting about Eliade's 'history of religions' is its claim that religious materials of traditional societies have a distinctive religious meaning which is only intelligible to the religiously sensitive observer. I shall argue that comparison of this claim with Otto's methodological observations on the study of religion can be very fruitful.

However, a comparison of Otto with later phenomenologists influenced by him needs to be supplemented by an examination of thinkers who later reacted against his ideas or ideas which are similar to them. I want to compare Otto's ideas with those of two contemporary phenomenologists of religion, who have attempted to respond to his challenge of religious subjectivity. They have endeavoured to find a middle course, which argues, on the one hand, that an impartial religious subjectivity is a

contradiction, and yet on the other, that Otto is justified in claiming that the study of religion cannot be reduced to either a sociological or a psychological account which refuses to acknowledge the irreducibly religious dimension of religious phenomena. The first is Jacques Waardenburg who argues that phenomenology of religion should properly study the religious intentions of religious practitioners. These are clearly irreducibly religious, and yet they are discovered and verified by the phenomenologist of religion by using all the scientific disciplines which are ordinarily used to establish facts in any other branch of the human sciences. Thus phenomenology of religion succeeds in respecting that which is unique in religion, and yet at the same time is a discipline founded upon empiricist assumptions.(70)

The second model of phenomenology of religion which I want to compare with Otto's ideas comes from Ninian Smart, who argues that a phenomenologist of religion is rather like an actor who can imaginatively and sensitively enter into and reproduce a picture of a situation, while bracketing out the question of the truth or falsehood of reality claims about that situation. In other words, the phenomenologist of religion must sympathetically report about gods, demons and other worlds, while bracketing out questions about the reality of such supernatural beings or places. Smart does not pretend that this exercise is an easy one, but rather argues that there are good and bad phenomenologists of religion just as there are good and bad actors. In other words, phenomenology of religion is a skill which some people have and others do not.(71)

Secondly, I return to Otto's theory of religious experience. As I said earlier, Otto has been criticized for not showing enough interest in the varieties of religious experience.(72) However, this is because, as the literature of phenomenology of religion has grown and as the term numinous has come to be adopted by that literature, this term has tended to be identified with devotional religion as opposed to mystical religion.

This is perhaps principally because of the influence of scholars such as Friedrich Heiler, once a close friend of Otto, who insisted on the fundamental differences between prophetic and mystical religion.(73) In any case, whoever was responsible for the identification of the term numinous with devotional religion, there is no doubt that since Smart's influential statement of the contrast between numinous and mystical experience,(74) hardly any English language writer has doubted the meaning of the term.

Of course we may want to argue that Smart and others achieve their interpretation of Otto's term 'numinous', by assuming that it is meant to be a deliberate departure from his earlier Friesian aesthetico - mystical religious feeling ardently defended in his The Philosophy of Religion; but there is little in the text of The Idea of the Holy to suggest that he wished to draw attention to profound changes in his theory of religious experience, nor that he had relinquished his adherence to the philosophy of Fries. Davidson recognizes this, and although he insists on the distinction of the sense of sin, sanctity and salvation belonging to numinous experience from the moral category of purpose and the aesthetic category of beauty in Ahndung, he is uneasy about Otto's failure to recognize that Ahndung and numinous feeling, as thus defined, are irreconcilable.(75)

Bastow more recently has also given attention to the problem of reconciling the mystical feeling of Ahndung with numinous feeling which he believes is innately 'dualistic', presupposing that the numen is 'separated by an infinite and awful gulf from the earthly being who experiences him.'(76) Bastow, like Davidson, also concludes that there is no way that we can identify Ahndung with numinous experience; and argues simply that Otto failed to recognize just how far he had moved away from Fries's transcendental idealism, and that this is why he implicitly identifies numinous feeling with Ahndung.(77)

However, neither Bastow, nor Davidson, nor Smart, nor most other interpreters seem to have understood what Otto meant by numinous experience in The Idea of the Holy. Nowhere in this work, nor in any of his later works, does Otto explicitly identify numinous experience with only devotional religion as opposed to mystical religion.(78) On the contrary, in The Idea of the Holy Otto insists over and over again that numinous experience includes mystical experience and that devotional and mystical experience are not opposed to each other. Indeed, this is one of the most important dimensions of his theory of religious experience which he labours throughout the book and which accounts for his, perhaps, excessive references to examples of mystical experience.(79)

It is, perhaps, the supreme irony that Otto was, in fact, attempting to do precisely the opposite of what most of his interpreters have taken him to be doing in formulating his ideas on the numinous. When the trend of scholarship in Protestant circles was to contrast prophetic and mystical forms of religion, Otto was attempting to redress this trend by drawing attention to similarities between mystical and devotional experiences, indeed arguing that many familiar features of devotional religion were just as appropriate to mystical religion. It is in this light that we should understand Otto's insistence that 'self-depreciation', 'creature consciousness' and the ascription of ultimate value to the 'wholly other' are applicable to many forms of mystical experience as well as to devotional religion.(80) It is in this light, also, that we must understand Otto's definition of mysticism as the 'strongest stressing and over-stressing of those non-rational elements which are already inherent in all religion',(81) that is the 'wholly other' aspect of the numen(82) before which the response of the mystic is stupor!(83) Finally, it is in this light that we must understand Otto's assertion that the tremendum moment of numinous experience is to be found in some forms of mysticism.

Otto cites as examples of a 'mysticism of horror' chapter XI of the Bhagavad Gita, some forms of Shiva and Durga worship, some forms of Tantra and from the Christian tradition the 'nights' or 'deserts' of personal annihilation and barrenness which, for instance, St. John of the Cross and Suso speak of.(84) Ironically, here Otto is unfamiliar with some of the finest examples of the tremendum in mysticism coming, as they do, from Jewish and Islamic forms of mysticism, but, nevertheless, in this as in other observations about mysticism he insists that we cannot understand religious experience, that is numinous experience, while we continue to assume that devotional religion must be opposed to mystical religion.

As Otto himself says at the end of The Idea of the Holy:

Each of the two, the personal and the mystical, belong to the other, and the language of devotion uses very naturally the phrases and expressions of both comingled. They are not different forms of religion, still less different stages in religion, the one higher and better than the other, but the two essentially united poles of a single fundamental mental attitude, the religious attitude.(85)

Nothing could be clearer than this, and Otto then supports this argument by looking for the mystical dimension of Luther's concept of faith.(86) Otto obviously sought to build a bridge between devotional and mystical forms of religion, and I shall endeavour to evaluate this aspect of his work by situating his discussion within the context of more recent debate about prophetic and mystical religion.

(viii) Numinous Experience and the Philosophy of Religion

Finally, the task of chapter V is to offer a general assessment of Otto's theory of religious experience presented in the previous chapters of this essay in the light of recent literature in the philosophy of religion. In particular, this chapter will consider four issues which are of interest to philosophers of religion, and which are inevitably very significant in any appraisal of Otto's theory of religious experience.

The first issue to be considered concerns the cognitive status of numinous experience. Do numinous experiences have the kind of evidential value that is associated with sensations? Can one argue that the existence of numinous experiences provide evidence for the existence of God, or some other supernatural Being? It is questions such as these that many recent philosophers of religion have addressed themselves to, in the attempt to establish whether numinous experiences are veridical. I shall examine some of the recent discussion concerning the cognitive status of numinous experience principally through the work of the philosophers, C.B. Martin,(87) Richard Swinburne,(88) Galen Pletcher,(89) and William Wainwright;(90) and I shall conclude from their arguments that there is no justification for claiming that the cognitive status of numinous experience is similar to that of ordinary perception. Rather, the evidence concerning numinous experience suggests that it has a unique cognitive status, being anomalous with regard to the distinction between objective and subjective experiences.

However, I shall argue that my conclusions, concerning Otto's failure to demonstrate that numinous experiences are veridical, should not be construed to be damaging to religious life or religious experience, and that Otto is wrong to think that they should. I will propose, in spite of Otto's failure to establish the cognitive certainty of numinous experiences through appeal to his account of the numinous a priori, that an approach to numinous experience be adopted which 'brackets out' questions concerning its cognitive status,(91) and which concentrates on its practical significance for inner religious life. In fact it will be seen that if such a position is adopted, what I want to call a non-cognitive position, the scholar can focus his attention on the value of Otto's challenging psychology of religious experience without having to accept the epistemological claims which he makes about such experience. In this way he can continue to be interested in the cognitive claims of

Otto's exciting religious psychology, including the claim that numinous experience contains powerful feelings that the experience is noetic and invulnerable to doubt, without either accepting or rejecting such claims. In particular, he can continue to be interested in the fascinating issues raised by the psychological features of Otto's 'exaggerated apriorism', introduced earlier in this chapter and to be discussed extensively in chapter II of this essay, by reading his claims about the rational and the numinous a priori non-cognitively. The psychological aspects of Otto's exaggerated apriorism continue to be of significance to a non-cognitive reading of his cognitive claims.

I shall, accordingly, conclude this discussion concerning the cognitive status of numinous experience, by arguing that although Otto can be seen to be offering a valuable theory of religious experience, it is not the theory that he thinks he is offering. This must be rejected, simply because Otto fails to provide the empirical evidence necessary to demonstrate that numinous experience is veridical. Rather, what the scholar will find which is of value in Otto's work is a different theory based upon a non-cognitive account of religious experience; and it is testable only insofar as it can be demonstrated on the one hand, that numinous experience does possess the life transforming properties that have been claimed for it (religious bliss, moral purpose, etc.), and on the other, that it really is a distinctive, irreducible experience which cannot be confused with any other and is easily identifiable as unmistakably religious.

This last observation leads me to the second issue which will be considered in chapter V. This concerns the explanatory power of the concept of numinous experience and its ontological standing. Does numinous experience exist, or is what Otto calls numinous experience merely the result of his misinterpretation of non-religious experiences? Is numinous experience easily recognizable, and if so, how does Otto

demonstrate that it is a distinctive, irreducible experience which cannot be confused with any other non-religious experience (aesthetic, moral, emotional etc.)? These are some of the questions I shall address myself to, in order to assess Otto's handling of evidence for numinous experience.

However, there is one question connected with the issue of Otto's handling of evidence for numinous experience which is particularly important, and to which I shall give considerable attention. That is: does numinous experience lend itself to non-religious interpretation, in spite of the passion with which Otto insists that it is irreducibly religious? I shall examine the argument of several philosophers of religion who have recently maintained that it does; and I shall demonstrate that their conclusions are unjustifiable, because they are based upon either a failure to recognize the unique features of numinous experience or upon a refusal to acknowledge that experiences that have been correctly identified as numinous should be given a religious interpretation.

The latter argument will be elucidated through an examination of the work of Ronald Hepburn,⁽⁹²⁾ who offers a psychoanalytic explanation of numinous experience and proposes that although it is wholly the product of our inner life and therefore subjective, it continues to have profound value for human life comparable to that of aesthetic experience. The former argument, on the other hand, will be elucidated through an examination of the work of Martin Prozesky⁽⁹³⁾ and John Gaskin.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Whereas Martin Prozesky proposes that all numinous experience is actually reducible to another more fundamental experience which can plausibly be given a non-religious, psychological interpretation, John Gaskin argues that while some numinous experiences are unquestionably religious, others (especially those associated with experiences of nature) are not because they do not explicitly refer to any divine being or reality.

Moreover, I shall also examine the argument of another philosopher of religion, H.D. Lewis.(95) He adopts a position which is diametrically opposed to any interpretation of numinous experience like Gaskin's, because he proposes that an experience can only be a numinous experience if it specifically refers to God. A numinous experience which is not a religious experience is not even a possibility for Lewis. However, I shall argue that Lewis, like Gaskin, misinterprets Otto's numinous experience, because he fails to recognize some of the distinctive features of such experience. Indeed, I shall conclude my argument with the observation that while I can agree with Lewis that every numinous experience is a religious experience, I cannot support his claim that for an experience to be a numinous experience, it must specifically refer to God, or to some other easily identifiable divine reality. Such a claim, I shall attempt to demonstrate, fails to acknowledge some of the distinctive features of Otto's concept of numinous experience, which should be more broadly defined than it is in Lewis's work.

The third issue to be discussed in chapter V concerns Otto's claims about the unmediated nature of numinous experience. I have already drawn attention to Otto's quasi-perceptual model of numinous experience. However, together with this claim Otto makes another persistent claim, namely that numinous experience is not mediated by any non-religious experience; (96) and he seeks to support this important dimension of his argument about numinous experience through an appeal to his law of association of analogous feelings.(97) It is clear how much Otto has invested in this claim about the unmediated nature of numinous experience, and I shall attempt to evaluate it by comparing it with some of the recent philosophical literature which insists on the mediated nature of all religious experience.

In fact, I shall compare Otto's claim that only unmediated numinous experiences are an adequate ground for religious belief with the position of three writers who have insisted that unmediated religious experience is not even a possibility. The first is John Baillie(98) who argues, contrary to those writers who adopt a quasi-perceptual model of religious experience, that experience of God is never given to man except in conjunction with the consciousness of the corporeal world and of our fellow men. We cannot be aware of the presence of God apart from all other presences. Accordingly, our experience of the immediacy of God's presence to our souls can only be a 'mediated immediacy'.

The second proponent of the thesis that all religious experience is mediated by non-religious experience, whose work I shall discuss, is John Smith.(99) Smith speaks of religious experience as mediated, but psychologically direct, just as our experience of a garden landscape through a window is mediated, but psychologically direct; and he affirms, like Baillie before him, that every alleged experience of God is also at the same time an experience of something else. Moreover, he explores the epistemological consequences of his observations about mediated religious experience, in particular arguing that we cannot be aware of God as one object among, but separable from, others. Finally, he concludes his argument by observing that direct, but mediated experience of God is completely satisfying for religious life, whereas immediate, self-authenticating, religious experience is actually inimical to it.

The third proponent of the thesis that all religious experience is mediated by non-religious experience, whose work I shall discuss, is John Hick.(100) Hick argues that religious faith consists of experiencing the events of our lives and of human history as mediating the presence and activity of God. There are, in fact, two different ways of experiencing the events of our lives and of human history; that is either as purely natural events or as mediating the presence of God. Religious believers

choose to experience the world as a world in which God is present, and thereby transform their experience of the world; but their position is no worse than that of the non-believer. In fact, we shall demonstrate that in Hick's position we have an understanding of religious experience which is profoundly different to Otto's, since, whereas Hick's religious experience is the result of adopting a religious faith, numinous experience, when it occurs, provides a reason for adopting such a faith.

The fourth issue to be discussed in chapter V concerns Otto's opposition to reductionism in the study of religion which has been so influential on the phenomenology of religion, and involves a return to issues first introduced in chapter IV. My discussion concerning Otto's contribution to the phenomenology of religion will be continued and concluded, in the light of my previous examination of the explanatory power of Otto's concept of numinous experience, by returning to a persistent claim in Otto's work; that is that the study of religion must seek to identify what is unique in religious life and experience, and must therefore avoid importing explanatory theories that are foreign to it. I shall attempt to elucidate the implications of this claim for later thinking about the nature of phenomenology of religion, going beyond my previous observations concerning the work of Van der Leeuw, Eliade, Waardenburg and Smart, by examining, on the one hand, the work of a group of recent philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein who support the phenomenologist's rejection of reductionism in the study of religion, and on the other, the work of a number of recent scholars who have attacked the rejection of reductionism in the phenomenology of religion as unnecessary, confused, unproductive and even a covert agent of evangelism in the cause of religious belief. In this way, I intend to make my own very modest contribution to the ongoing debate about the nature and

purpose of the phenomenology of religion, and at the same time to draw attention to both the strengths and weaknesses in Otto's methodological observations concerning the study of religions.

The theory of the irreducibility of religious belief and experience propounded by philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein, which I shall discuss, is known as the 'autonomist position' with respect to religious discourse; and it is especially associated with D.Z. Phillips⁽¹⁰¹⁾ and Peter Winch,⁽¹⁰²⁾ although many other thinkers have also adopted this position. These writers argue that religious beliefs must be evaluated in strictly religious terms, that is in terms of the belief systems of the particular religious traditions out of which they arise. It is incoherent, they say, to question the validity of religious beliefs in general, since to do so is to seek to invoke standards of judgement external to all religion. Religion, ultimately, is a separate form of life and religious discourse a separate language game. Accordingly, the task of the philosopher is not to evaluate, or criticise, religious language, but simply to elucidate it, that is to eliminate any confusion concerning its meaning. We shall see that this theory of religious belief and experience offers methodological observations which are remarkably similar to those of Otto, and that it can make a constructive contribution to the ongoing discussion concerning the nature and purpose of phenomenology of religion.

By contrast, the argument that the rejection of reductionism in the phenomenology of religion is unnecessary, confused and unproductive, which I shall discuss, has come from a variety of writers who share the conviction that explanatory reduction, contrary to Otto, is valuable, indeed necessary, in order to further the scholar's knowledge and understanding of other religious traditions. I shall pay particular

attention to two such writers, who, through their criticisms of Otto and Eliade, have raised important questions about the nature and purpose of phenomenology of religion.

The first is Robert Segal(103) whose criticisms are directed principally at the work of Eliade, but actually have more relevance to Otto's methodological position than to Eliade's. Segal argues that the effect of Eliade's persistent opposition to reductionism in the study of religion is to endorse the truth claims of the believers being studied, or to identify the religious experience of those believers with his own. Moreover, he observes that the reason for this is that outside the view held by the believer himself, reductionist explanations of religion are all that exist. However, I shall argue that Segal's own methodological observations themselves invite the criticism that they fail to understand the nature of the discipline of phenomenology of religion. Contrary to Segal, the discipline of phenomenology of religion can establish a position which is independent of the endless conflict between religious believers and reductionist students of religion, because it is based on the critical act of bracketing out truth claims in the study of religion which we find in writers as varied as van der Leeuw, Eliade, Waardenburg and Smart.

The second scholar I shall pay particular attention to is Wayne Proudfoot,(104) who argues that those who oppose explanatory reduction in the study of religion employ a 'protective strategy', to ensure that experiences that are identified by believers as religions are never exposed to naturalistic explanation. Otto's opposition to reductionism in the study of religion appears to be a plea for neutrality, but in fact conceals a substantial religious commitment, and thereby inhibits the furtherance of the scholar's understanding of religious materials. However, I shall argue that Proudfoot's observations concerning explanatory reduction are, in fact, profoundly damaging to the discipline

of phenomenology of religion, and fail to respond adequately to what is most challenging in Otto's opposition to reductionism. What Proudfoot fails to acknowledge is that explanatory reduction is bound to divert the scholar's attention away from the distinctive features of numinous experience, and thus lead him to pay insufficient attention to, or even ignore, the unique, irreducibly religious features of the religious materials he studies. For Otto, the study of religion should be principally concerned with what is irreducibly religious. This is a methodological observation which has been profoundly influential on the phenomenology of religion, and yet it is one which is bound to be obscured by Proudfoot's emphasis on explanatory reduction.

Chapter II

Schematization and Divination

(i) The Evocative Nature of Religious Language: The Forgotten Psychological Dimension of Otto's Theory of Religious Experience.

Ninian Smart in an important essay about Rudolph Otto and the study of religious experience⁽¹⁾ has suggested that the most important contribution which Otto has made to the study of religious experience is the idea that such experience generates distinctive patterns of thought which give religious language its own peculiar and special structure, just as other areas of language, such as those of morals and aesthetics, possess their own characteristic forms of inference. Smart agrees with Otto that this means that religious language cannot be reduced to other forms of discourse, and concludes that an important task for the philosopher is the analysis of this type of language, in order to discern the typical features of religious thinking. Now there are many factors contributing to the peculiar and special structure of religious language which the philosopher of religion should delineate and investigate, and not all of them arise out of raw religious experience. Contrary to Smart, the movement is not all one way from numinous experience to the intuition of religious truth. In fact one of the most important factors contributing to the unique structure of religious language for Otto is rather the very reverse of what Smart has in mind, that is the idea that it is religious discourse which anticipates and arouses religious experience. Although Smart does not mention this dimension of religious language in his discussion of Otto, and although none of Otto's critics have given any serious attention to it, The Idea of the Holy, is so involved with the

problem of the evocative nature of religious language that it is impossible to understand the work without giving some consideration to this question.

This theme, so neglected in the past, is the subject to be discussed in this chapter. Otto's ideas about the relationship between the growth of religious consciousness and the use of religious language will be elucidated by a critical re-examination of some of his key technical terms, schematization, the rational, divination and the direct and the indirect means of expressing the numinous, all of which, when properly understood and related to each other, illuminate the psychological dimension of Otto's theory of religious experience. There is, in fact, as much psychology as epistemology in The Idea of the Holy, but it is unfortunate that up till now interest in Otto's epistemology has prevailed at the expense of his psychology.(2) It is the aim of this chapter to do something to redress the balance, and in so doing to provide some information which will help the philosopher of religion, in the words of Smart, to discern the typical features of religious thinking and the peculiar structure of religious language.

The Idea of the Holy is 'an enquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational', and clearly what led Otto to begin work on the book was his fear that religion had been habitually confused with morality and metaphysics for so long that rationalization of religion was taking on alarming proportions. Indeed, so much was this the case that there was a risk that the rational, at least in the Christian West, was about to eclipse the non-rational dimension of religion completely.(3) Of course Otto recognized that the danger of rationalization of religious feeling was not just a modern problem. He believed its home to be in 'orthodoxy' and in 'doctrine' or 'dogma',(4) but he thought that the rationalization of the numinous had recently assumed a level previously unknown not only in contemporary

systematic theology but also in the infant science of comparative religion.(5) It was this that led Otto to embark on his 'enquiry into the non-rational' in other words, his attempt to draw his readers' attention to the distinctive qualities of numinous experience which set it apart from all other experience, by endeavouring to provide phenomenological description of such experience in terms of the mysterium, the tremendum and the fascinans.

However, as Otto does not tire of reminding his readers, numinous experience cannot be described because it is ineffable(6) or 'wholly other',(7) and yet, although such experience so defies description that we can only speak about the numinous negatively, nevertheless, numinous experience is something wholly positive which we discover in feeling.(8) Thus if Otto intends to delineate the unique qualities of numinous experience for his readers, then the only technique he can adopt to achieve this end is to evoke religious experiences in them, and the sole way to accomplish this is through the medium of religious discourse itself. Accordingly, he claims that there is just one way to help another to an understanding of the numinous, namely to talk about numinous experience until it begins to stir to life in the other's consciousness. Otto says:

We can co-operate in this process by bringing before his notice all that can be found in other regions of the mind, already known and familiar to resemble, or again to afford some special contrast to, the particular experience we wish to elucidate. Then we must add: this x of ours is not precisely this experience, but akin to this one and the opposite if that other. Cannot you now realize for yourself what it is?(9)

Clearly this statement defines quite unambiguously the intentions of the text of The Idea of the Holy. The text is not only an exhortation to use religious discourse to evoke numinous experience; it is actually an extended application of this principle which is meant to demonstrate just how potent such religious discourse can be.(10) This not only explains some of the obscurity of Otto's general language in the text; it also

determines the meaning of his discussion of the law of the association of feelings and schematization immediately after his examination of the nature of the tremendum, mysterium and fascinans moments of the numinous, (11) and suggests the important contribution which a proper understanding of these concepts can make towards an interpretation of the whole work.

(ii) The Law of the Association of Analogous Feelings.

Let us begin by clarifying the psychological function of Otto's ideas about the law of the association of feelings. (12) Otto claims that analogous ideas or feelings excite or stimulate one another. If one idea or feeling sufficiently resembles another, it may arouse it in the mind. The law of reproduction of similar feelings is such that there is an imperceptibly gradual substitution of one feeling by its like, the former dying away as the latter intensifies in corresponding degree. Otto does not specify what conditions are necessary for the association of similar feelings beyond the highly unsatisfactory theory of the arousal of analogous feelings by mistaken substitution. However, it is clear that at this stage of the work he has not pronounced the final word on the law of the association of feelings, and it is reasonable to suppose that his ideas on mistaken substitution are meant merely to combat all theories of cognition which speak about one feeling evolving or being transmuted into another rather than being replaced by another. What Otto is concerned with here is to preserve the sui generis nature of numinous feeling, while at the same time maintaining that such feeling may be stimulated by feelings resembling it. Indeed Otto himself appears to be dissatisfied with the explanatory force of his account of mistaken substitution, since he concludes his discussion concerning the law of the association of feelings with the declaration that

it is our task to inquire into these 'stimuli' or 'excitations', these elements that cause the numinous feeling to appear in consciousness, to intimate by virtue of what analogies they came to

be able to do so, and so to discover the series or chain of these stimuli by whose operation the numinous feeling was awakened in us.(13)

Clearly the theory of mistaken substitution does little to clarify precisely how the mechanism of association of analogous feelings operates, and the above declaration is not a promise already fulfilled but one which is still to be discharged later in the text. I turn now to demonstrate how Otto honours this important promise by drawing together some of the diverse references to analogies to numinous experience scattered throughout The Idea of the Holy.

Of course there are already many references to analogies to numinous experience prior to his introduction of his law of association of analogous feelings, in particular, his tentative and uncertain attempts to describe numinous experience that I have already referred to. These attempts to elucidate numinous experience, by drawing his readers' attention to other more familiar experiences analogous to it, are clearly more than just another theological struggle to speak at the edges of language about what is supposedly unspeakable. Rather this wrestling with language must be understood in the light of the law of association of similar feelings. Otto is not only arguing that talk about numinous experience has the potency to evoke it; he is also claiming that the law of association of similar feelings provides the explanation as to how talk about numinous feeling can arouse the feeling itself in the listener. Since talk about the numinous is always really talk around or at a distance from the numinous, the process is really a twofold one in which such talk first arouses in the mind of the listener feelings which only resemble numinous feelings, and that only when these feelings have been fully formed can the second part of the process take place, that is the movement in the mind of the listener from the feeling aroused by the description to the numinous feeling itself through the law of association of similar feelings. Thus we see that we cannot understand Otto's

agonising over his analysis of the elements of the numinous, the mysterium, tremendum and fascinans except in the light of his law of association of feelings.

For instance, it is clear that, in attempting to illuminate the nature of awfulness in the tremendum moment of the numinous, Otto believes that he can do this most effectively by drawing his readers' attention to many forms of non-religious awe or dread and then asserting that numinous awe is separated from all such forms, not only by being 'uncanny', 'eerie' or 'weird', but also by insisting that shuddering in the face of God is something that secular man simply cannot comprehend.⁽¹⁴⁾ None of this is strictly description since it points to the numinous by declaring what it is not, and Otto is clearly aware of the difficulties involved in using language in this unconventional way,⁽¹⁵⁾ but he insists that only a man who can move from non-religious feelings to numinous experiences can judge the matter adequately.⁽¹⁶⁾ Clearly once we recognize that one of the most important threads in the argument of The Idea of the Holy is the assertion that talk about religious experiences can arouse such experience, then it becomes apparent that we can only completely understand Otto's analysis of the tremendum when we see it rooted in his law of association of analogous feelings. Similarly, Otto's description of religious bliss, arising from the fascinans moment of the numinous, can also be adequately appreciated solely in the light of the same law of association of feelings.

Furthermore, it is in this same light that we can discern the important place that ideograms have in Otto's work.⁽¹⁷⁾ Ideograms are symbols or analogies for numinous feelings, which are not to be mistaken for statements which can offer hard scientific or conceptual knowledge. Like the function of myths in Plato's philosophy, ideograms are, according to Otto, used when hard conceptual thinking is found to be inadequate in our talk about the numinous. Ideograms are figurative designations of something essentially non-rational, and, accordingly, it is disastrous for

religion if they are understood literally.(18) Perhaps the most striking ideograms are those which attempt to express the tremendum and fascinans moments of numinous feeling, the 'wrath' and the 'grace' of God(19) but we can only understand the proper purpose of these ideograms when we remember that we must first bring to mind all past non-religious experiences of wrath and grace, and then contemplatively move through the law of association of feelings from these secular feelings to their numinous analogues.

However, so far we have only looked backwards to interpret concepts already introduced prior to the discussion of the law of association of feelings in The Idea of the Holy. Now we must turn to see where later in the work Otto fulfils his promise to 'discover the series or chain of these stimuli by whose operation the numinous feeling was awakened in us'. There are, in fact, two major ideas in The Idea of the Holy which are inextricably tied to this issue, indeed which cannot be understood except in the light of the law of association of analogous feelings. They are Otto's account of the indirect means of expression of the numinous(20) and his concept of schematization.(21) These ideas are extremely difficult to understand, but it is surprising that commentators have generally failed to recognize the significant psychological colouring that the law of association of feelings has brought to these ideas in Otto's work.(22) I turn first to a consideration of Otto's account of the indirect means of expression of the numinous, which can be dealt with more briefly.

(iii) Indirect Means of Expression of the Numinous Considered in the Light of the Law of Association of Analogous Feelings.

Otto actually first speaks of an abiding connection between expression and transmission of the numinous in the first sentence of his discussion on direct means of expression of the numinous.(23) and this connection is confirmed by the final paragraph of this section which is

wholly given over to a discussion concerning stimuli which arouse the numinous.(24) However, it is in Otto's examination of indirect means of expression of the numinous that the connection, indeed the equation, of the concepts of expression and stimulus is made perfectly clear. Indirect means of 'presenting and evoking' numinous feeling consist of those means by which we express 'similar feelings belonging to the natural sphere'.(25) In the light of the previous discussion concerning association of feelings, this phrase alone would suffice to make the connection between expression and stimulus quite clear, but Otto then proceeds to spell out the connection in some detail, using as examples feelings which echo his previous struggles to describe the mysterium, tremendum and fascinans moments of the numinous by speaking about analogous natural feelings.(26)

Thus, for instance, appropriate expressions of numinous awe in the tremendum are the fearful, horrible and dreadful, even at times the revolting and the loathsome, and Otto assures us that these qualities not only express but also arouse numinous awe.(27) Again, nothing can be found in all the world of natural feelings bearing so immediate an analogy to the religious consciousness of ineffable, unutterable mystery, the 'wholly other' nature of the mysterium moment of the numinous, as the incomprehensible, enigmatic thing wherever we find it. Here, once more, the law of arousing analogous feelings is used to explain how whatever has loomed upon the world of man's ordinary concerns as something terrifying and baffling to the intellect or evoked within him feelings of wonder and astonishment has excited in him numinous feelings. Otto illustrates this discussion of indirect means of expression of the mysterium, by citing the example of the spell which is cast upon the mind by the only half intelligible or wholly unintelligible language of liturgy. Especially

noticeable here are the elements half-revealed, half-concealed in the service which are well able to excite the mysterium moment of the numinous.(28)

It is also significant that Otto concludes his examination of indirect means of expression of the numinous with a further contribution to his account of the law of association of analogous feelings. He explains the mechanism of this law of association of feelings through the concept of 'anamnesis', where a natural feeling serves to remind the subject of that experience of its numinous analogue(29) in much the same way that Plato's doctrine of recollection functions in several of his mature works.(30) Indeed, as I have argued in detail in note 30, this passage suggests that the purpose of all of Otto's discourse about the numinous and analogies with the numinous is maieutic. Just like Plato, Otto is attempting to play the part of midwife in bringing to birth in his readers the forgotten ability to discover or rediscover the divine mysteries for themselves. Like Plato, Otto believes his primary task to be to get his readers into the position from where they can recognize and experience directly the numinous without any outside assistance.

However, notwithstanding all this, there are several ambiguities in the concept of indirect means of expression of the numinous. I defer discussion on most of these until later, but one of them should be mentioned immediately since it bears directly on our present examination of the law of association of analogous feelings. It concerns the unresolved question as to whether the connection between the numinous and its analogous means of expression is a temporary one or a more permanent one. As Turner has pointed out,(31) Otto hovers between two views of the relation between the numinous and the various means by which it is expressed. In the first, there is a psychological movement from the means of expression of the numinous to the numinous itself by a replacement process which is contingent rather than necessary. In the second, the

numinous, once recognized, continues to be experienced through its expression. Here there is the suggestion of a necessary connection between the means of expression and the numinous itself, such that whenever we experience the means of expression of the numinous we always experience the numinous as well. Unfortunately, this is one of the most profound ambiguities running right through the argument of The Idea of the Holy, and ultimately our understanding of the relation between the means of expression of the numinous and the numinous itself must await our clarification of the meaning of the concept of schematization and its relation to the law of association of feelings,⁽³²⁾ to a consideration of which I now turn.

(iv) The Meaning of the Concept of Schematization.

Schematization is a profoundly rich, if ambiguous, concept which has several theoretical functions in The Idea of the Holy, and before we can clarify the precise meaning of the relation between schematization and the theory of association of analogous feelings with which it is intimately connected, we must first review the other theoretical functions of the term, and offer an assessment of whether it can be legitimately understood in a strictly Kantian way, while at the same time retaining the variety of meanings which it is supposed to possess in Otto's work.

Although Otto formally introduces the concept of schematization in the context of his discussion of association of feelings, he already refers to it briefly as early as in the introductory inquiry into the crucial differences between the numinous and the holy.⁽³³⁾ There he says:

But this 'holy' then represents the gradual shaping and filling in with ethical meaning, or what we shall call the schematization of what was a unique original feeling - response, which can be in itself ethically neutral and claims consideration in its own right.

What is already being asserted here is that schematization explains the adding of the ethical to the numinous to create the complex idea of the holy. This general notion is confirmed and expanded in the formal introduction of the concept of schematization.(34) There the relation of the rational (which now includes the ethical) to the non-rational in the idea of the holy is described as a necessary connection according to the principles of true inward affinity and cohesion, 'so distinguishing it from accidental conjunctions or chance connections according to laws of purely external analogy', and is likened to the connection that Kant conceives to be a necessity of our reason in the process of schematization between the schema and the a priori rational category so that the category can be applied to sense experience, making such experience intelligible. Just as there is an 'essential correspondence' rather than 'a chance resemblance' between the category of causality and the temporal schema, so the relation of the rational to the non-rational in the complex category of the holy is also one of essential correspondence.

Furthermore, the genuine nature of the connection of the rational and non-rational, or schematism, is confirmed as the consciousness of religious truth proceeds onwards and upwards, and is only recognized with greater definiteness and certainty as religious consciousness evolves. In other words, the relation of the rational to the numinous is not a static one but one that evolves historically, and this evolutionary perspective on schematization is emphasized at several other later points in the text, perhaps most importantly immediately before and in preparation for the introduction of the concept of divination, where Otto says:(35)

For this the history of religion is itself an almost unanimous witness. Incomplete and defective as the process of moralizing the numinous may often have been throughout the wide regions of primitive religious life, everywhere there are traces of it to be found. And wherever religion escaping from its first crudity of manifestation, has risen to a higher type, this process of synthesis has in all cases set in and continued more and more positively.(36)

Also, here we are left in no doubt as to the general direction of this progressive schematization.

The degree in which both rational and non-rational elements are jointly present, united in healthy and lovely harmony, affords a criterion to measure the relative rank of religions - and one, too, that is specifically religious. Applying this criterion, we find that Christianity, in this as in other respects, stands out in complete superiority over all its sister religions.(37)

However, let us return to the early discussion concerning the concept of schematization.

Otto argues not only that the relation of the numinous to the rational is one of schematization; he also suggests that the relation of the holy to the sublime is a similar one. The inward and lasting character of the connection between the holy and the sublime in all the higher religions proves that the sublime too is an authentic schema of the numinous.(38) Otto also offers some further reflections on the nature of the connection of the numinous and the rational in the holy. The connection between the rational and the non-rational in religious consciousness is described as one of 'intimate interpenetration...like the interweaving of warp and woof in a fabric'.(39) Otto then proceeds to outline several examples of schematization outside of religious life, in order to further elucidate the nature of the process of schematization of the numinous by comparison. The best example of schematization outside of the religious context which Otto provides is that of music, which presents experiences of a non-rational nature which are schematized by our ordinary non-musical emotions. When these emotions blend with the non-rational musical feelings, the complex expression of the song is created, that is music rationalized in a new category where the musical and non-musical aspects of the song are combined, again as in the warp and woof of a fabric.(40) This concludes Otto's formal discussion concerning the concept of schematization, and apart from a few isolated references to it in chapter IX on means of expression of the numinous Otto temporarily

leaves this topic on one side and does not return to it again until he picks up the theme of the two processes of development in the holy, that is the separate development of the numinous and the rational in this complex category⁽⁴¹⁾ and his two chapters on the holy as an a priori category.⁽⁴²⁾

In his chapter on two processes of development of the holy Otto does not explicitly mention the concept of schematization, but it is perfectly clear that this chapter XIII is concerned almost exclusively with just this idea. Otto declares that

This permeation of the rational with the non-rational is to lead, then, to the deepening of our rational conception of God...we must always understand by it, (the holy), the numinous completely permeated and saturated with elements signifying rationality, purpose, personality, morality.⁽⁴³⁾

Again, Otto claims that

Almost everywhere we find the numinous attracting and appropriating meanings derived from social and individual ideals of obligation, justice, and goodness. These become the 'will' of the numen and the numen their guardian, ordainer and author. More and more these ideas come to enter into the very essence of the numen and charge the term with ethical content.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Finally, Otto concludes the chapter by arguing that

the moralization of the idea of God...is in no wise a suppression of the numinous or its supersession by something else...but rather the completion and charging of it with a new content.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The next chapter adds nothing that is new to the account of schematization. It simply declares that the holy is a complex category combining elements which are rational with those that are non-rational, and we have to wait until the second chapter on the holy as an a priori category, chapter XVII, for a final explanation of the mechanism of schematization. The chapter begins by asserting that the connection between the rational and the non-rational elements in the holy is a priori, for only this can explain their inward and necessary union. Otto, then, in support of this, argues his evolutionary case that

The histories of religion recount indeed, as though it were something axiomatic, the gradual interpenetration of the two, the process by which 'the divine' is charged and filled out with ethical meaning.

What is it that Otto is seeking to explain here by the a priori category of the holy, and by implication by the concept of schematization? It can only be that '...this process (the divine charged and filled out with ethical meaning) is, in fact, felt as something axiomatic, something whose inner necessity we feel to be self-evident'. Here we see clearly that Otto's orientation is as much psychological as epistemological.(46) His problem is the explanation of this powerful feeling of necessity, to repeat, the necessity of the connection of the rational and the non-rational in the divine; and he admits that he is forced to assume an obscure a priori knowledge of the necessity of this synthesis combining rational and non-rational,(47) simply because he can find no alternative philosophical explanation for his psychological observation. Now as we shall see later, this psychological dimension of the concept of schematization, virtually ignored by critics and admirers of Otto alike, is profoundly important for a complete understanding of Otto's theory of religious experience; but for the moment we must defer discussion concerning this subject, and move on to the climax of Otto's elucidation of the concept of schematization, that is, his explanation of how the individual moments of the numinous, the tremendum, mysterium and fascinans are schematized by appropriate and corresponding constituents of the rational.(48)

Otto declares that through the process of schematization individual aspects of the numinous and the rational come together to create different aspects of the holy. Thus the tremendum, the daunting and repelling moment of the numinous, is schematized by means of the rational ideas of justice and moral will to produce the holy 'wrath of God' and the fascinans, the attracting and alluring moment of the numinous, is schematized by means of the ideas of goodness, mercy and love, and so

schematized becomes what we mean by the holy 'grace of God'.(49) Finally, the mysterium moment of the numinous is schematized by the absoluteness of all rational attributes applied to the deity. Here the absoluteness of rational attributes are beyond our comprehension, if within the realms of our conceiving; they can be thought, but they cannot be thought home. They surpass the limits of our understanding, not through their qualitative character for that is familiar to us, but through their formal character. Thus they are appropriate schemata of the mysterium moment of the numinous which is itself, in form and quality, 'wholly other'. Otto, then, concludes his discussion of schematization with the observation that 'there is an exact correspondence between the non-rational element of the holy and its rational schema, and one that admits of development', (50) and remarkably this is the last reference that Otto makes to the concept of schematization, for in the next chapter he shifts his attention to another idea, the faculty of divination which commands his interest in the remaining chapters of The Idea of the Holy.

We have now drawn together all of the strands of meaning attaching to the term schematization, all, that is, except Otto's account of the law of association of analogous feelings; but before discussing this account we must consider whether there is any real parallel between this concept of schematization and the function that the term has in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. That is to say, we must assess whether a proper comprehension of Kant's schematization of the a priori categories of pure reason can help us to deepen our understanding of the function of schematization in Otto's work, or whether it will only obscure it.

Now it is important to remember that for Kant schematization of the a priori rational categories is the necessary condition for intelligible sense experience. Sense objects of the phenomenal world can only be understood as they are referred or related to transcendental a priori categories, and this necessity of our reason is only possible through the

provision of Schemata which link the a priori categories to objects of the phenomenal world, or more precisely transform the categories so that they can be fruitfully applied to sense objects. However, it is clear that this idea adds nothing to our appreciation of Otto's concept of schematization, since Otto's problem is not to provide a link between the numinous a priori category and its own proper object, the numinous aspect of the deity independent of the experiencing subject, nor to explain how intelligible experience of the numinous is possible. There is no chasm between the numinous a priori category and the object of numinous experience which necessitates a schema to link the former to the latter, since Otto believes that knowledge is not limited to conceptual understanding. One can know the numinous as it is given directly in feeling. Indeed, he declares that

Something may be profoundly and intimately known in feeling for the bliss it brings or the agitation it produces, and yet the understanding may find no concept for it. To know and to understand conceptually are two different things, are often even mutually exclusive and contrasted. The mysterious obscurity of the numen is by no means tantamount to unknowableness.(51)

What we have here is not an isolated remark but a reference to an important argument in The Idea of the Holy which will be given considerable attention in chapter III of this essay, namely, Otto's insistence that there is a religious way of knowing which is opposed to conceptual reasoning. Otto seeks to support this argument through his many references to the inexpressible nature of the numinous(52) and the positive nature of numinous feeling which must be opposed to the negative nature of language about the numinous,(53) and all this surely confirms that Otto's problem cannot be likened to Kant's endeavour to explain how rational experience is possible, corroborating the view that Otto does not conceive of schematization as providing the necessary conditions for numinous experience.

Furthermore, we cannot understand Otto's concept of schematization to be a process in which concrete qualities of numinous experience are made intelligible through their subsumption under rational and moral a priori categories in a way precisely parallel to Kant, in whose system schematization is a process in which the data of sense experience assume meaning and intelligibility through subsumption under categories of rational understanding. Davidson, in particular, argues that, if schematization for Otto were a genuinely Kantian concept, it would have to provide for the intelligible comprehension of numinous feeling through rational and moral a priori categories. However, as he himself recognised, should Otto have understood schematization as a way of grasping the numinous conceptually, he would have violated the basic thesis of his phenomenology of religion, namely, that the essential significance of religious experience is not contained in rational or moral ideas but in an autonomous religious category.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The insistence that numinous experience is sui generis must be the final arbiter here whether we construe the autonomous religious category as one of meaning and value with Davidson or as one of feeling alone.

Besides, as Reeder has ingeniously argued, schematization cannot for Otto refer to the application of a priori rational categories to non a priori numinous experience in a strictly Kantian way, since Otto himself speaks of the rational and moral a priori categories doing the schematizing of the numinous rather than themselves being schematized in order to apply to it as Kant would insist.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Thus we are forced to conclude, as Davidson, Reeder and many others have done before us, that Otto's concept of schematization bears no resemblance to Kant's and that a familiarity with Kant's mechanism of schematization is likely to confuse rather than to help to clarify the meaning of this term in Otto's work. Furthermore, we are led to recognize, on the basis of all previous discussion about the meaning of the concept in this chapter, that the term

schematization for Otto amounts to an assertion of an inward and necessary union of the rational and non-rational in religion, a feeling of the necessity of the synthesis of the rational and numinous or of their essential interdependence in the a priori category of the holy, and it is this same intimate relation of connection and interpenetration of the rational and the numinous in the holy to which, Otto claims, the histories of religion across the world testify.(56)

(v) The Relation between Schematization and the Law of Association of Analogous Feelings.

In the light of all this, we can now at last turn to an examination of the relation between schematization and the law of the association of analogous feelings. Unfortunately, Otto's critics and admirers alike have so concentrated their attention on the way that schematization explains how the numinous is shaped and filled out with rational meaning and why there is a necessary connection between the rational and the numinous in the holy, that they have overlooked the other important meaning and function of schematization in Otto's work as a mechanism through which analogies to numinous experience can arouse that religious feeling itself.(57) This is made perfectly clear not only by the point of the argument at which the concept of schematization is formally introduced and defined, but also by several other passing references to the term.

The explanation of the concept of schematization immediately follows the discussion about analogies and the law of association of feelings,(58) and that this theme is meant to be carried over into the concept of schematization is confirmed, on the one hand, by Otto's promise to enquire into the process of stimulation of numinous experience (already quoted on pages 56-57 of this essay (59)) which precedes the introduction of the concept of schematization and, on the other hand, by the fact that this introduction actually begins with a continuation of talk about the

association of religious feelings with other feelings. It is clear from the lack of a break in the argument between the discussion concerning association of feelings and the introduction of schematization that Otto does not intend that the reader, in being introduced to all the meanings of schematization that I have previously outlined, should at the same time leave behind the law of association of analogous feelings. What Otto affirms in the concept of schematization is that the relation between the rational and the non-rational in the idea of the holy is not one of 'chance connections according to laws of purely external analogy' but 'a necessary connection according to principles of true inward affinity and cohesion', (60) and this statement must surely be related to his previous discussion concerning the association of feelings.

What Otto is, in fact, claiming here is that there is a distinction to be made between ordinary associations of analogous feelings, which he has previously discussed in some detail, and schematization where there is a necessary, rather than an accidental, connection between the rational and the numinous. In other words, Otto conceives schematization to refer, among many other things, to a special category of evoking numinous experiences within a much broader federation of diverse psychological processes, the law of association of analogous feelings. The difference, to repeat, between the more common process of evoking numinous experience through analogous feelings and schematization is that in the latter there is a necessary connection between the schema and the numinous, such that whenever the schema is experienced the subject always passes over from that experience to the numinous feeling itself, whereas in the former there is no necessary movement from the feeling analogous to numinous experience to the numinous feeling itself. In this case the arousal of numinous feeling through anamnesis or reminder of the numinous by outward analogical representation(61) is accidental, that is highly unpredictable.

This interpretation of the relation between schematization and the law of association of feelings makes sense of the remarks which immediately follow the definition of schematization. Otto says:

And that the schematism is a genuine one, and not a mere combination of analogies, (a clear reference to association of feelings) may be distinctly seen from the fact that it does not fall to pieces, and cannot be cut out as the development of the consciousness of religious truth proceeds onwards and upwards, but it is only recognized with greater definiteness and certainty.(62)

Furthermore, the passage which immediately follows this one on the intimate relation between the holy and the sublime supports my argument about the relationship of schematization to the law of association of feelings. He says:

And it is for the same reason inherently probable that there is more too in the combination of 'the holy' with 'the sublime' than a mere association of feelings; and perhaps we may say that while as a matter of historical genesis such an association was the means whereby this combination was awakened in the mind and the occasion for it, yet the inward and lasting character of the connection in all the higher religions does prove that 'the sublime' too is an authentic schema of 'the holy'.(63)

Clearly this passage suggests that combination of the holy and the sublime can only be more than an association of feelings if it at least includes such an arousal of religious feelings, and only this interpretation of the passage is faithful to the general direction of Otto's previous argument about the meaning of schematization.

However, if the connection between schematization and the law of association of feelings still appears questionable, then our lingering doubts about the connection will be dispelled by one of several other important references to schematization in the text, one that appears at the end of the examination of direct means of expression of the numinous,(64) and is sufficient by itself to confirm the connection of schematization to the law of association of feelings. Otto is speaking about how the most insignificant or remote or clumsy stimulus may be

sufficient to arouse numinous excitement in a man who has the inborn capacity to receive the numinous, in other words, the man who has the spirit in the heart. For such a man, Otto argues:

where the wind of the spirit blows, there the mere 'rational' terms themselves are indued with power to arouse the feeling of the 'non-rational' and become adequate to tune the mood at once to the right tone. Here schematization starts at once and needs no prompting. He who 'in the spirit' reads the written word lives in the numinous....

This quotation leaves us in no doubt that my previous interpretation of the introductory passages about schematization is faithful to Otto's more general arguments in the text.

Furthermore, this conclusion helps us better to pick up the general sense of other isolated references to schematization. So, for instance, two further references to schematization in Otto's examination of indirect means of expression of the numinous must be connected to his interest in analogies to numinous feeling. When Otto claims that

the connection of 'the sublime' and 'the holy' becomes firmly established as a legitimate schematization and is carried on into the highest forms of religious consciousness - a proof that there exists a hidden kinship between the numinous and the sublime which is something more than a merely accidental analogy....(65)

we must understand this passage as referring implicitly to the law of association of feelings. Again, when Otto declares that 'the "super-naturalism" of miracle is purged from religion as something that is only an imperfect analogue and no genuine "schema" of the numinous',(66) there is another implicit reference to the law of association of feelings, and, in fact, even the most detailed statement of the schematization of the individual moments of the numinous late in the work, in the second chapter on the holy as an a priori category(67) already referred to, can only be fully understood against the background of this law.

Thus when Otto speaks about the tremendum moment of the numinous being schematized by means of the rational ideas of justice, moral will and the exclusion of what is opposed to morality, we must understand by

this statement that these rational ideas evoke tremendum, numinous feelings. Again, when he speaks of the fascinans moment of the numinous as schematized by means of the ideas of goodness, mercy and love, we must construe from this that he believes that such ideas arouse corresponding numinous feelings.(68) Again, when he speaks of the mysterium moment of the numinous being schematized by the absoluteness of all rational attributes applied to the deity, we must understand this absoluteness of rational attributes as evoking numinous feelings. This law of association of analogous feelings, important for an appreciation of so much of the argument of The Idea of the Holy, provides an additional dimension to the concept of schematization, without which this idea cannot be properly understood.

Furthermore, once we bear this in mind, we can use this expanded meaning of schematization to answer the question deferred on page 61 of this essay, that is the problem concerning what is the precise relation between the means of expression of the numinous and the numinous itself. I suggested on page 61 that Otto hovers between two views of the relation between the numinous and its means of expression. In the first the movement from numinous analogue to the numinous itself is contingent, whereas in the second there is a necessary connection between the numinous and its means of expression such that whenever we experience the numinous analogue we always experience the numinous as well. Now since schemata of the numinous are to be distinguished from other numinous analogues by having a necessary or permanent, rather than an accidental, connection with the numinous, this means that if discussion of means of expression of the numinous omits to mention the concept of schematization, this suggests that Otto conceives the connection between such means of expression and the numinous itself to be contingent or accidental. In other words, in such circumstances there is no certainty of movement from the means of expression of the numinous to the numinous itself. Now in the context of

his discussion of means of expression of the numinous Otto mentions schematization twice; once to describe how the rational evokes the numinous in the man of the spirit, (69) and on a second occasion when he describes the connection of the numinous and the sublime as a legitimate schematization. (70) One must assume that all other references to means of expression of the numinous such as the fearful, horrible, loathsome, or the incomprehensible and enigmatic involve numinous analogues, an experience of which it is by no means certain will lead to the discovery of the numinous itself.

However, we have so far only established that the concept of schematization has as one of its functions the arousal of numinous feelings. We have not yet given a proper exposition of how this is, in fact, possible. Of course the law of association of analogous feelings, previously outlined, obviously provides an important dimension of such explanation, but it by no means exhausts it. As previously mentioned on page 66 of this essay, Otto speaks about 'an exact correspondence between the non-rational element (of the holy) and its rational schema and one that admits of development', (71) a clear reference to the law of association of analogous feelings, but this by itself cannot adequately explain how the process of schematization can arouse numinous feelings, since whereas the association of analogous feelings is contingent, the connection between the schema and the numinous is a necessary one. As previously mentioned, this is what distinguishes the mechanism of schematization from other associations of analogous feelings. Now the crucial question here is what can possibly account for this necessary connection between the numinous and its rational schema?

Of course Otto's critics have answered that there can be no explanation of this necessary connection, and that this is the weakest part of his argument. This is because, they argue, Otto has created an artificial problem for himself by insisting on the 'wholly other' nature

of the numinous, implying that it is completely divorced from the rational and moral dimensions of human life when, in fact, we always find moral and rational experience connected with the numinous in concrete religious life. The critics believe that Otto's principal problem is the purely epistemological one of explaining the connection of the numinous to the rational in the light of his account of the 'wholly other' nature of numinous experience.(72)

However, they are mistaken. For Otto the problem here is not merely an epistemological one but also a psychological one.(73) Otto seeks to explain why rational schemata necessarily arouse numinous feelings. In particular, he attempts to elucidate the psychological situation in which such schemata must evoke numinous experiences, and in order to do this, he makes use of the Friesian idealism which he had enthusiastically advocated in The Philosophy of Religion.(74) It is this Friesian idealism which shapes his distinctive ideas on the numinous and rational a priori categories and, indeed, the a priori of the holy, namely, his belief that the a priori categories are not logical constituents in our awareness of any object of empirical experience but rather elements in our cognitive psychology independent of sense experience.(75) It is not only the numinous a priori which we must understand in this light as a 'hidden substantive source from which religious ideas and feelings are formed, which lies in the mind independent of sense experience',(76) but the rational a priori as well. The rational a priori, like the numinous a priori, produces religious ideas completely independently of all empirical experience, and this independence from sense experience is what not only unites rational schemata to numinous experiences but also leads the former to excite the latter. Here is the psychological explanation for the felt necessity of both the connection of the numinous to the rational and the power of rational schemata to arouse the numinous. To repeat, because the point needs to be laboured, rational schemata can only evoke numinous

experiences because, like them, they are formed in the mind prior to, and independently of, all sense experience; and the religious subject can, thus, pass over from one a priori experience to another without any intervention of empirical experience.

(vi) The Rational A Priori Introduced.

Now this psychological account of the rational a priori is crucial to a proper understanding of Otto's ideas about the growth of religious consciousness, and needs to be elucidated by drawing together Otto's diverse references to rational schemata in the text, as well as by going behind these references to the Friesian theory of knowledge on which they depend. The most important definition of the rational a priori appears at the beginning of chapter XIV (The Holy as an A Priori Category, Part 1), (77) where Otto declares that

The rational ideas of absoluteness, completion, necessity, and substantiality, and no less so those of the good as an objective value, objectively binding and valid, are not to be 'evolved' from any sort of sense-perception....Rather, seeking to account for the ideas in question, we are referred away from all sense experience back to an original and underivable capacity of the mind implanted in the 'pure reason' independently of all perception. (78)

Now what Otto is claiming here is not only that the rational a priori produces knowledge which is intuitively self-evident, in the words of Otto, assertions 'that, so soon as....have been clearly expressed and understood, knowledge of their truth comes into the mind with the certitude of first-hand insight', (79) but also that this rational a priori must be distinguished from ordinary discursive reason. However, the only way we can properly understand this distinction is by initially examining the categories of knowledge in the Friesian epistemology, Wissen, Glaube and Ahndung which have crucially influenced Otto's account of the rational a priori and, indeed, the numinous a priori as well.

(vii) The Friesian Epistemology on Which the Rational A Priori Depends.

Fries arrives at his distinction between Wissen (understanding), Glaube (rational faith) and Ahndung (divination) by reversing Kant's critical idealism and arguing not for the subjectivity of our a priori knowledge, as Kant argues, but for its absolute truth. Fries is a radical idealist, distrusting empirical experience on the grounds that such experience places a restriction on the possible knowledge of the a priori categories of the mind. The Kantian schematism of the categories, that is their proper application to sense experience, is not in the eyes of Fries their ultimate function but a denial of that function. In the process of the schematism the a priori categories are artificially limited or, to put it another way, scientific understanding of the world, Natur-Erkenntnis, illegitimately restricts the a priori knowledge of pure reason, Ideal-Erkenntnis. It is Ideal-Erkenntnis which provides knowledge of the real world, not Natur-Erkenntnis as the critical idealism of Kant has suggested, and thus, Fries argues, if we are to see beyond ordinary phenomenal experience to the real rational world, then we must create an ideal schematism of the categories. In this process the a priori categories are 'completed', which amounts to a removal of the limitation imposed by sense experience upon our knowledge of them, which in turn makes possible the experience of an ideal view of reality as a completely intelligible world of rational being. Put another way, the ideal schematism is a protest against, and subsequent denial of, the restriction placed upon pure reason by the original empirical schematism, that is a rejection by the rational a priori of the incompleteness and imperfection of our discursive scientific knowledge.

Now in the context of Fries's distinction between three forms of knowledge, Wissen, Glaube and Ahndung, discursive, scientific knowledge, Natur-Erkenntnis, must be identified with Wissen and opposed to Ideal-Erkenntnis which is, of course, Glaube, rational faith, and Glaube

is conceived to be a higher form of knowledge than Wissen, denying what Wissen has already affirmed. Thus, for instance, although Wissen, on the basis of empirical experience, may be led to deny many religious beliefs, such as the existence of God, the freedom of the human will and the immortality of the soul, Glaube through the ideal schematism is led to deny this denial. We discover the ideal reality only by becoming aware of the limitations of empirical experience. Again, Wissen may suggest, on the basis of empirical experience, that even if there were a deity, the nature of our known universe demands that this deity cannot be omnipotent and omniscient. However, when the time and space attributes are removed by an ideal schematism, Glaube asserts that the restrictions upon power and wisdom, as these are known in the phenomenal world, do not apply to the deity. Similarly, Wissen may suggest that even if there could be a deity, he could not be eternal, but again through the transcendence of the temporal attributes of the empirical schematism Glaube can affirm that in reality God is eternal.

However, despite the importance of Glaube in Fries's epistemology, this rational faith does have one serious limitation when compared with Wissen. That is that, although it offers knowledge of a different kind to Wissen, this knowledge can never be a concrete positive knowledge of reality. Glaube is essentially negative. Thus, although we know in Glaube that the immortality of the soul, freedom of the human will and the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent and eternal God are part of the real world, we do not know what they are as such. In other words, in Glaube we do not have concrete experience of the existence of God, immortality of the soul and freedom of the human will; we only know that such assertions cannot be repudiated by any possible empirical observations. Again, we can clarify the negative nature of the concept of Glaube by recognizing that, although the affirmations of rational faith can be thought, they cannot be thought home, they cannot be thought

through, since they are the product of an ideal schematism. Since the ideas of Glaube transcend empirical schematism of the rational a priori categories, we cannot fully understand what they mean, but must recognize that for Fries they are not metaphysical statements but rather incomprehensible mysteries.

However, if Glaube is only negative knowledge, we are forced to question whether there can be any positive experience of ideal reality at all to which Glaube must refer, in attempting to demonstrate that its incomprehensible mysteries do, in fact, have some concrete significance for human life. It is to serve precisely this need that Fries introduces his concept of Ahndung. Ahndung is aesthetic feeling, immediate and positive, although not resolvable into rational concept. Whereas Glaube offers a negative, conceptual knowledge of ideal reality, Ahndung offers us the only possible, positive knowledge of this same, ideal reality liberated from all empirical schematism, a knowledge wholly experienced in feeling and a feeling that cannot be articulated, although experienced as absolutely valuable and true. Furthermore, the knowledge of Ahndung is not confined to the ideal world, since once formed independently of all empirical schematism it then finds fulfilment in the recognition that the phenomenal world is in reality in harmony with the rational principles of the ideal world. In this divination the phenomenal world is experienced by feeling as a unity in the manifold of sense perception and as ordered by a mysterious higher purpose and worth that completely accords with the ideals of the human spirit. Thus to sum up Fries's distinction between Wissen, Glaube and Ahndung, whereas Ahndung is a necessary conviction of pure feeling, positive and immediate, Wissen is the mediate conceptual knowledge of the natural sciences, positive but the limited knowledge of ordinary perception, and Glaube is the negative but necessary conviction of pure reason which can only come into our consciousness in concepts. (80)

Furthermore, we see the Friesian distinction between Wissen and Glaube, so important for a proper understanding of the rational a priori in The Idea of the Holy, given a theological restatement and justification by one of Fries's most important disciples, Theodore De Wette who was also profoundly influential on Otto's thinking.(81) As Otto himself explains in his extensive treatment of De Wette's theology in The Philosophy of Religion, De Wette

distinguishes between Understanding and Reason: the former is the lower mediate consciousness through which the world is conceived in space and time and in its natural laws; by the latter he understands the spirits' immediate actual knowledge, its total life in all its activities, and as its central point he defined Faith.(82)

Clearly this antithesis of Reason and Understanding corresponds with the Friesian distinction between Wissen and Glaube. Reason in contrast to conceptual Understanding 'is a faculty of an independent and individual fundamental knowledge' which is immediate.(83) This Reason

has its seat in the spirits deepest places...meriting the name 'supernatural' (and) is...nothing more or less than a perception of the highest and absolutely objective Truth itself, and thus...a self-revelation of the eternal Truth in the deepest places of the human spirit, which is completely mysterious for we have no simultaneous knowledge of how it comes to exist there...(84)

De Wette then informs us that this 'knowledge', although obscure, is a genuine 'Inner Revelation' or 'Inner Light' which, although only a predisposition, finds concrete expression in religiously gifted individuals, prophets, founders and mediators. Furthermore, he argues that this Reason is absolutely certain, free from error and doubt. By contrast, all that is false and immoral has its home in the arbitrary, all too human Understanding which is totally cut off from the 'divine voice in the secret places of the soul....'(85)

Now what is interesting here about De Wette's distinction between Reason and Understanding is not only that it confirms the Friesian apriorism but also that it seems to reflect the mediaeval scholastic distinction between two different faculties of reason or intellect, one

which refers to objects in the empirical world, in other words, scientific knowledge and the other which is concerned with the knowledge of eternal things, the soul and God.(86) This might at first appear surprising in the light of Otto's commitment to Lutheranism and his interest in post-Kantian theology at the turn of the century, but that Otto was, in fact, committed to a scholastic doctrine of faculties of ratio and intellectus is suggested not only by explicit mention and praise of this doctrine in the theology of Eckhart in his Mysticism East and West, (87) but also by several references to Luther's pronouncements on religious faith and reason in The Idea of the Holy itself. It is interesting to notice that Otto rebukes Luther for his rage against the 'whore Reason,' (88) and then searches for other statements of Luther which seem to support the scholastic doctrine of two intellectual faculties. So, for instance, he cites Luther as proclaiming that

....the natural reason itself is forced even were there no holy scripture to grant (this assertion), convinced by its own judgement. For all men, as soon as they hear it treated of, find this belief written in their hearts, and acknowledge it as proved, even unwittingly; first, that God is omnipotent..then, that He has knowledge and foreknowledge of all things and can neither err nor be deceived...(89)

Now this passage and Otto's attack against Luther's rage against the 'whore Reason' succeed his discussion concerning a priori knowledge in the context of Plato's Republic, where Socrates asserts that 'God... is simple and true in deed and word, and neither changes himself nor deceives others'.. and Adeimantos replies that this truth now seems certain to him. He does not simply believe Socrates's pronouncement; he sees clearly for himself the truth of his words because of the immediate a priori judgements of his religious conscience.(90) However, that the Luther passage just cited is meant to do more than simply support Otto's Friesian apriorism, that it is meant to corroborate a mediaeval doctrine of faculties is made clear by what Otto says immediately after quoting the passage. He asserts that Luther's concept of faith is

a unique cognitive faculty for the apprehension of divine truth, and as such is contrasted with the 'natural' capacities of the Understanding, as elsewhere the 'Spirit' is contrasted.

He continues:

Faith is here like the 'Synteresis' in the theory of knowledge of the mystics, the 'inward teacher' (magister internus) of Augustine, and the 'inward light' of the Quakers which are all of them of course above reason, but yet an a priori element in ourselves.

after which, in support of this, he cites another Luther passage which speaks of the knowledge of God being impressed upon the mind of every man by God, regardless of how wild or savage any man may be.(91) Clearly here Otto is asserting that the distinction of De Wette between Reason and Understanding or the Friesian distinction between Wissen and Glaube is identical with the mediaeval distinction between ratio and intellectus, and all this finally helps us to acquire a proper perspective on the psychological function of references to the rational a priori and schematization of the numinous in the text of The Idea of the Holy, especially the awakening of numinous feelings. With the intellectual background to Otto's ideas on the rational finally delineated, we can now complete our consideration of references to the rational in The Idea of the Holy.

(viii) Discussion concerning the Rational A Priori Completed.

We must begin by returning to the passage which was cited immediately prior to the elucidation of the Friesian epistemology just presented,(92) which now has additional significance in the light of the Friesian distinction between Wissen and Glaube. When the passage speaks of

The rational ideas of absoluteness, completion, necessity and substantiality, and no less so those of the good as an objective value, objectively binding and valid, (which) are not to be 'evolved' from any sort of sense perception,

it is clearly describing the ideal schematism of Fries's concept of Glaube. When the passage then locates these rational ideas in the 'pure reason' independent of all perception, it is obviously referring to the

Friesian distinction between Wissen and Glaube. We have already demonstrated that schematization in The Idea of the Holy arouses numinous feeling. We can now explain how this process takes place by reference to the ideal schematism in the above passage. When rational ideas are completed, freed from the restraints of phenomenal experience, they serve to evoke numinous feelings by a process of association of analogous feelings. The intellectual exercise of the Friesian ideal schematism has the psychological function of turning the individual away from empirical experience back to his inner world, from which he can make the transition from transcendental rational experiences to numinous experiences. In other words, Otto is arguing that there are two forms of reason, a secular discursive reason and a religious transcendental reason, that the religious reason forms its ideas completely independently of empirical experience, and that it is only when rational thoughts are experienced or understood as completed, as referring away from empirical experience, that they can arouse numinous feelings.

This, for Otto, I suggest, is what largely defines the parameters of the proper use and understanding of theology,⁽⁹³⁾ and it is in this sense that religious discourse can be said to create the conditions for numinous experience, which is the only manner in which Otto's concept of schematization can be said to have anything in common with Kant's concept of schematization at all.⁽⁹⁴⁾

Bearing all this in mind, we can now return to complete our explanation of Otto's final definition of schematization which I introduced earlier,⁽⁹⁵⁾ where he explains how the separate moments of the numinous, the mysterium, tremendum and fascinans, are schematized by different types of rational experience or ideas. It will be remembered that the tremendum moment of the numinous is schematized by the rational ideas of justice, moral will and the exclusion of what is opposed to morality, the fascinans moment is schematized by the ideas of goodness,

mercy and love, and the mysterium is schematized by the absoluteness of all rational attributes applied to the deity. In the light of all that has been said about Friesian idealism, one of the most important functions of this passage, previously completely ignored, now becomes transparent. It is clear that this passage is meant to explain how different moments of numinous feeling are awakened. This is particularly obvious in the context of the mysterium moment of the numinous, schematized by the absoluteness of rational attributes applied to the deity, which Otto tells us can be distinguished from similar attributes applied to the 'created spirit' by being not relative, as those are, but absolute. Human attributes admit of degrees, but all that can be asserted of God conceptually is formally absolute. The content of the attributes is the same; it is the element of form which separates God's attributes from those that are human.

Our understanding can only compass the relative. That which in contrast is absolute, though it may be thought, cannot be thought home, thought out; it is within the reach of our conceiving, but it is beyond the grasp of our comprehension.

Clearly here Otto is referring to the ideal, but negative knowledge of Glaube and suggesting that when we think of human attributes as completed when applied to God, we are directed away from the customary limitations of empirical experience, so that we can pass over from the completed rational feeling to the numinous through the process of association of analogous feelings. In this way, Otto argues, there is a correspondence between what is rationally absolute and the mysterious, such that the former can be the legitimate schema of the latter, which means that it can evoke it as well. The rationally absolute surpasses the limits of our understanding and so corresponds with the mysterium which wholly eludes it or is 'wholly other'.

Furthermore, it is now clear, in the light of our discussion concerning the mysterium, that the rational schemata of the tremendum and fascinans moments of the numinous must be understood as formally absolute or completed and so able to evoke the corresponding moments of the numinous as well. This is not only because the rational schemata are applied to the deity rather than the limited human world, but also because Otto explicitly defines rational attributes of God as formally absolute right at the beginning of the argument of The Idea of the Holy. Not only does he in chapter VI, in his introduction to the fascinans moment of the numinous, assert that

The ideas and concepts which are parallels or schemata on the rational side of this non-rational element of 'fascination', - love, mercy, pity, comfort...all 'natural' elements of the common psychical life, are here thought as absolute and in completeness.(96)

He also declares in the first paragraph of the first chapter of the whole work that

The nature of God is thus thought of by analogy with our human nature of reason and personality; only whereas in ourselves we are aware of this as qualified by restriction and limitation, as applied to God the attributes we use are 'completed', i.e. thought as absolute and unqualified...The nature of deity described in the attributes above mentioned is, then, a rational nature; and a religion which recognizes and maintains such a view of God is in so far a 'rational' religion. Only on such terms is belief possible in contrast to mere feeling.(97)

In the light of this introductory definition of the rational, it is obvious that the rational ideas which schematize the tremendum moment of the numinous, that is the ideas of justice and moral will, must also be understood as absolute or completed, and when so understood are also capable of arousing the tremendum moment of the numinous.

One final point needs to be made about how the rational has the capacity to evoke numinous experience. It concerns a passage that I have already given considerable attention to(98) in the context of my discussion concerning schematization and its connection with the arousal of numinous experience. The passage declares that

..where the wind of the spirit blows, there the mere 'rational' terms themselves are indued with power to arouse the feeling of the 'non-rational', and become adequate to tune the mood at once to the right tone. Here schematization starts at once and needs no prompting. He who 'in the spirit' reads the written word lives in the numinous..

Now in the light of all that has been revealed about Otto's intellectual background, it is obvious that this passage must be understood as referring to a distinction between two types of reason, a religious faculty of reason and a secular faculty of reason, the former having the capacity to evoke numinous experience.

In fact the power of the rational to arouse the non-rational suggests the distinction of De Wette between Reason and Understanding or the mediaeval distinction between intellectus and ratio previously discussed. And it is the phenomenological experience of the power of religious reason which needs to be emphasised here. This potency of religious reason is also suggested by other passages in the text of The Idea of the Holy, such as the citing of the Republic passage already mentioned where Socrates asserts that 'God...is simple, true in deed and word, and neither changes himself nor deceives others'(99) and also in a provocative statement so far not mentioned in which Otto speaks about the numinous infusing the rational from above.(100) Unfortunately, Otto fails to elaborate on this idea, but it appears reasonable to suppose that this statement should be interpreted in the light of the main passage under consideration here, which describes the effects of the spirit on reason.(101) Indeed it might here be more appropriate, in order to convey the power of religious reason, to speak about the numinization of the rational rather than the schematization of the numinous, to borrow a phrase invented by Harold Turner.(102)

(ix) Otto's Concept of Divination

Having explored the many meanings and functions of religious reason and schematization in The Idea of the Holy, we are now in a position to turn to an examination of Otto's concept of divination, an important idea in the work which has to date received little scholarly attention.(103) Unfortunately, a proper understanding of the concept is not facilitated by the ambiguities in the introductory chapter XVIII on 'The Manifestations of the "Holy" and the Faculty of Divination.' For instance, Otto begins this chapter with an almost unintelligible discussion about signs of the holy that I referred to in chapter I of this essay.(104) He identifies divination with the proper recognition of signs of the holy, but, as I have already argued, is unclear about whether the numinous must be understood as residing in history or behind history; and anyway he wrongly argues that there is a similarity between identifying genuinely beautiful objects and accurately perceiving the numinous. Having already so clouded his elucidation of the concept of divination, he then proceeds to create more confusion by beginning by speaking of divination as the faculty of cognizing and recognizing the holy in its appearances(105) and then later reverting to talk about divination of the numinous.(106) Furthermore, he fails to define explicitly the relation of his discussion concerning divination to the subject of the previous chapter; that is his concluding remarks on the relation of the rational to the non-rational in the idea of the holy, his final detailed explanation of the mechanism of schematization of the numinous and his account of the relevance of this concept to the practice of evaluating Christianity among other religions.

However, in spite of these ambiguities we can uncover the proper meaning of divination by being guided by Otto's references, especially in chapter XVIII, to Schleiermacher, Fries, De Wette and Goethe. Once we have understood their ideas about religious contemplation, we shall be able to piece together the remaining constituents of Otto's theory of

religious experience, and we will recognize that there is no radical discontinuity between the discussion concerning the connection of the rational to the non-rational in the holy of chapter XVII and the elucidation of the concept of divination of chapter XVIII. Indeed, we will discover that the recognition of the a priori connection between the rational and the non-rational in the holy is absolutely crucial to the process of divination, even identical with it, and that the introduction of the discussion concerning divination, far from artificially interrupting the previous narrative about the concept of schematization, is merely a continuation of interpretation of that concept so important for the whole argument of The Idea of the Holy. In grappling with the concept of divination, Otto does not discard his ideas about schematization, but rather brings them to a conclusion.

Let us begin by reviewing the theories of religious contemplation of Schleiermacher, Fries and De Wette which are very similar to each other.(107) Schleiermacher maintains(108) that the human spirit, when absorbed in the contemplation of the vast living totality of things in nature and history, is capable of discerning intuitively 'the Eternal and the Infinite in and beyond the finite and the temporal'. These are 'intuitions and feelings' (Anschauungen and Gefühle) of something which is a 'sheer overplus, in addition to empirical reality.' While this 'overplus' of meaning cannot be given theoretical statement in the form it assumes for science, it is capable of a certain groping formulation similar to theoretical propositions, but distinguishable from them by being purely felt and not reasoned. Because of this Schleiermacher insists that these 'intuitions and feelings' can neither be employed as statements of doctrine, nor built into a system of theoretical premises from which theoretical conclusions can be drawn. Nevertheless, these 'intuitions and feelings' are inklings or surmises of a reality fraught with mystery distinguishable from empirical reality. This reality is felt

to have an ultimate mysterious cosmic purposiveness which is beyond all reason and which is incapable of intellectual analysis. In fact so delicate and elusive are these experiences that Schleiermacher refuses to call them knowledge at all, and we get a sense of the difficulty of understanding these 'intuitions and feelings' when we recognize that the mysterious purposiveness of this higher reality, beyond but penetrating empirical experience, is experienced, not in its universal conformity to law, a rational quality interpretable by the intellect in terms of concrete purpose, but rather by means of what appears to us as a baffling exception to law, thereby hinting at a meaning that eludes our understanding.

However, in spite of Schleiermacher's reluctance to call this experience knowledge Otto insists that it is legitimate and indeed helpful to understand what lies behind such groping formulations as knowledge or cognition, albeit knowledge which is the product not of reflection but of feeling.(109) He argues that the distinction between this form of knowledge and ordinary knowledge is illuminated by Kant's distinction between the faculty of pure reason and the faculty of aesthetic judgement, the subject of his third critique.(110) The distinction between ordinary conceptual knowledge and Schleiermacher's 'intuitions and feelings' is, Otto claims, identical to Kant's distinction between the faculty of judgement based on feeling and the faculty of discursive understanding. In contrast to logical understanding, the faculty of aesthetic judgement

is not worked out in accordance with a clear intellectual scheme, but in conformity to obscure dim principles which must be felt and cannot be stated explicitly as premises,

and Kant sometimes conveys the merely felt dimension of aesthetic judgements by the phrase 'not unfolded' or 'unexplicated concepts' (unausgewickelte Begriffe), a phrase which suggests the same elusiveness which characterizes the contemplative experience of Schleiermacher.(111)

When we turn from Schleiermacher to an examination of Fries's theory of religious contemplation (Ahndung), we encounter hardly any change of atmosphere at all. We have already introduced Fries's concept of Ahndung in the context of our presentation of Otto's epistemology earlier in this chapter,(112) and it is obvious from what has already been said about this concept that it also can be understood to arise out of Kant's distinction between a logical faculty of understanding and an aesthetic faculty based upon feeling. Ahndung as feeling is the essence of religion for Fries. It is, it will be recalled, an aesthetico-mystical feeling reflecting our immediate awareness of the rational harmony and unity of the manifold elements of sense perception. In this state of consciousness the phenomenal world is recognized as in some sense ordered by a mysterious higher purpose and value, and an eternal fitness is obscurely felt to condition the temporal and the finite. It is this state of consciousness which expresses the ultimate aim of the faculty of Ahndung, our immediate awareness of the eternal in the majesty and beauty of our natural environment, otherwise called by Fries the faculty of divining the 'objective teleology' of the world, and it is this experience, irresoluble into rational concept, which is the source of religious piety giving rise to devotion and surrender to God.(113)

Once again, as in Schleiermacher, this religious feeling is capable of only groping formulation, only expressible in symbol, to understand which we must already have experienced the feeling denoted by the symbol. So, for instance, in the epistemology of Fries the providence of God forever escapes rational comprehension and can only be apprehended in the obscure feeling of Ahndung.(114) This obscure feeling of Ahndung, this surmise, inkling, intuition or premonition of the providence of God, or of the 'objective teleology' of the world, clearly has much in common with mystical experience and, in particular, with what Otto has called the mysticism of the 'unifying vision' in his Mysticism East and West which he

contrasts with the 'mysticism of introspection'.(115) This aesthetico-mystical feeling, like Schleiermacher's religious contemplation, tells us much about Otto's concept of divination, especially in its emphasis on the feeling of mystery and eternal purpose in the universe, but it does not give us a complete definition of Otto's divination. If it is divination at all, then it is divination of an inferior form, inferior, that is, to the divination of De Wette, the pupil of Fries, whose own concept of Ahndung is identical with the concept of divination presented in The Idea of the Holy. As Otto himself tells us in Mysticism East and West, what De Wette did was to relate the mystical intuition or contemplative feeling, especially as inherited from Fries, to an object to which it had never before been applied by classical mystics of the west, namely, the factual in history. Thereby, Otto believes, De Wette was continuing what Schleiermacher had already begun in his On Religion, Speeches to its Cultured Despisers, but which in his later teaching he had suppressed rather than developed.(116) This unique mystical intuition in relation to the factual in history Otto regards as profoundly important for his own psychology of religion in The Idea of the Holy, since it provides the foundation for his account of the recognition of the holy as previously defined and, in particular, of the recognition of the supremely holy object, holiness incarnate, the culmination of man's divination of holiness, namely, Jesus Christ.(117) Let us now examine this concept of divination more closely.

Davidson has argued that the most important difference between Fries's concept of Ahndung, on the one hand, and De Wette's, on which Otto's concept of divination depends, on the other, is that whereas the former is only an aesthetic feeling, the latter is a specifically religious intuition, since De Wette goes beyond Fries's 'objective teleology' of the universe to discover that the ultimate reference for the faculty of Ahndung must be the divinity of Christ, experienced in feeling

and intuition together with the Christian doctrine of atonement. De Wette recognises through Ahndung that the teleological character of the historical process as well as the ultimate purposiveness of the universe point to and culminate in the specifically Christian recognition of Christ as supreme holiness.(118)

Now although Davidson accurately locates a difference between Fries's and De Wette's accounts of Ahndung, it is, nevertheless, misleading to suggest that Fries's concept of Ahndung, unlike De Wette's, is not really a religious feeling but only an aesthetic experience. Rather we should understand the difference between the two concepts of Ahndung not in terms of a distinction between aesthetics and religion, but instead in terms of one between a universal and a particular religious consciousness. Whereas Fries's aesthetico-mystical feeling is general enough to be adopted by, and incorporated into, many different religious systems with profoundly different, even conflicting, theologies, De Wette's concept of Ahndung by contrast refers to concrete historical events, recognizing that these special irrepeatable events of a particular time and place constitute the supreme revelation which is irreducibly Christian. This is where the real difference lies in the concepts of Ahndung of Fries and De Wette; and this distinction helps us to recognize that one of the purposes of Otto's discussion concerning divination is to explain a transition from an experience of holiness or the numinous in general to an experience of a particular supreme revelation of holiness in Christ. Like De Wette, Otto in The Idea of the Holy wants to demonstrate a transformation of a universal religious feeling into a particular, indeed unique, religious experience.

This is made perfectly clear in Otto's third and last chapter on divination in The Idea of the Holy, chapter XX on divination in Christianity today. In this chapter Otto's language is identical with De Wette's. So, for instance, he says:

Realization of Him through' surmise (Ahndung) of the divine government of the world' depends essentially upon two factors. On the one hand, there is the general view of the marvellous spiritual history of Israel as a connected whole, with its prophetic and religious development and with Christ appearing as its culmination. And on the other, there is the complete life-work and achievement of Christ himself in its entirety.(119)

Again, he says:

whoever sinks in contemplation of that great connected development of the Judaic religion which we speak of as the 'Old Covenant up to Christ' must feel the stirring of an intimation that something Eternal is there, directing and sustaining it and urging it to its consummation. The impression is simply irresistible....whoever goes on to consider all this must inevitably conclude 'That is god like and divine; that is verily Holiness. If there is a God and if He chose to reveal Himself, He could do it no otherwise than thus.'

He goes on to explain:

Such a conclusion is not the result of logical compulsion; it does not follow from clearly conceived premises; it is an immediate, underivable judgement of pure recognition, and it follows a premiss that defies exposition and springs directly from an irreducible feeling of the truth...Such an intuition, once granted issues....independently of exegesis or the authority of the early church, in a series of further intuitions, respecting the Person, the Work, and the Words of Christ, and it is the task of theology to render these explicit.(120)

These extensive quotations obviously express the ultimate goal of divination for Otto and help us not only to dispel some of the ambiguities in the first chapter on divination, chapter XVIII already referred to, but also assist us to connect Otto's concept of divination with his previous discussion concerning schematization of the numinous.

It is clear that divination of the holy, just described as the divination of Christ, means a Christian recognition of the necessary connection of the numinous and the rational in history, and this must surely explain why Otto introduces the concept of divination immediately after concluding his presentation of his account of schematization. His concept of schematization anticipates, if it does not overlap with, the faculty of divination and this is confirmed when we look more closely at some of the passages in Otto's concluding chapter on schematization of the numinous.(121) Otto begins this chapter by asserting that

...the same a priori character belongs...to the connection of the rational and the non-rational elements in religion, their inward and necessary union. The histories of religion recount indeed, as though it were something axiomatic, the gradual interpenetration of the two, the process by which the divine is charged and filled out with ethical meaning. And this process is in fact felt as something axiomatic, something whose inner necessity we feel to be self evident.(122)

This is a passage which we have already referred to in our examination of the levels of meaning in the complete concept of schematization of the numinous, but it clearly also has a place here in our elucidation of Otto's concept of divination. Not only does it emphasize the element of feeling as genuinely cognitive, but it also stresses that the connection of the rational to the numinous in the holy is discovered in the histories of religion. This passage must, in the light of our previous discussion concerning divination be interpreted as an expression of it. Again, later in the chapter similar talk about 'the a priori knowledge of the essential interdependence of the rational and the non-rational elements in the idea of God' remind one of later discussion on divination. He claims that for this connection

the history of religion is itself an almost unanimous witness. Incomplete and defective as the process of moralizing the numina may often have been throughout the wide regions of primitive religious life, everywhere there are traces of it to be found. And wherever religion, escaping from its first crudity of manifestation, has risen to a higher type, this process of synthesis has in all cases set in and continued more and more positively.(123)

Finally, Otto concludes this chapter on the holy as an a priori category with statements which leave us in no doubt as to the connection between schematization and divination. He asserts that

The degree in which both rational and non-rational elements are jointly present, united in healthy and lovely harmony, affords a criterion to measure the relative rank of religions and one, too, that is specifically religious. Applying this criterion, we find that Christianity, in this as in other respects, stands out in complete superiority over all its sister religions...Christianity, in the healthily proportioned union of its elements, assumes an absolutely classical form and dignity, which is only the more vividly attested in consciousness as we proceed honestly and without prejudice to set it in its place in the comparative study of religions. Then we shall recognize that in Christianity an element

of man's spiritual life, which yet has its analogies in other fields, has for the first time come to maturity in a supreme and unparalleled way.(124)

Having such a similar form to passages concerning the divination of Christ already cited,(125) and appearing as it does immediately prior to Otto's talk about signs of the holy, it is difficult to imagine how anyone could question the connection between schematization and divination.

Furthermore, this connection between schematization and divination is strengthened by another dimension of the process of divination which has so far not been noted. I have already pointed out that divination is divination of the connection of the rational and the numinous in the holy; and in the first passage already cited of chapter XVII Otto emphasizes that the connection between the numinous and the rational is 'felt as something axiomatic, something whose inner necessity we feel to be self-evident.'(126) Now this feeling of the necessity of the union of rational and non-rational in the holy is philosophically explained both by the proposition that the rational and non-rational in the holy are each a priori and by the further proposition that there is also an a priori connection between the rational and the non-rational in the holy. As I mentioned much earlier in this chapter,(127) Otto's talk here about this a priori connection between the numinous and the rational has an important psychological dimension which has been largely overlooked by Otto's critics. This 'connection' is experienced as completed in the mind independently of empirical experience, and this, as I have also previously argued, provides one important meaning of the complex concept of schematization.(128) However, this felt necessity of the connection between the numinous and the rational must also be extended to the concept of divination as well, since divination is divination of the holy, and this means that the process of divination must also be a priori in the psychological sense that we have previously discussed extensively.

This observation also helps us to complete our interpretation of another passage in chapter XVII, which I have already referred to earlier in this chapter of this essay, the long passage discussing a priori knowledge in the context of Plato's Republic where Socrates asserts that 'God..is single and true in deed and word, and neither changes himself nor deceives others..' and Adeimantos responds by declaring that this truth appears to him as self-evident, a product of the a priori judgement of his religious conscience.(129) This immediate certainty is an expression of the a priori nature of divination of the holy. In other words, the divination of the holy, just like the belief in the providence of God, is completed in the mind independently of all sense experience and is affirmed even in the face of contrary empirical evidence. Otto's concept of divination suffers from the same 'exaggerated apriorism'(130) as numinous experience, and is invulnerable to empirical falsification in the same way that, as I have already demonstrated, rational a priori schemata of the numinous are.(131)

In the light of this, we are now able to clarify the remaining ambiguities in chapter XVIII concerning divination. It will be recalled that the chapter begins by speaking about divination of the holy and ends by reverting to language about divination of the numinous,(132) illustrating this idea by presenting Goethe's divination of the 'daemonic.' Obviously Otto's presentation and criticism of Goethe's daemonic is meant to illustrate how divination of the numinous is inferior to divination of the holy and, in particular, to divination of the supremely holy object, Christ. After pointing out that Goethe's daemonic has all the qualities of numinous feeling, the mysterium, the fascinans and, in particular, the tremendum, and after demonstrating that, like the numinous, the daemonic surpasses all understanding and reason and cannot be properly put into words,(133) Otto argues that Goethe's divination is inferior to that of the prophet, in spite of the fact that he has a far

more pronounced divinatory nature than Schleiermacher. Otto believes that Goethe's divination is a 'pagan', as opposed to a specifically Christian, experience because he is unable to unite the experience of the daemonic (numinous) to the experience of the rational and the moral. Thus he says that Goethe's daemonic

....does not rise to the elevation of the experience of Job, where the non-rational mystery is at the same time experienced and extolled as suprarational, as of profoundest value, and as holiness in its own right. It is rather the fruit of a mind which, for all its depth, was not equal to such profundities as these, and to which, therefore, the non-rational counterpoint to the melody of life could only sound in confused consonance, not in its authentic harmony, indefinable but palpable.

In other words, he could not unite the numinous to the rational, and Otto concludes that this daemonic

precedes religion proper, (and is) not at the level of the divine and the holy in the truest sense....Goethe did not understand how to adjust (his) divination of the 'daemonic' to his own higher conception of the divine....(134)

(x) Some Concluding Observations about Otto's Theory of Religious Experience

Finally, having clarified the meaning of Otto's concept of divination, we must now attempt to pull together all the strands of Otto's theory of religious experience, and from these extract a general account of the development of religious consciousness, a task that Otto himself failed to carry out in The Idea of the Holy or, for that matter, in any of his later works. What is the relationship between numinous experience and divination? Is divination meant to be a transient state of consciousness or a more durable feeling in religious life? Again, what is the relationship between direct and indirect means of expression of the numinous, and what, if any, is their connection with divination?

Unfortunately, Otto offers us no answers to these questions, but we can suggest some plausible answers of our own, and in so doing, on the basis of all the information that we have so far collected about Otto's concepts

of schematization of the numinous and divination, we can carry further, perhaps even bring to some proper conclusion, our discussion concerning Otto's theory of religious experience.

In the light of what we have established about the concept of divination, it seems reasonable to suppose that this is rather an advanced state of religious consciousness, perhaps a state which relatively few people attain in our modern secularized post-Christian society. It is a persistent, rather than a transient, state of consciousness, providing the spiritual, psychological and intellectual background to profound numinous encounters. One can understand divination as generating continuous, but less intense, religious experiences, out of which the more dramatic or impressive numinous feelings arise.

Furthermore, since divination, as earlier argued, is a priori in the same psychological sense that the rational schemata are, that is completed in the mind prior to all empirical experience, this means that, like rational schemata, it may itself arouse numinous feelings. Clearly such a picture of divination leads us to the conclusion that Otto intended to provide a paradigmatic spiritual biography detailing the development of religious life, in which divination is a station or important stage on the way, a religious hurdle over which everyone must cross. It is also suggested that Otto intended not only to grade different types of religious experience which form the stages of religious life, but also to grade different types of religious people according to the degree of spirituality which they manifest in their lives.

This impression that Otto was interested in stages of spiritual progress is also reinforced by Otto's distinction between direct and indirect means of arousing the numinous. Direct means of evoking or expressing the numinous consist of actual 'holy' situations found in the reverent attitude and gesture, in the tone of voice and general demeanour and in the solemn devotional assembly of prayer, and where the wind of the

spirit blows, there the mere written word can arouse the numinous.(135) Prayer and holy scripture are particularly appropriate as direct means of expressing and arousing the numinous. Furthermore, there are direct means of expressing and evoking the numinous in art as well, although these are negative. They are darkness and silence, and also the void or emptiness, which, like these other negations, eliminate all particular concrete experiences so that the ineffable or the 'wholly other' may become apparent.(136)

By contrast, indirect means of expressing and arousing the numinous consist in the analogies in profane experience to the mysterium, tremendum and fascinans moments of numinous feeling, the 'triggers' for numinous experience with which so much of this chapter has been concerned.(137) Now in the light of this distinction, it is plausible to argue that indirect means of arousing the numinous provide religious experiences which, if intense, are still of less value than experiences evoked by direct means. Indirect means are for people of a lower spiritual station, the spiritual proletariat, who have little or no previous experience, and so need more powerful or obvious religious stimulants to awaken them to the numinous, that is concrete analogies to the several moments of the numinous. The majority of people, religious or irreligious, are insufficiently religiously sensitive to be able to experience the numinous through its direct means of expression. Only the spiritually more educated, those whom Weber called the 'religiously musical', are sufficiently sensitive to be able to discover the numinous behind its direct means of expression, prayer, holy scripture, holy behaviour, emptiness, silence and darkness.

Furthermore, this distinction between direct and indirect means of expressing and evoking the numinous reflects another important distinction in Otto's work, his distinction between numinous feeling and experience of the holy. As I have demonstrated already, numinous experience is not as valuable as experience of the holy, and yet anticipates it. Now numinous

experience is aroused generally by indirect means, whereas the experience of the holy is evoked by the direct means. Just as numinous experience precedes and may evolve into experience of the holy, so Otto's account of the development of religious life suggests that the indirect means of expression of the numinous are only a religious preparation for the direct means of arousing it. To summarize the meaning of the distinction between the direct and indirect means of expressing the numinous, we could argue that Otto begins by drawing his reader's attention to moments of the numinous in the world (indirect means), and then proceeds from there to demonstrate the feeling, the meaning and the value of the holy (direct means). Implicit in this position is the ideal that without some prior experience of the numinous one cannot understand what the holy is like; but Otto also insists not only that the feeling of the numinous must not be confused with the experience of holiness, but also that it does not possess the same value as the holy.

One final question remains. Otto does not explain how a transition from indirect means of arousing the numinous to direct means is made. In other words, he offers no clarification of how progress from a stage of spiritual insensitivity to one of holiness is possible. Now one plausible explanation for such spiritual progress is to be found in Otto's concepts of divination and the rational a priori which schematizes the numinous. What divination and the rational a priori achieve is to provide a bridge or connection between the indirect and direct means of arousing numinous feelings. What this means is that because divination and the rational schema are both a priori, that is completed in the mind independently of, or prior to, all sense experience, they can sensitize a man to direct means of arousing the numinous. Once again, we are led to the central theme of this whole chapter, namely, the thesis that it is Otto's 'exaggerated apriorism' (138) which arouses authentic religious experience. It is this inwardness which provides such an important psychological

factor in Otto's presentation of the growth of religious consciousness, and it is this inwardness which has been so neglected by previous interpreters of The Idea of the Holy.

Chapter III

Religious Language and the Inexpressible

(i) Summary of the Issues To Be Discussed in this Chapter

Numinous experience, Otto asserts, is totally unlike other types of experience, and we cannot offer any literal description of it but must approach it through analogy. Only by drawing the reader's attention to experiences which are similar to numinous feelings, can he be lead, through the operation of Otto's law of association of analogous feelings, to discover for himself what numinous experience is like. Thus, for instance, the element of numinous awefulness in the tremendum moment of numinous experience can be elucidated by drawing the reader's attention to other awful situations, providing the reader does not forget that there is a numinous overplus in numinous awe discovered in feeling, a quality in the experience of numinous awe which is not reproduced in any non-religious examples of feelings of awe. Similarly, there is a numinous overplus to be found in the other moments of the numinous, the mysterium and the fascinans.⁽¹⁾ Otto seeks to support his claim concerning the evocative character of religious language in The Idea of the Holy by referring to many analogies to religious feelings. He cannot point directly to numinous experience but must speak around it hesitantly. He suggests that religious experience is like this more familiar experience and unlike that one; it is similar to this experience in one respect but dissimilar to it in others; it is similar to different experiences in different respects but has something extra as well. Then he asks his readers: now can you feel for yourself what are the distinctive qualities of numinous feeling?⁽²⁾

This thesis concerning numinous experience, which Otto elsewhere describes as inexpressible and 'wholly other',⁽³⁾ has already been shown to be central to Otto's psychology of religion in chapter II. In this chapter the profound significance of this thesis for Otto's philosophy of religion will be unfolded through an examination of his philosophical theory of the relationship between numinous experience and religious language. This is a dimension of Otto's work which has, to date, received only superficial attention from Otto's interpreters, but it requires a far more systematic treatment which attempts to demonstrate its many implicit epistemological assumptions, since there has been much recent philosophy of religion and philosophy of language which can be construed as challenging the very foundations of Otto's philosophical position. It is because much contemporary philosophical debate tends to dismiss Otto's theory of religious language and the inexpressible, or any theory like it, as unintelligible, that we need a thorough reappraisal of this theory in order to clarify whether it provides an adequate theoretical foundation for his psychology of religion and, if it does not, whether it can be revised so that it can support this psychology.

For example, Otto's philosophical position is immediately plagued by two uncompromising epistemological problems. The first is that there appears to be a contradiction between arguing that numinous experience is 'wholly other' or inexpressible and asserting that it is analogous to non-religious experiences. How can there be an analogy, indeed any relation, between an ordinary experience and a religious experience which is said to be 'wholly other'?⁽⁴⁾ The second problem involves the very idea of ineffability of numinous experience which, if understood rigorously as several passages in The Idea of the Holy suggest,⁽⁵⁾ appears to be unintelligible. The problem is primarily a semantic one and can be put in the following way: how can a religious experience be incapable of description or expression if it can be correctly said to be indescribable

or beyond expression? How can it be ineffable if it can be correctly said to be ineffable? The description of ineffability here can only succeed if it defeats itself.(6) However, the problem can also take (and commonly does) an epistemological form, when the term 'wholly other' is applied not only to numinous experience but to the object of that experience as well.(7) Here the paradox concerns how we can be aware that the numinous experience or object is unknowable unless it is knowable.(8) Although the term 'wholly other' suggests absolute ineffability, as Stace has pointed out (following Wittgenstein), if there is a limit to our knowledge, it must be one of which we are completely unaware and do not even suspect.(9) Thus if the numinous experience or object is absolutely ineffable, then we can know nothing about it, not even that it is numinous or divine, indeed not even that anything is actually presented to consciousness at all.

However, these are only the most transparent philosophical problems concerning Otto's theory of the inexpressible. Behind these lie far more complex epistemological issues concerning the general relationship between not only numinous experience and religious language but all experience and language. Otto erroneously believed that much theological discourse was intended simply to reflect, rather than to educate, religious experience.(10) Coupled with this, he emphasized, reflecting the decisive influence of the Romanticism of Schleiermacher, the significance of the feeling dimension of religious experience, insisting that the rational dimension of such experience is parasitic upon its non-rational dimension.(11) Moreover, in the light of the importance of non-rational numinous feeling in Otto's account of religious life, it should not be surprising that he opposes this religious feeling as a religious way of knowing to conceptual reasoning, arguing that this religious feeling is the source of a knowledge inaccessible to our ordinary rational understanding.(12) Now not only is there a need to re-examine critically this religious epistemology (so obviously an expression of the influence

of the Friesian philosophy of religion on Otto's work) in the light of more recent philosophical discussion concerning the nature of religious experience, but we must also question whether the more general theory of the nature of experience, interpretation and language, on which these observations depend, is itself intelligible. Otto's theory of religious experience presupposes a particular intellectual model of what language and experience really are, and if this model is rejected as inadequate or incomprehensible, then either his theory of religious experience will have to be modified or some completely new theory constructed.

There are several assumptions in Otto's general theory of language and experience which many contemporary philosophers and theologians would want to challenge. Perhaps the most important is the assumption that there is such a thing as pure experience which is distinguishable from all interpretations of, or language about, that experience. Otto believes that words are labels or signs for separate experiences and that such words can never fully express those experiences. However, many recent writers have argued that this traditional distinction between experience and interpretation or language simply does not reflect our ongoing concrete experience. Experience, they say, cannot be separated from interpretation or language so that the former can be compared with the latter. On the contrary, it is largely interpretations which make experiences the experiences they are. It is not only that such interpretations determine in advance what can, or cannot, be experienced (that is to say, anticipate the nature of future experiences and thereby subsequently determine their actual character), illustrating the epistemological principle that all experience is influenced by previous already interpreted experience and, thus, that no experience can be understood when divorced from its particular, concrete, already interpreted context.⁽¹³⁾ It is also that it is largely interpretations

which give experiences the shape which they possess, without which it is impossible to identify any particular experience and separate it off from other experiences.(14)

Furthermore, it could be argued that not only is pure uninterpreted experience an artificial abstraction, but also that all experience is inseparable from, and only comes to us through, language. What is being asserted here is that the parameters of experience coextend as far as the parameters of language and no further. It is meaningless, it is argued, to speak about experience transcending language or language shutting us off from possible experiences, as is entailed by Otto's ineffability claims. Language is not a prison but our whole world of experience, indeed the only world we have. The only experience we can have are those we can speak about, even if it be on occasions hesistantly.(15) Clearly, this account of language and experience, if true, must fundamentally weaken Otto's claim that numinous experience transcends language even if we can speak about it analogically. It also suggests another criticism of Otto's theory of ineffability. Otto's talk about the numinous suggests that because there are limits to language, there must be limits to reason as well, limits, that is, beyond which we cannot go. But it could be argued that such limits to reason are artificial, and that beyond what can now be understood there is only more to understand. When we subscribe to a belief in the limits of reason, we only prevent ourselves from recognising that there is always more to be understood.(16) In fact this could be construed as a form of intellectual self-deceit, which we see through when we recognize that, as I have already suggested in this chapter, if there is an absolute limit to our knowledge, it must be one of which we are completely unaware.

These are the major epistemological problems confronting Otto's theory of religious experience, which this chapter will re-examine in an attempt to present the philosophical presuppositions behind the concept of

numinous experience in The Idea of the Holy. However, in its endeavour to elucidate Otto's real intentions in the work, this account will be guided by the sound hermeneutical principles which, Kellenberger has suggested, should govern any attempts to interpret mystics' ineffability claims.(17) Like so many mystics' ineffability claims, Otto's talk about the numinous in many contexts seems either unintelligible or ambiguous, but instead of prematurely dismissing Otto's claims about the numinous as inexpressible or incomprehensible as confused, we may perhaps discover the real intentions of these claims by looking at what else Otto says about the numinous. It is because interpreters in the past, for instance, have singled out ineffability statements in The Idea of the Holy and treated them in relative isolation from more positive claims made about the numinous or numinous experience, that Otto's position has often appeared more incoherent than perhaps it is. There is a real danger here of rejecting Otto's position without ever really understanding it.(18)

This chapter will explore whether it is at all possible to hold together coherently some, or many, of the different ineffability claims of The Idea of the Holy and yet at the same time to maintain that numinous experience is analogous to other forms of experience. In the event of such an undertaking being possible, we shall examine the structure of the concept of numinous experience which emerges from this enquiry, a concept which, of course, we must understand as implicit in the general discussion of The Idea of the Holy rather than explicitly formulated in that work. This, at least, will allow us to approach Otto's theory of numinous experience as if it were coherent, and will demand of us a constructive as well as a critical approach to this dimension of his work.

Furthermore, it is in the same spirit that we should approach Otto's theory of the relationship of language and interpretation to experience. Once again, it is easy to criticise Otto's theory of the inexpressible without fully understanding his philosophy of language. Otto was clearly

unaware of the epistemological difficulties involved in the idea of a pure experience, which is not only completely separated from interpretation but can also generate it in a quite uncomplicated way. Obviously this dimension of his theory of experience and interpretation must be dismissed. But this, I suggest, gives us no licence to argue that, accordingly, the notion that experience and, in particular, numinous experience transcends language is unintelligible. The theory that the limits of experience extend as far as, and no further than, the limits of language is questionable and certainly cannot have universal application. There are some experiences which suggest a need for unusual relations with unconventional, that is non-literal, forms of language, and it is such an observation which appears to be presupposed by Otto's attempts to indicate the nature of numinous experience indirectly.

Accordingly, if we are to understand how Otto uses religious language and what he conceives its limits to be in The Idea of the Holy, we must turn away from the restricted, conventional behaviour of literal language as a guide to his intentions and turn towards the metaphorical use of language. In fact a comparison of his employment of analogical language with the poetic use of metaphor will lead us to recognize that Otto, like many poets, far from underestimating the possibilities and the limits of language and reason, is actually pushing language as far as it will go. Otto, far from being complacent about what we can say about experience and, in particular, numinous experience, is attempting through the exploitation of analogy to extend the boundaries of our understanding of religious experience.

Thus an examination of Otto's use of analogy can help us to identify several functions of religious language which should be of considerable interest to contemporary phenomenologists and philosophers of religion. Otto's argument concerning religious language is not only that we have an inadequate vocabulary for the complex but elusive religious feelings which

contribute to religious experience. Neither is it just that a lack of an adequate religious vocabulary tends to inhibit intense religious experiences and a fully religious life. Nor is it only that analogical language about the numinous is intended to evoke numinous experience through the operation of the law of association of analogous feelings. In addition to all this, the thread of Otto's argument about religious language also suggests that one important function of analogical language in The Idea of the Holy is to help us to grasp and understand aspects of numinous experience which are elusive, transient and shapeless. Analogies for numinous experience enable us to form for ourselves mental pictures or ideas of religious feelings which would otherwise be mute, undefined and inchoate, and this provides one important explanation for Otto's relentless pursuit of such analogies. Now defective as these mental pictures or ideas of elusive religious experiences may be, they are precisely what may help us to remember them with some precision. This may, in turn, lead us to recognize future numinous experiences as religious when they occur and may even generate subsequent religious experiences.

Of course Otto's analogies cannot help anyone to form an image or idea of numinous feelings if he has not already had some experience of them himself,⁽¹⁹⁾ but, to repeat, they can prevent previous numinous experiences being forgotten, a not insignificant achievement considering how elusive and transient religious experiences usually are. Furthermore, Otto's analogies to numinous experience may have profound significance for those who have had numinous experiences but now cannot remember anything about them. Clearly if Otto's analogies to be numinous help his readers to recall numinous experiences they thought they had forgotten, this would offer some further explanation for the astounding popularity of The Idea of the Holy.

All of these aspects of Otto's theory of religious language demand our attention, and it is only when we have discussed these issues that we can attempt to venture an answer to the question, whether in Otto's opinion the ineffability of numinous experience is indistinguishable from the ineffability of other feelings or whether, alternatively, there are qualities in numinous feelings which create unique linguistic problems for religious experience which are not to be found in any other forms of experience regardless of their intensity.

(ii) The Meaning of Otto's Ineffability Claims

Having now summarized the issues to be discussed in this chapter, we can return to consider the meaning of Otto's ineffability claims. As I have already indicated,⁽²⁰⁾ ineffability claims, when understood rigorously, appear to be unintelligible and express themselves in two paradoxical ways: either as semantic problems or as epistemological problems. However, for the purpose of discussing Otto's ineffability claims there is no need to distinguish between them, since Otto's ineffability statements presuppose that they are inseparable (if we construe his many references to the numinous eluding conceptual understanding as expressing a semantic as well as an epistemological problem).⁽²¹⁾

Many of Otto's ineffability statements convey the initial impression of making absolute ineffability claims, and therefore appear to generate irresolvable contradictions. For example, Otto tells us that the numinous 'completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts' and that in this respect it is similar to experience of the beautiful.⁽²²⁾ Again, he says that conceptual characterization of the mysterium is negative, that is beyond conception and understanding; it is extraordinary and unfamiliar, and yet, paradoxically, what is meant by these terms is discovered in feelings to be absolutely positive.⁽²³⁾ Then he asserts that the 'wholly

other' is beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, the familiar, falling outside the limits of the 'canny' and filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment.(24) Then in one of his most uncompromising passages he states:

The truly 'mysterious' object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other', whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb.(25)

Again, we find a most revealing passage which seeks to define what is meant by the non-rational. He declares:

Not the most concentrated attention can elucidate the (numinous) object to which this state of mind refers, bringing it out of the impenetrable obscurity of feeling into the domain of the conceptual understanding. It remains purely a felt experience, only to be indicated symbolically by ideograms.(26)

Again, this time praising Plato, he says:

No one has enunciated more definitively than this master-thinker that God transcends all reason, in the sense that He is beyond the powers of our conceiving, not merely beyond our powers of comprehension.
(27)

Finally, in the spirit of the statement of the German Pietist, Gerhard Tersteegen, 'A God comprehended is no God', (28) Otto celebrates the inconceivable in God in the most radical fashion at the end of the work in the first appendix in his discussion of Chrysostom's interpretation of this theme.(29) One passage in this appendix in particular seems to express the most uncompromising ineffability claim yet, and so unequivocal is it, that it could be construed as confirming that Otto's numinous ineffability is indeed logically unintelligible. The passage, although lengthy, is so important that it requires full quotation. Notice, however, that the passage does not come from Otto's pen, but is an extract from Chrysostom's New Testament commentary which Otto has inserted into the text of the appendix to support and press to its conclusion his own argument.(30)

The passage reads:

He dwells, says St. Paul, in an unapproachable light. Observe here the exactitude of St. Paul's expression...For he says not merely in an incomprehensible, but (what conveys far more) in an altogether 'unapproachable light'. We say 'inconceivable' and 'incomprehensible' of something which, though it eludes conception, does not elude all enquiry and questioning. 'Unapproachable', on the other hand, means something which in principle excludes the very possibility of inquiry, which is quite inaccessible by conceptual investigation. A sea into which divers may plunge, but which they cannot fathom, would represent the merely 'incomprehensible'. It would only represent the 'unapproachable' if it remained in principle beyond search and beyond discovery.(31)

Anyone, I think, in the light of this passage as well as the previous citations, may be forgiven for believing that Otto's ineffability claims are logically incoherent. If these passages were the only references to the numinous in The Idea of the Holy, there would be no room for doubt that Otto's numinous 'inexpressible' is logically unintelligible.

However, these are not the only references to the numinous in the text of The Idea of the Holy. There are many other far more positive references to numinous experience(32) which must be placed beside these negative passages, and the principal question we must then attempt to answer is whether these positive references to the numinous can indeed in any way be reconciled with the radical ineffability passages I have just cited. Or to put it more precisely: is there any way that these uncompromising ineffability claims can be modified so that they can be reconciled with other more positive claims about the numinous? One way to resolve this problem is to argue that, since radical ineffability separates man completely from God and makes not only all religious experience impossible but also all religious behaviour meaningless, we must construe all of Otto's talk about the numinous as 'wholly other' or inexpressible as actually not literal talk at all but analogical statement from which no logical inference can be legitimately drawn. For instance, Davidson claims that Otto's numinous is not wholly 'wholly other' but that the term 'wholly other' is actually a conceptual symbol or ideogram.(33)

Unfortunately, however, this device does not so much constitute a resolution of the logical problem of radical ineffability as avoids meeting this problem altogether, since Davidson offers no reasons why terms such as 'wholly other' and inexpressible should be understood analogically and not literally, other than that without this device Otto's account of the numinous would indeed be logically unintelligible. We can present the problem in another way as well. Davidson appeals to Otto's ideas on ideograms, analogies and symbols, but what he overlooks is Otto's failure to specify the epistemological function of such terms. It is precisely terms such as 'analogy' and ideogram in The Idea of the Holy which are so much in need of philosophical clarification.

It is also into a similar difficulty that Turner's more recent attempt to resolve this problem falls.⁽³⁴⁾ Like Davidson, he argues that numinous experience is not wholly 'wholly other' and that the phrase should be understood as an ideogram or analogy rather than as a literal statement. However, unlike Davidson, he does at least attempt to support his thesis by arguing that, since the numinous must be present to our experience without losing its 'otherness', it must have some affinity with men. It is 'the Beyond that is akin'. Here, at least, Turner moves beyond the mere assertion of the analogical nature of ineffability claims but not very far beyond it, since the passage under consideration does not explain what it is in the actual argument of The Idea of the Holy which suggests 'the Beyond that is akin'. Turner does not explain, in the context of his discussion of the 'wholly other', that the reason why the numinous has some affinity with men is because of Otto's theory of the numinous a priori, a theory which is profoundly important for the whole argument of The Idea of the Holy.⁽³⁵⁾ He does not point out that the reason that radical numinous ineffability should be denied is that, in the words of Otto:

Every religion which...springs from personal assurance and inward convincement (i.e. from an inward first-hand cognition of its truth) ...must presuppose principles in the mind enabling it to be independently recognized as true. But these principles must be a priori ones...(36)

Significantly, it is these a priori principles which assure the religious believer that his experiences are veridical. This is why the numinous has an affinity with man. This by itself, however, does not take us much further in our attempt to explain the logical status of Otto's ineffability claims and, in particular, it does not help us to understand the epistemological function of terms such as ideogram, analogy and symbol. In fact Turner is no more successful than Davidson in establishing the precise meaning of Otto's ineffability claims.

In order to decipher the real meaning and function of Otto's ineffability claims, we must turn away from all attempts to conceal the logical and epistemological difficulties inherent in statements such as those of Davidson and Turner. When we do, we shall discover that Otto's ineffability claims can be interpreted as not radical after all, providing the following hermeneutical principles are accepted as a key to an understanding of such claims: the first principle is that we discover the sense of ineffability claims and determine whether they are, in fact, radical only by examining whether anything further is said about the object of such claims (whether this be the deity or religious experience). If anything further is asserted in addition to these ineffability claims, then we must assume that such claims were not, after all, intended by the writer to be understood as radical ineffability claims, regardless of how negative the language of such claims actually was. The principle which should guide our deliberations concerning the meaning of ineffability claims should be the intentions of those who write about them, and we can only discover what these are by taking into account what else they say (if anything) about the deity or religious experience other than that it is ineffable. In the majority of instances (as we shall see with Otto's

ineffability claims shortly), it is clear that writers do not intend their ineffability claims to be understood rigorously or literally. To sum up this rule, ineffability claims can only be understood in the context of their utterance, and those philosophers who abstract ineffability claims from that context without concern for the intentions of those who make such claims, in the evident belief that the implication of any proposition are what they are regardless of what the speaker of that proposition wants them to be, tend all too often mistakenly to assume that such claims are confused and incoherent and, therefore, dismiss them without ever understanding them.(37)

The second principle, parasitic upon the first, merely extends the meaning of the demand that all ineffability claims be understood within the context of their utterance. This principle declares that the meaning of any ineffability claim is crucially affected by whoever makes it and in whatever situation it is made. Thus the meaning of an ineffability claim about the deity or religious experience proposed by someone who is religious, in the context of life of prayer, devotion and contemplation, will be utterly different from the same ineffability claim made by a man who is not religious and perhaps cannot understand what the religious life is like. In the context of our problem concerning radical ineffability claims, it is clear that whereas such a claim made about the deity or religious experience by a man with no interest in religion would indeed be incoherent because emptied of all meaning, the same claim made by a religious man would not be incoherent because, in spite of the uncompromising nature of its verbal form, it would not, and indeed could not, be a radical ineffability claim. Such an ineffability claim could not be understood rigorously, since it would have to be qualified by whatever were the religious assumptions presupposed by the man making the claim. The religious situation of the man making any claim about the deity or religious experience must contribute to the meaning of that

claim. Indeed, we could argue that outside of any concrete situation any claim about God, including an ineffability claim, would be meaningless, since all the assumptions which the speaker has about God (whether they be religious or agnostic) must affect the meaning of that claim, and this once again refutes the argument of many contemporary philosophers of religion that we can establish the truth or falsehood of religious propositions without having to examine the concrete contexts within which they have been formulated.

Thus we can conclude that no ineffability statements made by religious people in concrete religious circumstances are radical ineffability claims, no matter how negative the language of such statements may be. Even the negative theology of Dionysius the Areopagite contains no radical ineffability claims, although non-religious observers outside the Christian tradition may misinterpret his mystical theology to be making such claims, since this negative theology presupposes the possession of a wealth of information about God (if not intimate first hand experience of Him) through prayer, theology and cult which lends intelligibility to those claims, indeed which gives them a meaning that can be discovered by someone steeped in the same or similar religious tradition as that from which Dionysius spoke.(38)

Having now outlined the rules which should be applied to Otto's ineffability claims to establish whether they are, or are not, coherent, let us now turn to consider some of those apparently radical ineffability claims themselves, many of which I have already cited. Of course many of Otto's ineffability claims are merely expressions of the Friesian epistemology so influential on the argument of The Idea of the Holy. For instance, in a passage already quoted on p.111 of this essay Otto argues that, although the conceptual characterization of the mysterium is negative, that is beyond conception and understanding, what is meant is discovered in feelings to be absolutely positive, feelings which our

discussion can make clear to us in so far as it arouses them in our hearts.(39) This sentiment is also echoed by Otto's assertion that, although the terms 'supernatural' and 'transcendental' appear positive, they are really negative terms and only acquire meaning as they refer to the positive feeling content of the 'wholly other', whose special character we can feel without being able to give it clear conceptual expression.(40) Clearly these two passages reflect the Friesian distinction between the negative, conceptual knowledge of Glaube and the positive feeling, incapable of being given clear conceptual expression, Ahndung. The same is true of the following, which also expresses sentiments which in Christian tradition can trace their ancestry back at least as far as Dionysius the Areopagite:

And it is still more instructive that in reading and hearing such words their merely negative character simply is not noticed; that we can let whole chains of such negations enrapture, even intoxicate us, and that entire hymns and deeply impressive hymns - have been composed in which there is really nothing positive at all! All this teaches us the independence of the positive content of this experience from the implications of its overt conceptual expression, and how it can be firmly grasped, thoroughly understood, and profoundly appreciated, purely in, with, and from the feeling itself.(41)

It is also significant that these ideas about a negative theology and positive, but inexpressible, feelings are repeated in the first appendix to The Idea of the Holy, 'Chrysostom on the inconceivable in God', in a passage which follows the radical ineffability passage of 'Chrysostom's' New Testament commentary quoted extensively earlier,(42) and which, as we shall see, appears to retract the radical ineffability claim of that passage. Otto says:

But this 'negative theology' does not mean that faith and feelings are dissipated and reduced to nothing; on the contrary, it contains within it the loftiest spirit of devotion, and it is out of such 'negative' attributes that Chrysostom fashions the most solemn confessions and prayers. He thereby shows once more that feeling and experience reach far beyond conceiving, and that a conception negative in form may often become the symbol (what we have called an ideogram) for a content of meaning which, if absolutely unutterable, is none the less in the highest degree positive. And the example of

Chrysostom at the same time shows that a 'negative theology' can and indeed must arise...from purely and genuinely religious roots, namely, the experience of the numinous.(43)

Now these passages are clearly not radical ineffability claims which are confused and incoherent. This is not only because of the second rule outlined above, namely that the meaning of any ineffability claim can only be established by taking into account the situation in which such a claim is made, the implication of the passages cited being that they presuppose an intense religious life on the part of the author of these statements, which he assumes that he shares to some degree with those he believes will understand his writing.(44) It is also because, even under the first rule for establishing whether ineffability claims are radical or not, it is clear that the claims just cited are not intended to be understood rigorously, since these claims, in spite of their negative language about the numinous, speak of so much that is already known about the deity or religious experience which is often wrongly overlooked. If we recognise that all knowledge, regardless how insubstantial it may appear to be, is positive, then we shall have to conclude that Otto's ineffability claims tell us considerably more about the numinous than we might otherwise have thought.

Thus when we look at the first Otto passage just cited,(45) we find that the mysterium, although negative, is discovered in feeling to be positive. The second passage adds nothing to this,(46) but the third passage speaks of chains of negations which enrapture, even intoxicate us, which must surely tell us something significant about the nature of numinous feeling even if it be otherwise inexpressible. Again, the fourth passage informs us positively about the numinous. Negative theology arising from numinous experience does not mean that faith is dissipated but that it contains within it the loftiest spirit of devotion. Indeed, Otto speaks of Chrysostom's solemn confessions and prayers, as well as his declaration that religious experience, although unutterable, is in the

highest degree positive. This passage is clearly opposed to the radical ineffability passage of Chrysostom's New Testament commentary previously quoted,(47) and suggests that either its forceful language about the numinous being beyond search and discovery, and even tracing, is not to be understood literally, or that we have a genuine contradiction to contend with. To repeat, if this radical ineffability passage is logically incoherent, then it is contradicted by another passage later in the same appendix as well as by Otto's declaration that, in spite of Chrysostom's strictures, the incomprehensible is still understood by him as a fascinans.(48) I suggest that, in the light of other ineffability claims in The Idea of Holy, the uncompromising language of the Chrysostom New Testament commentary passage is intended by Otto not to be understood literally, regardless of what may have been the intention of Chrysostom himself.(49)

Furthermore, our impression of the exceptional nature of this passage is also reinforced by our recognition that other ineffability claims already quoted, which appear to be uncompromising, are in fact not so at all. For instance, Otto declares that

The truly 'mysterious' object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other', whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb.(50)

Although this statement might initially suggest radical ineffability, this view is mistaken since it speaks positively of recoiling in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb, which echoes a statement made previously about the 'wholly other' falling outside the limits of the canny, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment.(51) Again, on closer inspection, what appears to be another radical ineffability claim (already quoted) is not one, even though it seeks to define the non-rational. Otto asserts:

Not the most concentrated attention can elucidate the object to which this state of mind refers, bringing it out of the impenetrable obscurity of feeling into the domain of the conceptual understanding.

It remains a purely felt experience, only to be indicated symbolically by ideograms. That is what we mean by saying it is non-rational.(52)

Even this claim about the non-rational, which comes closest to the radical ineffability claim of the Chrysostom passage, still speaks about a state of mind, on obscurity of feeling and the use of ideograms. When this claim is understood in the light of our second rule about ineffability claims, namely that their meanings are affected by their contexts within arguments (in this case its meaning being affected by its place in the argument of The Idea of the Holy), it becomes clear that this passage is no more empty of meaning or incoherent than many other passages which refer to ineffability in the text.

Clearly the weight of evidence, we can now assert, supports the view that Otto's ineffability claims, contrary to the opinion of L.M.S. Griffiths,(53) are not incoherent, and if we now add to the evidence already cited Otto's many statements about analogies to numinous experience, then we are forced to conclude that all ineffability claims in The Idea of the Holy, regardless how uncompromising they may appear, are never absolute but always qualified.(54) The crucial question which should govern any study of Otto's ineffability claims is not then whether they are meaningful,(55) but what precisely is the extent of their ineffability. This question could be put another way: how much does the information we have about what is otherwise ineffable (numinous experience of the numinous object) reveal about its essential nature? Once again, we are brought to the point where we are forced to recognise that, although we can see that Otto's talk about analogies and ideograms is meaningful, we still cannot assess their precise epistemological function.

(iii) Otto's Distinction between Religious Feeling as a Religious Way of Knowing and Discursive Reason.

In order to do this, we must return to a more detailed examination of Otto's general theory of religious experience and his philosophy of language, which presupposes that religious feeling as a religious way of knowing is contrasted with discursive reason, and that such religious knowledge is inaccessible to our ordinary rational understanding.(56) Clearly this theory of religious experience is directly indebted to the Friesian distinction between Wissen, Glaube and Ahndung described in chapter II, but it can also trace its ancestry further back to Friedrich Schleiermacher's profoundly influential distinction between immediate 'raw' religious experience and mediated theological discourse which depends upon such experience.(57)

This by now much applauded, but also much criticized distinction between religious language and experience, indeed any language and experience, is perhaps most lucidly presented in the writings of William James, whose philosophy of Pragmatism confirmed (if it did not actually influence) Otto's own ideas on the relation between religious experience and interpretation of that experience. James argues that thoughts or concepts stand outside the stream of immediate experiences, and this provides the foundation for his insistence that there are two kinds of knowledge: 'knowledge of acquaintance' and 'knowledge about'.

'Acquaintance knowledge' is the more fundamental, since it is gained in immediate experience and cannot be communicated to anyone else. This pure experience is dumb when separated from 'knowledge about'. By contrast, 'knowledge about' is derived from 'acquaintance knowledge', and is the product of the reflective activity of mind operating on the material supplied by immediate experience. 'Through feelings', says James, 'we become acquainted with things, but only by our thoughts do we know about them. Feelings are the germ and starting point of cognition, thoughts the

developed tree.'(58) Now although James admits that 'acquaintance knowledge' can tell us nothing about the inner nature of objects or what makes them what they are, we find all through James's writings a polemic against the supposition that 'knowledge about' is self-sufficient and constitutes a substitute for 'acquaintance knowledge'. Abstract knowledge, he argues, has been consistently over-valued by all western philosophers, and it is in the light of this observation that James claims that religion originates in feeling alone which is the most important ingredient in religious experience. Although religious experience is immediate, it is also cognitive, yielding 'acquaintance knowledge' upon which all 'knowledge about' depends.(59)

Now this model, extracted from James's writings, of two types of knowledge, mediated discursive knowledge and immediate experience,(60) is reflected in Otto's theory of religious experience, in particular, in the distinction between Wissen and Ahndung upon which Otto's theory of numinous experience in The Idea of the Holy depends. However, there are two damaging criticisms which can be made of this model, neither of which can it be said that Otto responded to adequately. The first is that immediate or first-hand experience simply is not by itself knowledge. Knowledge is not just a kind of awareness. It is the process of relating immediate experience to previous knowledge and experience. Immediate experience, contrary to Otto, James and others, is not by itself genuinely cognitive, although of course, it is a necessary factor in our acquisition of knowledge.(61) The second criticism is that there can be no immediate 'experience of' something without, at least, some 'knowledge about' it. All immediate 'experience of' depends upon a background of 'knowledge about'.(62) Now this criticism amounts to more than merely underlining a point I have already laboured in this chapter, namely that there can be no absolutely ineffable experience. It also challenges the position of

those religious thinkers who claim that while we can have positive 'experience of' God, we can have absolutely no discursive 'knowledge about' Him.

Clearly Otto is one such thinker as is apparent from several ineffability passages previously cited,(63) although, as I have already demonstrated, his discussion can be construed to be making a set of qualified, rather than unqualified, ineffability claims and, consequently, his theory of numinous experience can be interpreted as depending upon some rational understanding of, or 'knowledge about', God after all. Thus Otto's theory of religious experience can be seen ultimately to avoid the criticisms which have justifiably plagued the argument that immediate encounter with God presupposes no rational knowledge of God outside that encounter. (Incidentally, this theory of immediate, non-rational, religious experience often seeks to draw attention to a similarity between wordless immediate encounter between two human beings and the encounter between man and God, which, in turn, appeals to the authority of Martin Buber's distinction between I - You ('acquaintance knowledge') and I - It ('knowledge about') relationships and his insistence that although we can have both I - You and I - It relationships with our fellow human beings, we can only have I - You relations with God.(64) But as several philosophers have recently argued, we can have no I - You experience of God which is not parasitic upon some I - It experience of Him, just as we can have no I - You experience of another human being which does not depend upon some I - It experience.(65) Religious experience of direct encounter without any I - It experience no more points towards God than towards anyone or anything else.)(66)

However, in the context of Otto's theory of numinous experience, it is important to recognize that although 'immediate experience' and 'knowledge about' are always united in the constant 'stream of experience', this does not mean that what can be said about the former

must be reduced to what is said about the latter. In other words, the insistence that 'immediate experience' and discursive understanding are inseparable does not entail the claim that there can be no dimension of experience which is non-verbal, nor that the only experience we can have is that which we can speak about.(67) As Kellenberger has recently argued, one meaning of ineffability, in the context of mysticism, is that, although mystical experience can be referred to by propositional language, it has a

cognitive import that extends beyond (such strict propositional expression...It is as though mystical propositions had a cognitive shadow, beyond language and beyond the strict import of propositions spoken or unspoken, in which lay their greater significance.(68)

Kellenberger is distinguishing here between knowing that a proposition is true and understanding the full significance of what is known, a distinction which relies upon the insistence on the distance between experience and language about that experience, and which consequently recognizes that language can express neither the subtleties nor the intensities of experience. It is this separation of language from experience which led Eliot to speak of 'a raid on the inarticulate', and, as I shall demonstrate later in this chapter, it is such a theory of language and experience which leads Otto to stretch language as far as he can, in order to lend intelligibility to religious experiences which would otherwise be inexpressible.

To conclude this argument then, the recognition that there can be no 'experience of' without some 'knowledge about' does not by itself entail the further claim that there can be no non-verbal experience, nor that the parameters of experience extend only as far as the parameters of language and no further. Consequently, although Otto, as I have shown, was not aware of the epistemological difficulties surrounding his concept of immediate experience, this by itself is not damaging to his theory of language and experience upon which his psychology of religion depends.

(iv) The Epistemological Issues Raised by Otto's Understanding of the Relationship between Experience, Interpretation and Language in 'The Idea of the Holy'

However, many recent writers have also wanted to argue against Otto, and other writers like him, that not only is all experience linguistic, by which is meant that experience cannot be abstracted from its linguistic context so that language and experience can be compared with each other, but as a corollary of this that all experience is inseparable from interpretation, by which is meant not only that all experience has a concrete unique interpretative context, but also that interpretation enters into the experience itself as a constitutive factor so that, it is argued, the endeavour to distinguish experience from interpretation is misconceived because impossible. Now if it is demonstrated that the concept of a 'pure' or 'raw' experience distinguishable in principle from its interpretation is unintelligible, if it is shown that all experience is mediated by our language about, or our interpretation of, such experience, then this will be very damaging to Otto's theory of religious experience, since it will call into question once again his claim implicit in The Idea of the Holy that there is, in fact, a separation between language and experience and that experience transcends language.

This model of language, or interpretation, and experience is crucial to Otto's psychology of religion, and without it we can make no sense of his agonizing over the inexpressible nature of numinous experience and his experiments with metaphorical language in order to attempt to convey the distinctive flavour of such religious experience which, as I have already insisted, is one of the most important strands of argument in the text of The Idea of the Holy. It is for this reason that we cannot avoid some consideration of the difficult epistemological issues surrounding the

relationship between experience, interpretation and language, a subject which has engaged many contemporary students of mysticism. It is to some consideration of this complex problem that I now turn.

In fact contemporary interest in definitions of, and distinctions between, experience and interpretation among students of religious experience has arisen as a response, or rather reaction, to the claim that there can be a pure, immediate, uninterpreted, neutral mystical experience which forms a universal core of religious experience in all mystical traditions. Contrary to all appearances, variations in reports about mystical experience are not due to differences in the actual experiences of different traditions, but are the result of those experiences being distorted by interpretations which are added to, or superimposed upon, them. Walter Stace is typical of those who would argue for a uniform mystical experience across religious traditions, which is discovered when we strip off all theory-laden interpretations from the description of such experiences.⁽⁶⁹⁾ He says:

If there are common characteristics in the mystical experiences reported in all religions, cultures, and periods of history, it seems obvious that we cannot expect them to be everywhere described in similar sets of words. We should surely expect on the contrary a great variety of vocabularies, styles and modes of expression. We must therefore be able to penetrate through the mantle of words to the body of the experiences which it clothes. We must be able to recognize the same experience though described in a wide variety of types of phraseology and language.⁽⁷⁰⁾

Unfortunately, however, there is one immediate difficulty in 'penetrating through the mantle of words to the body of the experiences', and that is, as many commentators have pointed out, that the non-mystic who studies accounts of mystical experience has no direct access to the actual original mystical experiences in order to compare them with descriptions of those experiences. Accordingly, he is in no position to discover whether those descriptions of mystical experiences have been corrupted by interpretation or not.⁽⁷¹⁾ It is for this reason that critics of Stace and other proponents of the philosophia perennis argue

that it is impossible to isolate a pure experience from any interpretation in any account of mystical experience, and that, accordingly, such accounts of mystical experience must be understood to be wholly descriptions of experience in the absence of any evidence to the contrary. In this case, it becomes clear that the variety of accounts of mystical experience is explained by a genuine variety of experiences themselves, and each experience is the product of external stimulus and interpretative framework.(72) The interpretative framework becomes a constituent of the mystical experience, and this is one, although not the only possible, reason why people of different religious traditions necessarily have different religious experiences.

However, some writers have wanted to argue that experience and interpretation are inseparable in the report of a mystical experience, not merely because the experience itself is not available for comparison with the report, but also because the distinction between experience and interpretation is unintelligible even to the subject of the experience himself. This is a far more radical claim, namely that experience and interpretation are inseparable in principle, each epistemologically contaminated by the other, and it is to an examination of this claim that I now turn.

Steven Katz has recently forcefully argued that there are no pure or unmediated experiences. All experiences, mystical and non-mystical, are shaped by the concepts the subject brings to his experience; that is to say, the forms of consciousness which the subject brings to his experience set structured and limiting parameters on what the experience will be. Because of the kind of beings we are and the kind of epistemological processes that we are all subjected to, this rule must apply to mystical experience as well. Thus religious beliefs define in advance what will be experienced and rule out what will not in a particular concrete context.

For instance, the Hindu mystic does not have an unmediated experience which he then interprets in the language of Hinduism. Rather, he has an, at least, partially pre-formed, anticipated Hindu experience,(73) conditioned by pre-experiential belief patterns.(74) There is no given, immediate experience free from all mediating cultural conditioning.

That is, the given is appropriated through acts which shape it into forms which we can make intelligible to ourselves given our conceptual constitution, and which structure it in order to respond to the specific contextual needs and mechanisms of consciousness of the receiver.(75)

Contrary to all appearances, forms of mysticism which seek liberation of the self from all conditioned existence cannot attain any state of non-contextual awareness, because all states of consciousness are contextual. Indeed, it can be argued that mystics of different traditions seek different specific goals through different specific ways or paths. Thus properly understood, altered states of consciousness attained during meditation exercises are not examples of

an unconditioning or deconditioning of consciousness, but rather...a reconditioning of consciousness...albeit a new, unusual, and perhaps altogether more interesting form of conditioned, contextual consciousness.(76)

Since mystical life is filled with concrete, future directed activities which generate expectations of what will be experienced, there is obviously, Katz concludes, 'a self-fulfilling prophetic aspect' attached to all mystical experience,(77) and this leads him to argue that all mystical activity is intentional and, therefore, culture specific.(78)

It is because all experience is culture specific, that another writer, Peter Donovan, has also argued that uninterpreted experience is not even a possibility. This is because all experience, even while it is taking place, is being interpreted, that is taken to be one sort of experience rather than another. It is not possible to describe the 'feel' of an experience and 'bracket out' the interpretation which supervenes upon it at the moment that the 'feel' is recognized, and since this is the

case, any description of the 'feel' of an experience, which pretends to be an abstraction of that neutral experience from its interpretation, will, in fact, be only a description of the 'feel' of that experience which has already been contaminated by interpretation. In fact, Donovan concludes that

it becomes very difficult to say how experiences could be individuated (marked off from one another) at all, at some uninterpreted level...No means for identifying or individuating experiences seem to remain, once all interpretations are left out of the picture, for it is largely they which make an experience the experience it is.(79)

Furthermore, Donovan asks:

why it should be supposed that the less the amount of interpretation, the nearer we get to the essential meaning of an experience, while the greater the amount of interpretation the further we get from the true meaning. It is, after all, just as possible to miss the genuine significance of an experience through under-interpretation as it is through over-interpretation.(80)

Once again, we find the insistence that experience and interpretation are not even distinguishable in principle, and this leads Donovan to claim that

the words we can use and the interpretations we can make may very much govern the kinds of experience we are able to have. Far from being merely a source of labels and descriptions, our language is the thing that makes many of our experiences possible.(81)...If we are unaware of the discriminations and shades of meaning which words bring to our attention, then the experiences we are capable of having will be limited and lacking in subtlety too...That is especially so with religious experiences. People who lack all familiarity with the language, imagery or world-views of a religious system can hardly be said to be capable of having religious experiences, for they lack the habits of mind and the awareness of significance which make religiously-interpreted experiences possible.(82)

However, perhaps an even more sophisticated and sensitive account of the relationship between religious experience and its interpretation is to be found in an important article by Peter Moore, who argues that reports of mystical experience can be analysed into four theoretically distinct elements. These are:

(i) 'references to doctrinal interpretations formulated after the experience is over', which he calls 'retrospective interpretation',

(ii) 'references to interpretation spontaneously formulated either during the experience itself or immediately afterwards', which he calls 'reflexive interpretation',

(iii) 'references to features of experience which have been caused or conditioned by a mystic's prior beliefs, expectations and intentions', which he calls 'incorporated interpretation', and include 'ideas and images in an experience in the form of visions and locutions (reflected interpretation)' and 'features of experience moulded into what might be termed phenomenological analogues of some belief or doctrine (assimilated interpretation)',

(iv) 'references to features of experience unaffected by the mystic's prior beliefs, expectations, or intentions' which he calls 'raw experience'.⁽⁸³⁾ Now what is significant about this account is that, although Moore insists that 'experience and interpretation are not actually exclusive epistemological categories', he deviates from the positions of Katz and Donovan on two important issues. The first is his delineation of several forms of interpretation which are defined by their different relationships to experience, and the second is his conviction that, in spite of all the practical difficulties, it is possible to distinguish 'raw experience' from 'retrospective interpretation', which suggests that, contrary to Katz and Donovan, the distinction between experience and interpretation is not unintelligible.⁽⁸⁴⁾

Nevertheless, there are many issues concerning which Moore's position is in harmony with that of Donovan and Katz. Moore criticizes those who

tend to treat the doctrinal elements in an account as factors irrelevant, if not actually obstructive, to the phenomenological analysis of the experience in question...The suggestion that the doctrinal elements in an account obscure the real nature of the experience described makes about as much sense as saying that if we want to know what a chicken really looks like we must first pluck out all its feathers.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Here Moore is referring to his incorporated interpretation which

both reinforces and is reinforced by the mystic's beliefs, so that these beliefs may indeed be as much 'read off' from an experience as added to it...(86) The mystic's doctrinal background should, therefore, be seen as a key to his experience rather than a door which shuts us off from it.(87)

However, Moore claims that religious beliefs and intentions not only enter experience as a constituent in the form of 'incorporated interpretation',

but actually facilitate and literally 'educate' the experience as a whole. In this case...the lack of doctrinal presuppositions might prevent the mystic not only from understanding and describing his mystical states but even from experiencing the fullness of these states in the first place. The possession of what could be called a 'doctrinal vocabulary' might indeed serve to precipitate features of experience which would otherwise remain at the margin of consciousness if not actually beneath it. The fullest and most informative experiences might be those for which the subject was prepared beforehand-prepared, that is, in respect of some definite doctrinal background.(88)

The parallel here with comments of Katz and Donovan already cited is obvious, as is another parallel in Moore's observation that all experience is conditioned by cultural factors,

while if it were (or could be) free of all cultural conditioning whatsoever it might 'not be pure' so much as shapeless and undeveloped. In such a case...the subject of the experience would...find it difficult to represent it, reflexively or retrospectively, to his own understanding.(89)

Clearly there is much common sense in these observations and many more which insist on the mediated nature of all experience including mystical experience. These comments once again highlight the naivety of Otto's insistence on an immediate 'pure' experience which is fully cognitive and his failure to understand the complexity of all epistemological processes. Nevertheless, we must not conclude from all this that Otto's claim that experience transcends language must, therefore, be finally discarded. This is because there are, in fact, two significant confusions about the notion of interpretation which Katz and Donovan just cited share (one of which is also to be found in Moore's work), which create unnecessary difficulties for Otto's experiments with language. It is William Wainwright who has recently exposed these two related habitual

errors which much contemporary writing on the interpretation of mystical experience suffers from,(90) and it is to a consideration of these issues that I now turn.

The first confusion which is apparent in the writings of Katz, Donovan and Moore cited above is that between

interpretations of mystical experience and elements incorporated within it which reflect the beliefs, attitudes and expectations which the mystic brings to his experience.

Wainwright continues:

Recognising the difficulty of distinguishing those elements of an experience which are contributed by the mystic from those elements which are not, or of isolating an experience's raw data from its other aspects, one concludes that interpretation cannot be distinguished from description...The error is to assume that a pure description of mystical experience is a description of what is contributed by the setting or the 'given'. This is an error because what is contributed by the setting or the 'given' is not the experience itself but, at most, one of its components.(91)

In other words, Wainwright insists that there is no evidence that it is impossible to describe experience as a whole, providing this includes incorporated beliefs and other factors contributed by the tradition as well as the 'given'.(92) Wainwright is not denying that the colour or taste of mystical experience varies from tradition to tradition, nor is he unimpressed by what Moore calls 'incorporated interpretation'.(93)

However, what he insists upon is that since authentic descriptions of mystical experience are possible, and since interpretation must be an interpretation of something, that is the experience, the distinction between experience and interpretation cannot be incoherent. Wainwright defines interpretation as the attempt

to relate the elements so described (the experience) to a larger context, that is to beings, qualities, events or states of affairs, the existence of which is supposed to explain or account for the experience and/or its components.(94)

For instance, a psychoanalyst who attempts to explain a religious experience by reference to Freudian concepts is 'interpreting' the experience. Similarly, the mystic who asserts that God is the cause of

his experience is also interpreting it. And he underlines what he means by 'interpretation' in a revealing criticism of Moore's concept of 'incorporated interpretation'. He complains that the use of the word 'interpretation' here is misleading.

Flavour, doctrinal beliefs or concepts, imagery, and phenomenological analogues are parts or aspects of these mystical experiences, not interpretations of them. If it were legitimate to speak of these things as interpretations, there would have to be something (the 'given' or 'raw data') which they interpret...(To see the problem, ask how the flavour of an experience or incorporated imagery explains the 'raw data'.)(95)

Clearly this must mean that much which Katz and Donovan, as well as Moore, call interpretation should not be so called, but it is important to recognise a distinction between Moore's position and that of Katz and Donovan. Moore's position surpasses that of the other two writers because he is, at least, prepared to distinguish 'raw experience' in principle from three different types of interpretation. Although recognising the difficulties in making such distinctions, given appropriate documentary evidence such distinctions are possible.

However, for Katz and Donovan distinctions between what Moore calls 'raw experience' and 'incorporated and reflexive interpretation' are not even possible in principle. Donovan, in particular, stresses that one cannot distinguish 'raw experience' from 'reflexive interpretation', (96) arguing that all experience is an 'experience as' something in particular, (97) but this leads him to the unreasonable claim, already cited, that no means for identifying experiences seem to remain once all interpretations are excluded, since it is largely interpretations which make experiences the experiences they are. (98) Clearly such a statement leaves one wondering whether the word 'experience' has any remaining semantic function. If the concept of experience is to be at all intelligible, some distinction between interpretation and experience must be possible. If there is such a thing as experience, we must be able both to be aware of it and to say, at least, something about it, else how would

we know anything about it? And if we can be aware of experience and say something about it, then we can not only distinguish an experience from its interpretation, but we can also mark off one experience from another prior to all interpretation. It is also into some such difficulty that Katz's insistence on the contextual particularism of all experience falls. Of course no experience can be fully understood when separated from its context and, of course, all experience is mediated by complex cultural factors, but this does not mean that it is impossible to distinguish experience from both 'reflexive and retrospective interpretation'.

The second important error concerning the interpretation of mystical experience which Wainwright considers is the unquestioned assumption that mystical experience is largely constituted by the tradition within which it occurs. Wainwright considers Katz to be the major spokesman for this methodological position, a choice which is surely not surprising in the light of his philosophy of mysticism. He argues that Katz's claim, that all experience is substantially determined by its context and that, therefore, mystical experience is, like all other experience, strictly intentional, is an epistemological assumption which is unexplained and unsupported.

That no experience is entirely pure or 'unmediated' does not entail that the nature of mystical experience is significantly determined by the religious tradition to which the mystic belongs.

As Wainwright goes on to explain, the contribution of the mystic's tradition to the experience may be comparatively negligible, and one important point to consider in the context of this argument is that there is a profound difference between demonstrating a strong correlation between a mystic's tradition and his experience and a necessary connection between them. It is because the connection between tradition and experience is not necessary, that Wainwright insists that the experience is not constituted by the tradition and that, therefore, the tradition's

contribution to the experience may be relatively minor.(99) If this is the case, then once again, it is reasonable to argue for a distinction between experience and interpretation and for Otto's insistence that experience transcends language.(100)

Wainwright's criticism can also be directed at the work of Donovan as well. It will be recalled that Donovan claims that the words we can use and the interpretations we can make govern the kinds of experience we are able to have. If we are unaware of the shades of meaning which words bring to our attention, then our experiences will be limited and lacking in subtlety, and this is particularly the case with religious experiences. Without a doctrinal vocabulary a man is not capable of having religious experiences, and Donovan goes on to argue that we should reject the view that the less the amount of interpretation the nearer we get to the essential meaning of an experience, while the greater the amount of interpretation the further we get from it, because very often the feeling of an experience is not a particularly central feature of it at all.(101) However, the difficulty with Donovan's argument is that he does not consider whether religious experience might be significantly less constituted by its particular tradition or context than many other forms of experience. As Donovan rightly insists, many experiences are very complex and we have to know much about their context before we can fully appreciate them, but are all mystical experiences like that? Are they all as complex as 'losing a golf tournament...or being worried about the economy?' In many forms of experience the feeling may not be pronounced but may be overshadowed by other factors, but is this the case with mystical experience? Can we assume that the feeling dimension of mystical experience is less important than other factors, when so many mystics testify to the contrary?

In any case, that a doctrinal vocabulary may well facilitate or educate, as well as make intelligible, religious experiences of much greater subtlety and complexity does not mean that such experiences are largely constituted by doctrinal interpretations. It might be the case that, rather than substantially entering into experience, such doctrines simply draw our attention to previous discriminations within experience, and in preventing us from forgetting such subtle variations of experience these doctrines may stimulate experiences of just as great, if not greater, complexity and subtlety in the future.(102) In this case, a doctrinal vocabulary would not be understood as something which creates or completes mystical experience so much as something which is itself parasitic upon an accumulation of previous experience. In other words, the observation that a doctrinal vocabulary facilitates a fully religious life may not only refer to processes of situating experiences within appropriate specific contexts and so narrowing down their meaning. It may also draw our attention to the way doctrines can actually express or reveal prior experiences, and so provide a guide for the mystic seeking religious experiences within his tradition. The mystic's interest in his doctrinal vocabulary then suggests both that experience can influence doctrine and that doctrine can shape experience.

It is clear that religious doctrines can provide a mystic with a substantial quantity of valuable information about the varieties of experience which are available to him, and that this information may find its source in the experience of past masters, and thus we can conclude that Donovan's observations do not establish that there can be no dependence of doctrine upon prior experience. Once again, we find that Otto's distinction between experience and interpretation and his insistence on the priority of experience over doctrine in religious life, while not reflecting the whole spectrum of religious life, nevertheless, is not shown to be incoherent or unintelligible by Donovan's remarks.(103)

However, before proceeding to explain how Otto uses language in The Idea of the Holy, we must briefly review one more recent work on the relations between religious language and experience which, like Donovan's work, asserts that the parameters of experience extend as far as the parameters of language and no further. Paul van Buren's work⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ is one of the most uncompromising of recent attempts to demonstrate that all claims that experience transcends language are unintelligible. He insists that just as experiences of deep love do not extend beyond language, so experiences of religion likewise do not extend beyond words. Concerning such profound experiences we may speak hesistantly, but, nevertheless, words do precisely what they are supposed to do - they mediate experiences. Such profound experiences are not quite speechless - otherwise language could say nothing about them and we would know nothing about them.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

In fact van Buren argues that when we grapple with words in order to speak about religious experiences or experiences of love, we turn away from the use of ordinary descriptive language to speaking at the 'edges of language'. Nevertheless, he is careful to make clear that this defence of metaphorical language should not be construed as a vindication of any theory of non-verbal experience, for he insists that when we go out to the edges of language,⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ this means only that there are edges beyond which we cannot go without 'falling off' into meaninglessness.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Here van Buren is indebted to Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, which insists on the public, rule-governed nature of all language which we necessarily share,⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ but this is no reason, he argues, why language should be interpreted as a cage which restricts our ability to obtain experience. To see language in this way, he insists, is to misunderstand its role in our lives, since it assumes that we can conceive of an inside and an outside of this cage, perhaps even that we stand apart from the cage and see it holding humanity captive. But van Buren makes the point already

made by Donovan and Katz that we cannot step out of the linguistic world to see ourselves captive within it,(109) and so he insists that, to counteract the picture of the cage, we should conceive of language as a kind of platform that we build out while standing on it. This is what is meant by the 'extension of language' or by 'speaking at the edges of language', and he insists that this extension of language is a social act as language itself is, and that when we fall off the platform into a misuse of words, that is in to nonsensical speech, this is the void where the public, socially agreed rules are ignored.(110)

Furthermore, beside these criticisms of the idea that there can be non-verbal experience can be placed the comments of Renford Bambrough concerning Otto's agonising about the inexpressible nature of numinous experience.(111) Bambrough is critical of all claims that there are limits to language beyond which we cannot go, and singles out for discussion what Eliot has called the 'raid on the inarticulate'.(112) The suggestion of Eliot, Otto and others that words cannot capture feelings with any precision, and particularly religious feelings for which the best expressions are silence and darkness, Bambrough questions, not only because, like van Buren, he believes that all feelings must be expressible in some form or we could know absolutely nothing about them, but also because the idea that there are limits to language suggests that there are absolute limits to human reason as well beyond which we cannot go.

However, Bambrough takes issue with this idea that there are limits to reason, on the grounds that contingent and temporary limitations of reason are treated as if they were a priori, and so we fail to recognize that there are always opportunities to transcend the particular limits of reason by which we are temporarily bound. In fact when we fall into accepting that there are a priori limits to reason, we are discouraged from just the effort that is needed if we are to extend our understanding.(113) There are, in fact, no limits to our understanding and no

limits to our reason. Beyond what is now understood there is not a blank but only something further to be understood.(114) There need be no limit to the extent to which our understanding may be increased and no limit to our powers of expression, for a temporary intellectual problem or limit to our powers of expression already indicates the direction in which we should look for a means of solving the problem or transcending the particular limit. 'A failure to express is a failure, and there is no failure where no success is thinkable'.(115)

Thus Bambrough asserts that we can resolve the paradox presented by Eliot, Otto and others, who need many words, sometimes whole volumes, to agonise over, or assert, the inexpressible dimension of experience. Such 'raids on the inarticulate' are not, as Eliot and Otto seem to think, indications that we have reached the limits of language, but rather very fine examples of just how effective language can be, that is demonstrations of penetrating to a new understanding of what is difficult to understand. When words 'strain, crack, sometimes break under the burden' of capturing experience, or when they 'decay with imprecision, will not stay in place, will not stay still', this is not an example of the limitations of language but of its proper use. Thus Bambrough concludes that in the face of what is presently difficult to understand, silence, empty space or darkness are never adequate responses, because if they are accompanied by nothing else, they are vehicles of communication for absolutely nothing!(116)

However, these comments of Bambrough as well as those of van Buren, although they appear to be reasonable, largely miss the point of those who, like Otto, agonise over the inexpressible. Of course we must be able to say something about what we experience, otherwise we could know nothing about it, and such is clearly an effective use of language that we should be continually striving to extend. Again, there is obviously no value in being deceived into thinking there are absolute limits to

language and reason. However, Otto does not appear to want to question the wisdom of these principles. On the contrary, Otto, far from wishing to restrict the use of language, desires to extend it as far as he can, since his problem is not that we can say nothing about experience, but that we can never say enough! Otto's use of analogical language is an attempt to extend further and further what we can say, or think, about what we experience. In other words, it is a continuous striving for greater and greater understanding of our experience. Accordingly, when van Buren concludes that language will always express all that can be said and encompasses all experience, although he speaks about extending the uses of language and of 'speaking at the edges of language', the net effect of his complacency about the uses and functions of language is to inhibit the extension of language rather than to promote it.

In fact van Buren and Bambrough in their apparent confidence in language are actually more likely to be insensitive to the possibilities of extending our language about our experience than Otto is, and this insensitivity to what can, or cannot, be said either now or at some future moment is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in van Buren's insistence that the aroma of coffee is not an example of a non-verbal experience which cannot be described. Van Buren argues that we cannot describe the aroma of coffee because we have no need to. We have noses with which to smell the aroma of coffee and distinguish it from other smells, so that the phrase 'aroma of coffee' is all the description we need, coffee being common enough in our world for this aroma to be familiar to us. Van Buren concludes that although we have no further descriptions of certain experiences than our references to them, these references are all we need.(117)

However, in arguing in this way, van Buren overlooks the possibility of extending what we can say, and understand, about our experience of the aroma of coffee. There is always more to be said about such experiences,

and we praise our poets for seeking more to say about them. It is precisely such a restless seeking that we shall discover in Otto's attempts to extend our language about, and consequently our understanding of, religious experience.(118) To repeat, Otto, far from being complacent about the limits of reason with respect to religious experience, is, contrary to the opinion of Bambrough and other thinkers like him, continually striving to transcend those limits.

In fact what is wrong with van Buren's discussion of 'the aroma of coffee' is his failure to see the inadequacies of literal language. Literal language presupposes shared experiences. Certainly literal language can help a number of people to agree that they are experiencing the aroma of coffee, even to agree that this aroma can be recognized by certain qualities, but what literal language cannot do is to extend what we know about the aroma of coffee and therefore the experience of that aroma as well. It is the same difficulty that we find in Stace's insistence that terms such as emptiness and the void are literal descriptions of mystical experience.(119) The problem with this statement is that it assumes that mystics and non-mystics share experiences, whereas, in fact, no such sharing exists, and it certainly does not explain how the non-mystic can possibly be interested in this literal description. Surely this description will be unintelligible to him because he has had no immediate first hand acquaintance with the void or emptiness of mystical experience, in fact, as unintelligible as talk about colour is to one who was born blind, or indeed as talk about the aroma of coffee is to one who has never had such a satisfying experience.

Furthermore, the inadequacy of literal language not only restricts what can be conveyed by one person to another about a mystical experience; it also prevents the subject of the experience from extending what he knows about the experience and therefore the experience itself. Literal language creates false limitations and expectations which prevent the

mystic from experiencing as fully and as sensitively as he might, and it is for this reason that metaphorical language is so important, not only in the context of religious experience but also in the context of other forms of experience which are to some degree non-verbal. We shall soon see that it is such a theory of metaphorical language which is presupposed by Otto's attempts to offer analogies to numinous experience, in order not only to evoke such experience but also to extend and deepen our understanding of it. However, before examining Otto's theory of metaphorical language which informs his psychology of religion, I want briefly to review the remarks of several recent writers on metaphor which will help to clarify Otto's own ideas on this subject.

(v) Metaphor: An Introductory Survey of its Meaning and Purpose.

Of course the word 'metaphor' means to carry over. It refers to the process in which aspects of one object are carried over or transferred to another object so that the second object is spoken of as if it were the first. This process of transference has the purpose of achieving a new, wider, or more precise, meaning.(120) However, there are two ways in which metaphors have traditionally been understood to function in language, which can trace their ancestry back to Plato and Aristotle. The theory of metaphor associated with Aristotle sees it as a decoration of clear, unambiguous, 'ordinary', literal language. Metaphor is a kind of dignifying of literal language; the noted resemblances of metaphor and their surprising nature add charm to literal language, but there must not be too much of it which would lead to a lack of decorum and clarity. Behind this view of metaphor may be discerned a theory about the relationship of language to the real world. Language and reality, words and the objective world to which they refer, are quite separate and uncontaminated entities.(121)

This theory of metaphor was particularly influential in the Renaissance period and in the centuries of Classicism. However, as will not be surprising in the light of the foregoing discussion concerning the relationship between experience and interpretation, this theory of metaphor was opposed by another which traces its ancestry back to Plato, but which only really began to be widely respected during the period of 19th century Romanticism, and which in this century has been widely acclaimed by writers on literary criticism, linguistics and anthropology. This theory does not see metaphor as providing an embellishment of, or diversion from, the realities of life or language but as the creator of them. Indeed, metaphor can be distinguished neither from the real world, nor from the rest of language. As Ivor Richards, the great literary critic, has affirmed, all language by the nature of its transferring relation to reality is fundamentally metaphorical. Given this, the chief use of metaphor, Richards argues, is to extend language, and since language is reality, the ultimate function of metaphor must be to expand reality.(122) Again, a more recent literary critic has found the metaphorical process to be everywhere in language. Owen Barfield has invented the term 'tarning' from the German verb tarnen meaning to disguise, to camouflage, to say one thing and mean another, and he argues that 'tarning' is essential to the process of creating the new, of making what was previously unconscious conscious. One must on the face of it talk nonsense in order to suggest new meaning.(123)

However, one of the most lucid and detailed accounts of this theory of metaphor (especially seeing that it throws much light on Otto's philosophy of language implicit in The Idea of the Holy is that of Sallie TeSelle, who is not a literary critic but herself a theologian who is interested in the Gospel parables and in the notion of theology as story.

Like Richards, Barfield and many other writers, TeSelle insists that all language is ultimately traceable to metaphor, it being the foundation of a language and thus of thought.

Consequently,

Metaphor is not first of all the language of poets (referring to the Aristotelian theory of metaphor) but ordinary language. We use metaphors all the time in order to say something about things we know little about.(124)

And she illustrates what she means, by citing an interesting passage from the influential work on English Romanticism by Abrams who writes:

Any area for investigation, so long as it lacks prior concepts to give it structure and an express terminology with which it can be managed, appears to the enquiring mind inchoate - either a blank, or an elusive and tantalising confusion. Our usual recourse is, more or less deliberately, to cast about for objects which offer parallels to dimly sensed aspects of the new situation, to use the better known to elucidate the less known, to discuss the intangible in terms of the tangible. This analogical procedure seems characteristic of much intellectual enterprise..(125)

It is for this reason that TeSelle maintains that metaphors are cognitive, although the information obtained through them is 'highly risky, uncertain and open-ended'. TeSelle speaks of

The simultaneity of the moment of insight (into the unknown object) and the choice of metaphor (for it) - they appear to come together and be forever wedded...it is..as if the other dimension, the unknown one, were available to us only in and through the familiar dimension.(126)

Furthermore, she argues:

Because of the dialectic of the ordinary and the strange in poetic metaphor, in which each evokes and provides the context for the other, there is no way to have the new meaning apart from the metaphor itself. Any attempt to paraphrase a metaphor immediately reveals one of the primary characteristics of a good poetic metaphor; its inseparability from what is being said... metaphor creates the new, it does not embellish the old, and it accomplishes this through seeing similarity in dissimilars.(127)

Again, she says that we must approach everything elliptically and indirectly with no final satisfaction of ever finding the one and only way to a thing. Many metaphors are necessary, many forays on reality are

needed, since there is no univocal relation between language and reality, no privileged set of terms for reality which are exempt from criticism.

In fact,

we cannot say our metaphors 'correspond' to 'what is'; at best, we can only say that they seem appropriate to our experience, they 'fit' or seem 'right'.(128)

Finally, TeSelle suggests (and here we come to her most significant observations) that the claim that metaphor lies at the root of language and thought means that the mind is continually constructing and reconstructing reality. Reality is created by a process of metaphors,

of seeing this as that, and we use what we notice about one thing to name, that is to describe, call up, evoke, elicit, another thing where we notice something of the same, and hence for the first time we see it that new way.

The process being described here is 'the hypostatizing, distinguishing character of language formation, the naming through noticing'. What the metaphor does is to 'seek to distinguish, to emphasize, to hold the object of attention, to fix the object as a permanent focus of attention'.(129)

What TeSelle is assuming is that we are continually barraged by what William James called the 'stream of experience', that is the continuous flow of elusive but complex and subtle feelings for which we have little or no vocabulary with which to name such experiences and so distinguish them, one from another. Our states of consciousness are continually changing from moment to moment, and the only way we can give any definition to the great variety of transient, often undeveloped and even shapeless experience is through metaphor. It is through metaphor that we break up the 'stream of experience' into different parts and distinguish one from another, including the numinous from the secular and even different types of numinous experience, although this process must remain incomplete since no language can perfectly reflect the complex and subtle

variations of experience. TeSelle's ideas on metaphor are obviously important for an understanding of Otto's philosophy of language, to a consideration of which I now turn.(130)

(vi) Analogy, Metaphor and Otto's Philosophy of Language.

Otto conceives of numinous experience as similar to other feeling states, and, like William James, insists that nobody can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling in what the quality or worth of it consists.(131) Thus the psychological talk about numinous experience in The Idea of the Holy is not meant to convey an idea of what numinous experience is like to those who have had no prior acquaintance with it, but rather to help those who have had previous numinous experience to attain a deeper understanding of it and to recognize future confrontations with it as religious.(132) Otto's language about numinous experience, his description of the moments of numinous experience, the mysterium, the tremendum and the fascinans, and his talk about ideograms, analogies and symbols, not only defines the unique sui generis nature of religious experience; it also helps anyone to discriminate between religious and non-religious forms of experience. Being continuously subjected to a stream of varied, complex and subtle, yet often undefined, even shapeless, transient feelings (some of which are religious, some of which are not), Otto's extensive religious vocabulary is intended to help one to distinguish religious experiences from other forms of experience to which it is similar and with which it is liable to be confused, such as aesthetic experiences, moral experiences and emotional experiences. Like so many other feelings, religious experiences often lack structure. They often appear to the mind as inchoate, an elusive and tantalizing confusion, and thus we cast about for analogies for these confused religious experiences, which Otto understands as metaphors.(133) We use the better known to elucidate the less familiar: and there is a

simultaneity of the moment of insight into the relatively unknown numinous feeling and the choice of metaphor (analogy) for it, although it must be stressed here that the choice of metaphor can only be understood by someone who has already had a numinous experience, but is having difficulty giving it any definition.(134)

Again, Otto interprets ideograms, (135) which he elsewhere identifies with analogies and symbols, (136) as instruments of understanding of numinous feelings. Ideograms are, like analogies to the numinous, metaphors which use what we notice about more familiar feelings to name, and thereby notice, something similar in the numinous itself. The process being described here is again that of naming the moment of the numinous by finding an analogy for it, and thereby noticing it for the first time. It is in this way that moments of numinous experience are distinguished, emphasized and held as separate moments of consciousness, intelligible and fully-formed, and therefore capable of being recognized as religious experiences and amenable to the process of storing in the memory, since these experiences now have sufficient definition for them not to be confused with any other experiences. This is obviously one very important function of the development of a complex and sophisticated vocabulary about religious experience such as the one offered by Otto. As I have already indicated in the context of a criticism of Donovan's work, a religious vocabulary may well facilitate religious experiences of much greater subtlety and complexity, not only because religious experiences are constituted by doctrinal interpretations, but also because such a religious vocabulary may draw attention to previous discriminations within experience and thereby prevent the recognition of subtle variations of experience from being forgotten. It is in this way that a religious vocabulary may not only depend upon, and be influenced by, previous religious experience, but, through preserving a memory of previous subtle

variations of what are otherwise elusive religious feelings, may precipitate religious experiences of as great, if not greater, subtlety and complexity in the future.

What I am, in fact, arguing is that Otto's religious vocabulary about the numinous may well create a greater sensitivity to future religious experiences, and also ensure that numinous experiences are consciously recognized as religious and then committed to memory as such. It is this memory of religious experiences, sometimes mute, undefined and inchoate, sometimes disturbing, which may contribute to what the sociologist, Peter Berger, has called a 'plausibility structure',⁽¹³⁷⁾ a system of visible cultural symbols which support, and thereby lend plausibility to, ongoing inner religious life, and it is this same memory which may bring about an increase in the incidence of subsequent numinous experience. Furthermore, Otto's analogies and ideograms for numinous experience may have profound significance for those who have had numinous experiences but now cannot remember much, or anything, about them. Obviously, if Otto's metaphorical language helps many of his readers to recall numinous experiences they thought they had forgotten, and perhaps lost for ever, by giving them definition, this would offer some further explanation for the powerful evocative qualities of The Idea of the Holy.⁽¹³⁸⁾ I suggest that the tremendous popular appeal of this text should be attributed not just to its ability to evoke novel numinous experiences through the process of association of analogous feelings, but also to its capacity to reawaken memories of numinous experiences long since forgotten and thereby to convince the reader of the reality, vitality, authority and value of religious experience. This would explain why, on the one hand, Otto writes about the numinous when he himself insists that the distinctive qualities of numinous experience cannot be directly indicated by language

but can only be discovered through immediate acquaintance, and, on the other, why he insists that those who have had no previous religious experience should not read his book.(139)

However, behind the challenging observations about analogy and metaphor which we have just explored, there is an unacknowledged theological assumption about the cognitive limitations of religious language, and in particular concerning the function of analogy in religious discourse, which needs to be discussed. Apart from his constant praise of figurative language as a powerful means of evoking numinous experience and deepening our understanding of it, Otto is constantly criticising those who interpret theological language literally; and before concluding our discussion concerning Otto's philosophy of language, I would like to elucidate the unavowed theological assumption concerning the nature of religious language which informs that criticism, as well as to discuss a recent, much respected, theological account of religious language which is in many ways remarkably similar to Otto's and appears to lend it much support.

Of course Otto's criticism of literal interpretation of theological language is a persistent theme in The Idea of the Holy. The following passages illustrate his position:

....all those who later championed against the 'God of philosophy' the 'living God' and the God of anger and love and the emotions have unwittingly been defending the non-rational core of the Biblical conception of God from all excessive rationalization, and so far they were right - where they were wrong and sank into anthropomorphism was in defending not figurative 'anger' and 'emotion', but literal anger and emotion, misconceiving the numinous character of the attributes in question and holding them simply to be 'natural' attributes taken absolutely, instead of realizing that they can only be admitted as figurative indications of something essentially non-rational by means of symbols drawn from feelings that have analogy to it.(140)

The mysterium is merely an ideogram, an analogical notion taken from the natural sphere, illustrating, but incapable of exhaustively rendering, our real meaning.(141)

If such an ideogram is taken as an adequate concept, the result is anthropomorphism such as mythology illustrates....and the pseudo-science of theosophy. For the characteristic mark of all theosophy is just this; having confounded analogical and figurative

ways of expressing feeling with rational concepts, it then systematizes them, and out of them spins, like a monstrous web, a 'science of God'....(142)

Clearly here these passages draw the reader's attention to the cognitive limitations of religious language. However, what we need to enquire into is the unavowed theological assumption concerning the nature of religious language which lies behind and informs these comments.

One of Otto's principal theological problems with regard to religious language is to justify the kind of vivid analogical language about religious experience and God which he constantly uses to evoke numinous experience and to deepen our understanding of it. He obviously recognises that the terms he uses to refer to ordinary experience cannot be used in the same sense to refer to God or religious experience, that is univocally. At the same time, he knows that the terms he uses to refer to ordinary experience cannot have a completely unrelated sense when used to refer to God or religious experience, that is be understood equivocally; otherwise these terms, when applied to God, would be cognitively empty. Accordingly Otto is forced to adopt the 'middle way' between the univocal and equivocal use of words, the way of analogy advocated by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th Century, in which the same term may be used to refer to man and God in a similar or related, but not an identical sense.(143) This is the unacknowledged theological assumption about the nature of religious language which informs Otto's criticism of the literal interpretation of religious discourse. For Otto, every statement about God or numinous experience must be qualified in some way, and, of course, this observation lies at the heart of the Thomistic doctrine of analogy.

The reason, however, why Otto refuses to acknowledge the influence of the Thomistic doctrine of analogy on his thinking about religious language is that he does not share the desire of Aquinas, Cajetan and others to explore the metaphysical implications of the analogy of being between man and God.(144) In particular, he is not interested in exploring the

metaphysical implications of the proposition that although we cannot understand what the qualities of love or wisdom mean for God, we can know that God possesses such qualities which are analogous to those in human nature.(145) Otto, I suspect, regards such an attempt to define the nature of deity without being able to conceive what that definition means for God as an example of the excessive rationalization of religion which he associates with 'intellectualist' scholasticism at its worst, and which should not be confused with his own very practical use of analogical language in referring to the numinous.(146)

It is because of this that he fails to acknowledge the influence of Aquinas on his thinking about religious language, and instead turns to Plato for assistance in his formulation of his non-literal interpretation of religious discourse. Otto shares with Plato the desire to distinguish the religious interpretation of reality from the scientific, and he admits that his concept of the ideogram, which is created to achieve this, was suggested to him by the use of myth in Plato's philosophy. In fact, Plato defines myth as an imprecise language of images which speak of religious truths which are inaccessible to the precise language of philosophy. Where the language of philosophy cannot go in speaking of religion, there one must resort to the language of myth.(147) It is specifically in this sense that Otto seeks to liken his ideograms to Plato's use of myth. He says:

....the most remarkable characteristic of Plato's thought is just that he himself finds science and philosophy too narrow to comprise the whole of man's mental life. He has indeed properly no philosophy of religion; he grasps the object of religion by quite different means than those of conceptual thinking, viz by the 'ideograms' of myth, by 'enthusiasm' or inspiration, 'eros' or love, 'mania' or the divine frenzy. He abandons the attempt to bring the object of religion into one system of knowledge with the objects of science....(148)

Yet, in spite of these illuminating comments about the similarities between ideograms and Plato's use of myth, we are forced to conclude that Otto's comparison between the two confuses, rather than clarifies, his

definition of the function of ideograms in religious language. This is because Plato's idea of myth is far too vaguely defined to be of much use as a source of comparison with ideograms. In particular, whereas Otto specifically identifies ideograms with analogies, there is in the language of Plato's myth as much parable as analogy.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ We must, accordingly, conclude that, because of Otto's excessive reliance on Plato here, as well as his failure to acknowledge the influence of the Thomistic doctrine of analogy on his philosophy of language, he does not offer as precise a definition of his ideograms, or more generally of his analogies, in religious discourse as he might.

We are, however, fortunate in having the recent account of religious language of the theologian Ian Ramsey (itself profoundly influenced by the Thomistic doctrine of analogy) which addresses itself specifically to the issues surrounding analogy (and ideogram) in religious discourse which Otto avoids above, and in a manner which is remarkably close to the 'spirit' of Otto's writing on ideograms and analogies. Indeed, Ramsey's account of analogy lends Otto's philosophy of language considerable support, and it is for this reason that it deserves our attention.

Ramsey, like Otto, desires to demonstrate that religious language should be understood analogically or metaphorically; but, unlike Otto, he offers a detailed explanation of how religious discourse should be constructed so that it will warn the reader not to interpret it literally. Ramsey's essential thesis is that all properly constructed, religious statements, and especially those concerned with God, should be based on the interaction between what he calls 'models' and 'qualifiers'.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ By the term 'model', Ramsey means to refer to that aspect of religious discourse which speaks in the language of ordinary empirical experience. The purpose of the model is to mediate religious experience and to anchor that experience, as well as statements about God, in every day empirical experience. By contrast, the term 'qualifier' refers to that aspect of

religious discourse which warns the reader that the model-term is not to be interpreted in a simple, straightforward fashion. What is revealed by religious discourse points beyond the model-term to an extraordinary, 'unseen', religious dimension of experience. Ramsey says:

The overall lesson to be learned, then, is that if we want to understand language which claims to talk of a mystery, if we want to understand some piece of distinctive religious discourse, we must first pick out the words which are most straightforward and most obviously descriptive. We then look at the other words to see which of them act as qualifiers behaving logically like an imperative to direct us to a (religious) disclosure. Every complete religious assertion will thus use words descriptively and also specify a technique by which we may move from 'what is seen' to 'what is seen and more', from the expressible to the point where the expressible becomes part of the inexpressible.(151)

Ramsey also offers some examples of statements about God which express in an ideal way the interaction between models and qualifiers. He asks his readers to consider the following positive claims about God: God is 'first cause', 'infinitely wise', 'infinitely good', 'creator out of nothing' and exhibits 'eternal purpose'. The pattern of such claims obviously expresses Ramsey's distinction between models and qualifiers. Firstly, the terms 'cause', 'wise', 'good', 'creator' and 'purpose' function as models, which are used to designate situations generally familiar to people in ordinary experience. It is because of this that a model serves to anchor the theological claims presented for consideration above in 'a situation with which we are all familiar, and which can be used for reaching another situation with which we are not so familiar; one which, without the model, we should not recognize so easily'.(152) Clearly, here, we have an observation which is similar to that which we have recently seen Otto making concerning the cognitive function of metaphorical language about the numinous. Obviously, Ramsey, like Otto, seeks to find access to the relatively unknown, 'unseen', religious dimension of experience through what is relatively familiar.

Secondly, the words 'first', 'infinite', 'out-of-nothing', and 'eternal' function as qualifiers. In fact they have two separate functions, which are to express the logical limitations of the model terms when used in connection with God,(153) and to indicate in which direction the models are to be developed. What Ramsey desires to do, in speaking of the latter function, is to indicate that words like 'cause', 'wise' and 'good' are to be developed in the direction of their higher meanings. When they are so developed through their interaction with qualifiers, they provide what Ramsey calls 'analogical pointers', indicating the direction towards God. Yet such 'pointers', he argues, should not be mistaken for descriptions of the religious destination that the believer seeks.(154)

In concluding our discussion concerning Ramsey's account of religious language, it is useful to cite some of the unfortunate consequences which he regards as the result of the failure of religious statements to include both a model-term and a qualifier-term.(155) To begin with he observes that if religious assertions fail to use qualifier-terms, then it is extremely likely that they will be interpreted as straightforward empirical assertions, which, of course, they are not. So, for example, he argues that statements such as 'God is love', 'God exists', and 'God is the Father', ought to be avoided, because they give the misleading impression that they should be interpreted literally, which is disastrous to the religious understanding. Rather, if such claims are to be made at all, then they should be appropriately qualified. Thus the assertion 'God is love' should be qualified by the term 'infinite'; the claim 'God exists' should be qualified by the term 'necessarily'; and the statement 'God is the Father' should be qualified by the term 'heavenly'. In this way, it is never forgotten that such religious claims are no more than 'analogical pointers' to God. On the other hand, he observes that if religious assertions fail to anchor themselves in empirical experience by means of model-terms, they will be cognitively empty. Qualifiers cannot

function independently of other terms. Simply to say, for example, 'God is infinite', or 'God is necessary', is to say very little indeed! Thus we can conclude that Ramsey conceives models and qualifiers to be dependent on one another for their meaning, and that he regards religious statements as only valuable if they include both model and qualifier terms.

(vii) Otto's Ineffability Claims Reconsidered in the Light of our Previous Discussion concerning Analogy and Metaphor.

Finally, we must venture an answer to the question whether in Otto's opinion the ineffability of numinous experience is indistinguishable from the ineffability of other forms of experience, or whether alternatively numinous feelings create unique linguistic problems which other forms of experience do not suffer from. Clearly this is not an easy task, since whereas, as I have just indicated, much of the language of The Idea of The Holy seeks to find metaphors for numinous feelings and so extend our understanding of them in the same way that we might extend, deepen and enrich our understanding of aesthetic or emotional feelings, many other passages can be found that stress the unique linguistic problems surrounding numinous experience, such as those I discussed earlier in this chapter.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Clearly, although Otto's references to the 'wholly other' and the inconceivable are not to be understood as radical but only qualified ineffability claims, nevertheless, such claims do suggest that something about numinous experience must lead one to the conclusion that it is to be distinguished from a linguistic point of view from all other experiences. Consequently, we are forced to recognize a profound tension in the argument of The Idea of the Holy between two contrary conceptions of the relationship between language and numinous experience, and I want to conclude this chapter by offering my own account of how this tension might be eliminated.

I suggest that Otto's oscillation between these two theories of the relationship between language and numinous feeling must reflect an important distinction between different moments of numinous experience. The tremendum and the fascinans moments of numinous experience are clearly patient of a substantial amount of rational analysis which is inappropriate to the mysterium moment of numinous experience. The mysterium is 'wholly other',

that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment.(157)

The 'wholly other' is also said to be

beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but (also) because....before (it) we....recoil in a wonder which strikes us chill and numb.(158)

Furthermore, Otto seems to associate the 'wholly other' particularly closely with mysticism and suggests, reflecting his Friesian idealism, that although conceptual designations of mystical states of consciousness are negative, the feelings they refer to are positive.(159) Obviously, the Friesian distinction between Glaube and Anndung forms the background to Otto's thinking about the relations, or rather the lack of relations, between language and the mysterium moment of numinous experience, and again, it is equally apparent that this Friesian distinction is much more appropriate to mystical experience than to other forms of religious experience.(160) Here at last, then, in the distinction between the tremendum, fascinans and mysterium moments of the numinous, we find some explanation for the conflicting strands of thought concerning relations between language and numinous experience in The Idea of the Holy.

Clearly the tremendum and fascinans moment of numinous experience are capable of far more definition than that of the mysterium. They are like other feelings to the extent that they possess particular qualities

which, while incapable of literal description, are to some degree accessible through metaphor. By contrast, metaphor can convey almost nothing about the mysterium. That is its distinctive mark.(161)

With these comments in mind, we are led to two important concluding observations. The first refers to Bambrough's complaint that Otto, in claiming that religious experience is inexpressible, has constructed artificial and unnecessary limits to our reason and language, and thereby deceived himself and others into believing that there are absolute limits to our understanding when there are none.(162) I argued earlier that Bambrough was mistaken about Otto's intentions, that Otto, far from underestimating the limits of reason, was continually striving to extend them. Clearly this assertion must now be qualified. Although Otto was constantly pushing at the edges of reason in order to define, and to understand, the tremendum and the fascinans moments of numinous experience, this was not the case with the mysterium moment of numinous feeling concerning which he believed that there definitely are limits to reason. On the other hand, although we can now see that Bambrough had, in fact, located a claim about the limits of reason in Otto's work, it is clear that he was mistaken about the meaning of that claim. What Bambrough has done is to confuse one ineffability claim with another. He has assumed that Otto was making a general, absolute claim about emotional ineffability, whereas, in fact, he was making a much more narrowly defined, qualified ineffability claim about the mysterium moment of numinous experience.

The second observation concerns Wainwright's questioning of the assumption of many recent scholars, such as Katz, that mystical experience is substantially, if not totally, determined by the religious tradition to which the mystic belongs.(163) Wainwright has suggested that the contribution of the religious tradition to any mystical experience may be comparatively negligible, and his observations lead us to speculate that

the degree to which a mystical tradition will influence mystical experience is likely to vary from one experience to another, one context to another, perhaps even one moment to another. Certainly, we are neither entitled to assume that any mystical experience is substantially constituted by its tradition, nor that the relationship between experience and tradition is unlikely to change. Now I suggest that such observations about tradition and experience can lead us to a more discriminating understanding of Otto's ideas about the relationship between language and experience. It is plausible to speculate (although Otto himself did not) that the mysterium moments of numinous experience, because they are least accessible through language, are those which are least constituted or influenced by religious tradition,⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ whereas non-religious experiences are largely determined by their cultural contexts and amenable to a substantial amount of linguistic definition, and the tremendum and fascinans moments of numinous experience lie somewhere between these two extremes.

In fact if this hypothesis is plausible, then the tremendum and fascinans moments of numinous experience, although comparable with other emotional and aesthetic feelings, are likely to be less determined by their tradition than these non-religious feelings. Indeed, on this basis we could then argue that the limits of reason or language of the tremendum and fascinans moments of numinous experience are likely to be more sharply defined than those of their non-religious analogues. For example, we should be able to say less about numinous awe than about non-religious forms of awe, and this would warn us not only that numinous awe is less familiar than other forms of awe, not only that we need a special religious word, perhaps even a religious vocabulary, to help us to distinguish numinous awe from similar non-religious feelings, but also

that numinous awe is less accessible to language and reason than non-religious forms of awe, although, of course, more accessible to language than the mysterium moments of numinous feeling.

Chapter IVOtto's Contribution to the Phenomenology of Religion(i) Some Preliminary Observations

Otto has been one of the most important exponents this century for a unique, irreducible, religious consciousness. Through the introduction of the term numinous, he has attempted to delineate an elusive, transient and largely shapeless experience which, while in some respects similar to other elusive, transient and largely shapeless feelings such as aesthetic and moral feelings, possesses qualities which distinguish it from all other feelings and make it what it is, religious experience. Otto draws our attention to similarities between religious and non-religious feelings, only in order to underline the differences between them; and having done this, he insists that this unique religious consciousness that he has delineated lies at the centre of religious life, and that we can only understand all the visible dimensions of religion (theology, religious institutions, ritual and art) in the light of such consciousness. Numinous experience should govern the direction of all studies of religion. This means not only that students of religions need a religious sensitivity, and that those without prior acquaintance with numinous experience are incapable of fully understanding religious phenomena, but also that Otto challenges the reductionist approaches to religion of sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and others who insist on interpreting religious phenomena completely within the context of non-religious areas of human experience and activity. For Otto, religious life and experience are not epiphenomena of something non-religious, and can only be criticized from within a specifically religious context.(1)

Furthermore, Otto argues that religious discourse has its own peculiar structure just as other areas of language, such as morals and aesthetics, possess their own characteristic forms of inference, and that this distinctive structure of religious discourse may, on the one hand, be an expression of prior religious experience and, on the other, take its form from its ability to arouse subsequent numinous experience.(2)

However, in order to comprehend fully Otto's thinking on the distinctive nature of religious discourse, we must remember what John Moore calls Otto's 'exaggerated apriorism', that is his suggestion that rational language (schemata) about religion must be understood as a priori in the psychological sense introduced in chapter II of this essay (referring away from all empirical experience). This argument concerning rational apriorism is one of the most important observations that Otto has made in The Idea of the Holy, and yet it is remarkable that it should remain unnoticed by writers who have been involved in the phenomenology of religion. Otto argues that only the religiously sensitive man, as opposed to the profane or the 'natural' man, can understand religious discourse,(3) and this is because he alone is capable of the act of 'exaggerated apriorism', this refusal to allow empirical experience to contradict the truths of reason discovered in inner religious life. It is an awareness, and understanding, of this 'exaggerated apriorism', we should conclude, which Otto believes that every student of religion should possess, although inevitably the scholar will recognize his distance from this apriorism.

Now phenomenologists of religion interpret Otto to be recommending a religious subjectivity, and emphasizing the 'wholly other' nature of numinous experience to such a degree that religious experience is totally separated from other forms of experience, including rational experience, but this is only because they have not to date recognized that, to repeat, one of the most important dimensions of this religious subjectivity is

Otto's rational apriorism. This rational apriorism needs to be understood by phenomenologists of religion, if they are to be sensitive to the distinctive features of religious life. They must be aware of the possibility of such apriorism significantly influencing religious behaviour and experience, and must be prepared to take steps to measure its effects on religious life. Of course, study of this apriorism, because of the difficulty of collecting evidence for it, will not be easy,⁽⁴⁾ but it is clear that Otto has located an important area of religious life which phenomenologists of religion have for a variety of reasons ignored.⁽⁵⁾

Similarly, the phenomenologist of religion must be aware that much of his material may be coloured by a religious consciousness of an a priori connection between rational schemata and the numinous. Once again, the task of the phenomenologist is to take steps to establish whether, in fact, there is any evidence for the a priori category of the holy in particular traditions. Clearly, on the basis of the material in The Idea of the Holy, there is some evidence for the a priori category of the holy in some religious traditions, but such evidence as there is is scattered and therefore inconclusive. Thus there is need of more systematic research before we can begin to hypothesize about typical or even universal patterns in the development of religions.⁽⁶⁾

Finally, the phenomenologist of religion should be much more attentive to another dimension of religious experience which is an expression of Otto's exaggerated apriorism, namely, what Otto has called the 'divination of the objective teleology of history'. To date, phenomenologists of religion have given little attention to this dimension of religious experience, perhaps because of the mistaken belief that it is only to be found within the Christian tradition, perhaps because of the assumption that it is not as significant as the more dramatic religious experiences that Otto calls numinous experiences. However, as I

emphasized in chapter II of this essay, the term divination for Otto means a more sustained, if less intense, form of experience which provides the background to both numinous experience and religious speculation, so that divination may contribute to the stimulation of intense or dramatic religious experiences. Obviously, Otto's concept of divination is a significant factor in religious life which phenomenologists of religion should not ignore.(7)

Clearly, while it is widely recognized that Otto has made a significant contribution to the foundations of phenomenology of religion, there is obviously still much more in his work which needs to be digested by contemporary scholarship. However, although Otto's work is far from being completely understood by more recent phenomenologists of religion, we can make some progress towards a clarification of Otto's place in the history of phenomenology of religion, by comparing his work with that of other writers who make no secret of their great intellectual debt to him, as well as those who respond more critically to his ideas. In fact, I want to compare Otto's ideas with those of four writers who have been influenced either positively or negatively by his theories, Gerardus van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade both profoundly influenced by Otto, and Jacques Waardenburg and Ninian Smart who, while recognizing the great value of Otto's work, have attempted to respond to what they see as weaknesses in his methodology.

(ii) A Comparison of Gerardus Van Der Leeuw's Phenomenology of Religion with Otto's Methodological Observations concerning the Study of Religions.

I turn first to consider the work of Gerardus van der Leeuw, the Dutch phenomenologist of religion, where Otto's influence is particularly transparent; and I begin by offering an introductory explanation of his methodological position. Van der Leeuw believed that the phenomenology of religion should include both a cataloguing of religious phenomena and

some exercise of subjective understanding by the scholar (reflecting the influence of Dilthey on his work). Phenomenology of religion requires not only meticulous observation of religious reality but also systematic introspection by the observer, and thus the phenomenologist should, in addition to providing a description of religious phenomena from outside the tradition, allow these phenomena to enter his own inner life and then testify to what he has experienced. Phenomenology is therefore the discussion of appearances when these have been internalised by the scholar, and although it demands a 'bracketing out' of all theoretical presuppositions concerning what appears, such scholarly understanding also rather paradoxically involves the 'loving gaze of the lover on the beloved object' since all understanding rests upon self-surrendering love. Van der Leeuw, in fact, sees phenomenology of religion as combining a religious subjectivity with a 'pure objectivity' which he evidently does not regard as being mutually exclusive, and he summarizes the task of the phenomenologist in the following five stages:

- I. To assign names to groups of religious phenomena, e.g. sacrifice, prayer etc.
- II To experience religious phenomena subjectively.
- III. To withdraw to one side and observe what one has experienced. This is the act of objectivity which involves bracketing out premature and unfounded truth-claims, and is known as the process of epoché.
- IV. To clarify and comprehend what appears, the fully formed phenomenon.
- V. To testify to what has been understood.(8)

Clearly, van der Leeuw's methodological position owes much to Otto's work and suffers from similar difficulties. Like Otto, van der Leeuw was a theologian as well as a phenomenologist of religion(9) and, like Otto, he has been accused of using phenomenology as a form of theological propaedeutics. It is for this reason that commentators have been so suspicious of the demand of both scholars that the student of religion

must possess a religious sensitivity and exercise his subjectivity in order to understand religious phenomena in their entirety. Like van der Leeuw's ideas, Otto's comments on religious experience possess the semblance of objective reports about religious appearances. They appear to be masterpieces of phenomenological reporting, but critics suspect them of being only disguised forms of theology.

There are real methodological difficulties with the claim of Otto and van der Leeuw that the scholar should exercise his subjectivity in the study of religious phenomena, although it is an understandable response to a genuine problem in the history of phenomenology of religion. Otto and van der Leeuw have justifiably argued that the effect of insisting upon detached empirical studies of religion is often to produce reductionist accounts of religious phenomena, even to identify such detached empirical studies with reductionist forms of scholarship which pay little attention to what is distinctly religious in religious phenomena, and they conclude that the distance between the scholar and religious phenomena, which is created by what they see as the spiritually anaesthetizing effect of the unhealthy 20th century emphasis on empiricism, destroys his understanding and appreciation of them. Only through some profound religious sympathy can the scholar comprehend religious phenomena from within a religious tradition rather than from outside it.

However, the problem of religious understanding is rather more complex than this. What Otto and van der Leeuw overlook is that the scholar's religious subjectivity is as likely to distort as to enhance his understanding of phenomena of another religious tradition, since no religious sensitivity can be free from cultural parochialism. Otto and van der Leeuw attempted in their study of religious phenomena to move from a position of religious outsiders to one of religious insiders, but all they have done is to create another category of religious outsiders comparable to that of reductionist students of religion. No religious

subjectivity can be abstracted from any particular tradition. Thus, when Otto and van der Leeuw claim to be exercising a religious sensitivity which is appropriate to the study of phenomena from many religious traditions, we must counter that they are, in fact, only working with a Lutheran Christian sensitivity which is in principle as likely to distort the interpretation of religious phenomena as any other form of religious sensitivity or the lack of it.(10)

Rather, if we are to arrive at an understanding of religious phenomena of other cultures which is free of distortion we must be guided (at least initially) by those scholars who insist that the religious subject is the final authority concerning his religious experiences, and that these are accessible not through some scholarly religious sensitivity but through ordinary empirical research. The guiding principle for phenomenological research should be that if we want to discover what it is like to be a religious insider, we must assume that the believer in any particular tradition is the only reliable source of information concerning this (assuming that he is truly representative of his tradition).(11)

This is a methodological position which, as we shall see, has been adopted by both Jacques Waardenburg and Ninian Smart in their efforts to respond critically but creatively to the writings of Otto and van der Leeuw. However, as we shall also see, Mircea Eliade's position by contrast reflects the confidence of Otto and van der Leeuw in the exercise of religious subjectivity.(12)

There is also another revealing similarity between the work of Otto and that of van der Leeuw. Van der Leeuw was much absorbed by the concept of holiness, reflecting equally the influence of Otto and of the Swedish theologian, Nathan Söderblom. However, he attempted to give this concept of holiness substance by focusing his attention on the experience of religious power, the evidence for which he believed he had found in ethnological literature about primitive societies. Particularly

encouraged by the reports of the missionary Codrington and later by Robert Marett's writings on the Melanesian term mana, the Iroquois term orenda, the Sioux term wakanda and many references in other languages to sacred or supernatural power, van der Leeuw concluded that this experience of power was quite common and concrete in the natural setting. Religious power can be discovered in the natural environment, that is, provided it is not obscured by excessive theoretical speculation about such power. Thus this power has been, according to ethnological reports, discovered in primitive societies through immediate acquaintance with unusual places, unusual people (especially people with charisma) and unusual objects (especially extraordinary natural objects), and man's customary reaction to such sacred power tends to be amazement (Scheu) and in extreme cases fear, although van der Leeuw also approves of Marett's term 'awe'.(13)

Clearly, van der Leeuw's ideas on power are similar to Otto's writings about numinous experience, and just as Otto criticizes the rationalization of religion where reason may completely overshadow the numinous, so van der Leeuw recognizes that it is speculation about religious power, the attempt to impose order on it through interpretation and explanation, which distorts and even obscures it. Nothing is more likely to neutralize the immediate experience of power than constant theoretical reflection on it. Moreover, just as Otto attempts to reawaken a sensitivity to numinous experience in his readers by attempting to describe it in The Idea of the Holy, so similarly, van der Leeuw in his many references to religious power also seeks to awaken a sensitivity in his readers to the religious power which can be discovered in the natural environment around them.

Accordingly, we can conclude that there are many similarities between the theories of van der Leeuw and Otto, although we must not lose sight of significant differences between their positions as well. Apart from the Friesian idealism which informs Otto's thought, perhaps one of the most

important differences between the work of Otto and that of van der Leeuw can be traced to the latter's lack of interest in the history of religious phenomena, both the development of religions and the origins of religion or religions, whereas by contrast Otto seems to have been very interested in the history of religions, albeit, as we have shown, in a manner which is incapable of taking account of the complexities of religious development. In fact, van der Leeuw avoided historical study of religions precisely in response to what he saw as the mistaken theories about the evolution of religions and the possibility of discovering the origins of religion which Otto, like so many of his contemporaries, had adopted.

(iii) A Comparison of Mircea Eliade's History of Religions with Otto's Methodological Observations concerning the Study of Religions

Otto's observations concerning the study of religions can also with profit be compared with the methodological ideas on the study of religion of Mircea Eliade. Like van der Leeuw, Eliade has vigorously defended the exercise of religious subjectivity by the student of religion, and has insisted on the irreducibility of religious experience. Eliade speaks about the history of religions rather than phenomenology of religion, but it is quite clear that, like van der Leeuw and Otto, he wishes to challenge the reductionist approaches to religion of sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and others, and to create a discipline which will study religions as distinctly religious phenomena rather than by reference to anything else. Eliade believes that the study of religions must respect the intentionality of religious phenomena, something which social scientific studies of religion are incapable of doing; and, in particular, studies of religion must illuminate what is

fundamental in all religious life right across the world, the opposition of the sacred to the profane which expresses the irreducibility of the religious.

This concept of the dialectic of the sacred and the profane is obviously indebted to Otto's thinking about the 'wholly other' nature of the numinous, but Eliade's interest in the 'sacred' is not confined to personal religious experience. He sees the opposition of the sacred to the profane also in much institutional religious life, in ritual practice especially at festival times, in places of worship and in myths and theologies; and he has focused his attention on two principal expressions of this opposition between the sacred and the profane, sacred time (including festival time, mythical time, no time, eternity) as opposed to profane time (that is ordinary chronological history) and sacred space (the space inclosed by the place of worship) as opposed to profane space. Non-religious man lives in profane time and profane space. He knows of no distinction between the sacred and the profane. By contrast, homo religiosus consciously lives in two worlds, the sacred world and the profane world, and this experience in turn gives rise to some of Eliade's other distinctive concepts, his 'archetypes' (reflecting the profound influence of C.G. Jung), his 'myth of the eternal return' which denies the value of history, his interest in creation myths and his belief that the sacred and profane dialectic can be expressed as an opposition between the real and the unreal or between cosmos and chaos.(14)

Eliade is also, like Otto, interested in dialogue between religions, and just as Otto in the 1920's attempted to promote international co-operation between different religious communities and traditions in the hope of bringing about world peace and consciousness of universal fraternity, so Eliade more recently has with Joachim Wach affirmed the 'spiritual', as opposed to the academic, value of the comparative study of religions, and insisted that the purpose of such study should be to

promote renewed cultural and religious dialogue among the member nations of our global village. The purpose of such dialogue today is not only to eliminate cultural and religious parochialism and so create more toleration between members of different religious traditions. Students of comparative religion should also learn to deepen their spiritual understanding of their own religious traditions through a confrontation with the religious traditions of others, just as Eliade himself believes he has found a deeper understanding of his own Orthodox tradition through his experiences with Indian religions. Eliade insists that those who practice the academic study of comparative religion have a responsibility to become the world leaders of cultural dialogue, in fact, the leaders of what he calls the 'New Humanism', and he is critical of those scholars who reject such responsibility and hide behind an objective antiquarianism. Like Otto, Eliade is an impassioned internationalist, convinced of the 'spiritual' value of the growth of cultural dialogue.(15)

However, perhaps the most revealing similarity between the work of Otto and Eliade lies elsewhere. I refer to the resemblance of Otto's claim that religious discourse has a peculiar a priori structure to Eliade's claim that rituals and symbols of 'traditional' societies have a distinctive religious meaning which is unintelligible to the non-religious observer. Now the details of these claims are certainly in some respects different, since there is no trace of the Jungianism of Eliade's work in Otto's writings. Nevertheless, the similarity between Eliade's ideas about the distinctive quality of religious thinking and consciousness and Otto's claim about religious discourse is impressive, and tends to suggest that both methodological positions share similar strengths and suffer from similar weaknesses.

Of course, Eliade has much to say about archetypes and symbols as an expression of religious consciousness and, in particular, about what he calls the restructuring of religious materials so that the language of

archetypes can be discovered hidden within them. Symbols have a metacultural and metahistorical meaning which is typically buried beneath the weight of meaningless empirical detail, and this meaning can only be discovered by the 'historian of religion' who possesses the appropriate religious sensitivity (a consciousness basically informed by Jungian ideas). Such a historian of religion can do what no social scientist can; he can 'open up' religious symbols to the sacred.⁽¹⁶⁾ However, Eliade's critics who do not possess the same religious sensitivity have argued that his archetypes and 'logic of symbolism' cannot be discovered within concrete religious history, and that much of his writing on the metacultural and metahistorical meaning of symbols cannot qualify as disciplined 'history of religions', since it rejects many of the principles of empiricism, in particular, being vulnerable to the charge of unfalsifiability. There is no conceivable ethnological evidence, the critics point out, which would lead Eliade to change his mind concerning many of his ideas connected with his argument about archetypes and symbols, and yet it is such ideas which, he believes, are expressive of what is distinctive about religious consciousness.⁽¹⁷⁾

Now what is interesting here about this observation is that Eliade's methodology appears to suffer from the same 'exaggerated apriorism' as Otto's. Eliade appears to assume that the ultimate meaning of visible religious phenomena can only be established by the student of religion, when he looks into his own inner religious life and ensures that his experiences of this inner world govern, determine or even correct, his interpretation of the concrete religious materials he is studying, whether these belong to his co-religionists or to people who are culturally far removed from him. Similarly, he seems to suggest that an ultimate understanding of religious history is again primarily determined by the scholars own inner religious life rather than by any perhaps contrary, documentary evidence.

Thus, for example, we should conclude that Eliade discovered Jungian meanings behind all concrete religious symbolism and a 'progressional view of hierophanies' in the evolutionary history of religions by simply sinking into his own religious subjectivity, and only later searched for corroborating evidence for such experience in concrete religious history. Similarly, we know that Otto discovered a progressive schematization of the numinous in the evolutionary history of religions (which is felt inwardly to possess absolute necessity) and realized through divination that Christianity embodies the perfect expression of this process (the goal of the evolutionary history of holiness), again by simply looking into his own inner religious life and then seeking confirmation for the truths discovered there from the 'pages of history'. Clearly, both Otto and Eliade are radical idealists as well as committed Christians. It may be the case that Eliade has been more influenced by Otto than he has explicitly acknowledged, especially when we take account of Eliade's revealing comment about Otto 'most probably tacitly claiming for himself the role of reconciler of pagan philosophy with Christian revelation,' that is the role of 'mediator between revelatio generalis and revelatio specialis, between Indo-Aryan and Semitic religious thought, between Eastern and Western types of mysticism,'⁽¹⁸⁾ a role which Eliade would surely claim for himself!

(iv) A Comparison of the Phenomenology of Religion of Jacques Waardenburg and Ninian Smart with Otto's Methodological Observations concerning the Study of Religions.

However, I now want to turn to consider Otto's methodological position in the light of the work of two contemporary phenomenologists of religion, who have attempted to respond to his ideas on the value of religious sensitivity in the scholar critically but creatively by arguing that, although no such sensitivity can be impartial and must, therefore,

be rejected as a hermeneutical tool if phenomenology is to remain free of bias, the study of religion should, nevertheless, not be reduced to sociological, anthropological, psychological, or even historical or philological research which refuses to take any account of the irreducibly religious dimension of religious phenomena.

The first scholar I want to consider is Jacques Waardenburg, who argues that the primary purpose of phenomenology of religion should be the study of religious intentions which inform religious life. All religious life, he assumes, is visible and, therefore, accessible to disciplined research, and we can discover the meaning of it by studying the religious ideals or objectives which motivate religious behaviour. Through this device of seeking the religious reasons for religious behaviour (ritual, doctrinal and experiential), Waardenburg believes that the phenomenology of religion can become an academic discipline which, while respecting the irreducibly religious nature of religious behaviour, acquires for itself the status of a human science, since, like all other types of empirical enquiries, it seeks to support its conclusions inductively by appeal to hard evidence. Religious intentions are in principle as amenable to scientific study through such hard evidence as any other dimensions of human life. Thus phenomenology of religion in Waardenburg's hands succeeds in respecting that which is unique in religion, while at the same time being a valuable scientific discipline.⁽¹⁹⁾

There is much of value in Waardenburg's account of phenomenology of religion, but it creates some difficulties as well. It is certainly true that we can learn much about religious life by studying religious intentions, but we cannot learn everything about it in this way. There are, in fact, two kinds of methodological problem created by Waardenburg's model of phenomenology of religion. The first is the result of Waardenburg's failure to take account of the observation of many anthropologists, who have discovered through their field work how

difficult it often is to ascertain the meaning of religious behaviour. So often researchers complain that getting the right answers about religious intentions depends upon asking the right questions, and in any case they insist that research demonstrates over and over again that, even if one is convinced that one has found the right questions to ask, the answers one receives to such questions are not always precise, unambiguous, properly thought out or even truthful! (For instance, if a religious specialist does not like a question, his reply may not be trustworthy.) Clearly, there are a host of difficulties here which Waardenburg appears to be unaware of.

The second problem is even more damaging. If, as I have argued in chapter III of this essay, Otto's claim that a dimension of religious experience is inexpressible, that is that religious experience to some degree transcends all religious language about it, is coherent, this suggests that the meaning of religious behaviour cannot be restricted to what can be articulated about it. In other words, when we have discovered the avowed religious intentions which incite religious behaviour, we have not exhausted its meaning which may be able to trace its origins to any number of subtle but elusive and inexpressible feelings. Since religious intentions must be expressed in language, this must mean that many areas of inner religious life are likely to slip through the net of Waardenburg's phenomenology, which we are now in a position to conclude must be a form of subtle reductionism (albeit not possessing the weaknesses of many other more obviously reductionist studies of sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists, etc.)(20)

The second scholar I want to consider is Ninian Smart. Smart has struggled with the problem of the status of the phenomenologist of religion and the nature of his understanding of religion. Acutely aware of the difficulties of the religious subjectivity argument of Otto and van der Leeuw, profoundly influenced by van der Leeuw's injunction to practice

epoché (the 'bracketing out' of all theoretical presuppositions which obscure naked experience) and reconciled to the impossibility of the scholar ever becoming a religious insider (that is capable of experiencing the materials of another religious tradition in exactly the same way as the religious believer within that tradition experiences them), Smart has attempted to give the phenomenology of religion a new definition.

Since the phenomenologist of religion is banished to the position of religious outsider, Smart considers what, in fact, he is doing, and argues that he is rather like an actor or a fiction writer, who can imaginatively and sensitively enter into a situation and reproduce a verbal or visual semblance of it, while 'bracketing out' questions concerning the truth of reality claims implicitly or explicitly avowed by it. In other words, while a phenomenologist of religion can never have the same experiences as the religious insider he studies, he can sympathetically, even enthusiastically, contemplate such experiences and then produce accurate reports about them without allowing either premature theoretical presuppositions or sentiments of aesthetic or moral preference to interfere with such scholarly activity. Now Smart does not pretend that this exercise is an easy one, and recognizes the demands which are thereby placed on the phenomenologist of religion. But he argues that there are good and bad phenomenologists of religion, just as there are good and bad actors and fiction writers. Phenomenology of religion is, in other words, a skill which some people possess and others do not, just as many people are incapable of discovering within themselves the creative empathy which is needed by a fine actor or writer.(21)

Smart has obviously reformulated van der Leeuw's concept of epoché and responded to the challenge of the irreducibility of the religious with considerable skill, thereby offering a sophisticated account of phenomenology of religion which has much to recommend it. Smart, while accepting that there must always be a distance between the scholar and the

religious subjects he studies, has attempted to shorten that distance and to present the phenomenological contemplation of religion as an activity of an outsider who is much closer to the religious materials he studies than either the detached and often remote agnostic or atheist or the passionate, enthusiastic, but inevitably biased Christian. In this sense, phenomenology of religion is a genuine, independent discipline with a particular intellectual function which, while using much that may be offered by theology on the one hand and the social sciences on the other, is not to be confused with, or reduced to, either.(22)

However, although Smart's concept of phenomenology of religion represents a valuable contribution to contemporary methodological debate, it is not without its difficulties as well. The most important problem for Smart's methodological position is that there is a real danger that phenomenology of religion in his hands will degenerate into a kind of aesthetic appreciation of religious life which overlooks important dimensions of religious experience,(23) and, in particular, that it will create a hermeneutical distance between the phenomenologist and what he studies which is comparable to that created by aesthetic contemplation. After all, the distance between the phenomenologist and his subject must surely mirror the distance between the actor or the writer and his subject.

Accordingly, although the phenomenologist may be able to combine the act of bracketing out truth claims with an enthusiasm for, sensitivity to, and an empathy with the religious materials he is studying, he will not, regardless of how skilful he is, be able to avoid some recognition of his distance from those materials and especially from their challenging and possibly threatening nature. The phenomenologist's observation from a position outside a religious tradition must to some degree diminish his understanding of the divine authority which is immediately felt by

religious believers within it, and this proposition is particularly well illustrated by his failure to eliminate the distance between himself and the concrete experience of religious value.

Now Otto devoted much of his energy to emphasizing the value dimension of numinous experience, speaking in The Idea of the Holy of the sacred as a category of valuation and distinguishing between the experience of subjective value, the source of which is the fascinans moment of the numinous, and objective value, a value independent of any beneficial subjective experience which he calls the fourth element of the numinous, the augustum, in the face of which the self is disvalued.⁽²⁴⁾ He also stressed that this augustum dimension of religious experience is the source of the consciousness of sin which is not to be confused with any moral feelings of unrighteousness,⁽²⁵⁾ and in later works he did even more to emphasize this distinctive experience of religious value.⁽²⁶⁾ It is this experience of religious value, the augustum, which is in danger of being distorted by the hermeneutical distance created by Smart's phenomenology of religion, and we can conclude this discussion with the observation that Smart appears to be unaware of the general tendency of his phenomenology of religion to obscure to some degree the axiological dimension of religious experience. (Incidentally, this conclusion is not called into question by the kind of cross-cultural study of religious values and obligations which is to be found in Smart's work, since such study cannot significantly compensate for the hermeneutical distance or distortion which is created by the phenomenological act of bracketing out truth claims.)

Having attempted to situate Otto's work within the history of phenomenology of religion by examining some of the ideas of four thinkers who have in important ways responded to his methodological observations

concerning the study of religions, I want now to review some of the other significant problems regarding the argument of The Idea of the Holy.

(v) Otto's Christian Theology of World Religions

Of course, Otto's account of the historical evolution of holiness and its perfection in Christianity has received much criticism from phenomenologists of religion. As I have already indicated, the history of religion by no means provides irrefutable evidence for the progressive schematization of the numinous, since so often rationalization of the numinous is followed by reactions against such rationalization.(27)

Again, the evolution of the numinous and its development into more intense and purer forms is unlikely,(28) and in any case such a development of the numinous would be difficult to demonstrate through appeal to the materials of the history of religions. It is difficult to envisage how empirical materials could demonstrate that one instance of numinous experience really was more intense, pure or profound than another. Again, it is not obvious that the development of the numinous and schematization of the numinous generally take place together and remain in step in the evolution of any particular religious tradition.(29) Once again, the evidence of the history of religions in this context can lead us to no unequivocal conclusions.

Nevertheless, although the history of religions is ambiguous concerning any general patterns in the development of religious traditions, in other words, although Otto's account of the progressive schematization of the numinous in history invites criticism when understood as phenomenology of religion (not least because Otto believes Christianity to be the perfect expression of schematization of the numinous and the fulfilment of the evolutionary history of religions), this same account assumes an altogether different quality when interpreted as a Christian theology of world religions.

In fact, I suggest that Otto's writings about the progressive schematization of the numinous in the history of religions (that is his observations about the superiority of Christianity over other religious traditions and the evaluation of different religious traditions on the basis of the extent to which the numinous in each has been imperfectly rationalized or moralized)(30) should be understood as primarily offering a Christian theology of world religions, and one sufficiently interesting and original for contemporary theologians engaged in evaluating non-Christian religious traditions to find much which is challenging in it. If one of the principal tasks of the theologian of world religions is to define the theological presuppositions which are the foundations upon which his evaluation of religions is based, if he must offer an account of the criteria which lead him to his particular appreciation and criticism of non-Christian religious traditions, then Otto's suggestion that religions be graded according to the extent of schematization constitutes one such possible criterion which, although implicit in much contemporary Christian theology of world religions, is rarely explicitly acknowledged or discussed.

What is surprising is that contemporary literature on the theology of world religions fails to mention Otto and his work on the progressive rationalization of religions,(31) even though he believed that the comparative study of religion would demonstrate that Christianity is the fulfilment of all religion, a theme which preoccupied many liberal theologians at the beginning of the century. What is perhaps particularly surprising is that nobody has noticed the significant similarities between the ideas of Otto and the fulfilment theology of the influential theologian John Nicol Farquhar.(32)

However, what is distinctive in Otto's evaluation of non-Christian religious traditions, what is original in his theology of world religions which contemporary theologians sooner or later will have to respond to,

originates in the psychology of schematization which I have now already mentioned on so many occasions. That is his belief that there is a felt necessary connection between the rational and the numinous in the holy. Clearly, this example of what I have called Otto's 'exaggerated apriorism' must significantly affect the meaning of his theology of world religions and, in particular, must make any religious tradition where there is little schematization of the numinous appear remote to the Christian. In other words, the felt necessity of the process of progressive schematization of the numinous in the evolutionary history of religion must make inter-religious dialogue between the Christian and representative of less rationalized religious traditions such as Islam and primitive religions more difficult than it might otherwise be.(33)

(vi) The Difficulty of Distinguishing between Numinous and Sublime Experiences in Other Cultures

There are also two other significant criticisms of Otto's The Idea of the Holy, so far not mentioned, which need some discussion. The first concerns the difficulty which the scholar has of distinguishing between numinous and sublime experiences mediated by the art of other cultures which Otto refuses to acknowledge. Now there is no doubt that Otto himself creates this difficulty in part by drawing attention to important similarities and connections between the numinous and the sublime in the religious traditions he studies. For instance, he understands the sublime as an important means of expression of the numinous,⁽³⁴⁾ as well as capable of schematizing, that is evoking, it.⁽³⁵⁾ He also believes that the sublime is like the numinous in that it approaches, or threatens to extend beyond, the bounds of our understanding by some dynamic or mathematical greatness, by potent manifestations of force or by magnitude in spatial extent. A thing is not sublime merely because of its greatness; rather, the concept of the sublime, like the numinous, is in

Kantian language unexplicated or cannot be unfolded, and because of this has in it something mysterious. Moreover, the sublime, like the numinous, is ambivalent, being at the same time both daunting and yet attractive, humbling and yet exalting, circumscribing and yet extending us beyond ourselves, producing in us both fear and joy.(36) Clearly, if the sublime is also, like the numinous, to some extent inexpressible, then one may be forgiven perhaps for finding difficulty in distinguishing between the two.(37) And yet Otto insists that, in spite of all the similarities between the sublime and the numinous, as well as the connections between them, they are distinguishable by the religiously sensitive scholar. What are the problems which such a claim creates for the phenomenology of religion?

We must begin to answer this question, by first establishing what are the most serious difficulties in Otto's position here and what are the less serious problems concerning his claim about distinguishing between numinous and sublime experiences in other cultures. It is clear, for instance, from Otto's extensive analysis of the numinous early in The Idea of the Holy that there are, contrary to the claims just made, a host of qualitative differences between the numinous and the sublime. This is not where Otto's most serious problem lies. Otto's detailed account of the numinous elements of awfulness, overpoweringness, energy or urgency, and the fascinating, as well as his analysis of the mysterium, lend support to his repeated, emphatic claim that numinous and sublime experiences cannot be confused. Of course, the existence of such detailed analyses of the distinctive qualities of numinous experience should not lead us to suppose that there are no difficulties at all for Otto's claim regarding the distinction between numinous and sublime experience; only that the problems here are less damaging to Otto's argument than those we shall discuss later. Let us, therefore, first of

all examine these less serious problems, before proceeding to the most important criticisms which should be made of Otto's account of the relationship between the numinous and the sublime.

The first problem to consider is that since the differences between the numinous and the sublime are very subtle (due in large part to Otto's elevated concept of the sublime), it may often be very difficult to find sufficiently detailed reports of other cultures which can confirm the scholar's intuition of these differences. Very often, the scholar may be forced to recognize (due to the lack of sufficient information in the reports under scrutiny) that he will have to remain uncertain as to whether particular reports are evidence of numinous or sublime experience. Moreover, as we have observed earlier, (see notes 10 and 11 above) although we accept that the scholar's numinous sensibility allows him to argue inferentially from means of expression of the numinous and reports of religious experience (consisting of analogies and ideograms for numinous experience) to numinous experience in other religious traditions, we must recognize that the scholar's numinous sensibility is vulnerable to error. In particular, since expressions of the numinous and the sublime vary from culture to culture, the scholar's assumptions about customary means of expression of the numinous in his own religious tradition may well lead him to misinterpret means of expression of the numinous in other religious traditions. It is here, if anywhere, that there is a danger that the scholar may impose his own cultural prejudices on the religious materials he studies and thus distort them. This is how, for example, the scholar may misinterpret means of expression of the numinous as means of expression of the sublime, or even means of expression of some other form of aesthetic experience.

However, these observations about the scholar's occasional difficulties in distinguishing between numinous and sublime experiences in other cultures should not lead us to question the very plausibility of the

sui generis religious category of the numinous, one of Otto's most important contributions to the phenomenology of religion.(38) Just because there are occasions when it will be difficult for the scholar to establish from the empirical evidence available where the sublime ends and the numinous begins, this does not mean that we are entitled to conclude that Otto's general distinction between the numinous and the sublime is unintelligible. We can afford to recognize that there may be reports of experiences where the scholar feels some uncertainty concerning whether they are of the numinous or the sublime, without such an observation leading us to conclude that, therefore, the distinction between the numinous and the sublime is unconvincing. The scholar, on the basis of the majority of ethnological materials presented to him, will find no difficulty distinguishing numinous from sublime experiences, and the few exceptions to this general rule should not undermine his confidence in this taxonomic principle.

However, as I have already indicated, this is not the most challenging problem concerning Otto's account of the relationship between the numinous and the sublime. A far more serious problem lies in Otto's claim that in art an effective, indeed perhaps the most effective, means of expression of the numinous is the sublime. Otto discusses several examples of the sublime as an indirect means of representing the numinous, arguing that the sublime has the power to evoke numinous experience through the principle of the association of analogous feelings. In art, only the 'magical' can compete with the sublime as an effective means of expressing and exciting numinous experience. But the problem with this claim is that, since the sublime is a means of expression of two forms of experience, a religious and an aesthetic experience, and since the scholar's knowledge of numinous experience in other cultures must be indirect, that is, inferential (as previously explained, from means of expression of the numinous to the numinous experience itself), this means

that independent evidence is needed to establish that on any particular occasion numinous experience is accompanying the experience of the sublime. Concrete religious testimony needs to be provided (in the form of reports of religious experience, consisting of recognizable analogies and ideograms for numinous experience) to demonstrate when the experience of the sublime excites (by the law of the association of analogous feelings) numinous experience; otherwise, how is a scholar outside a religious tradition to recognize the existence of numinous experience in that tradition at all? It is this problem of concrete evidence which Otto fails to acknowledge and discuss, and this failure must surely be profoundly damaging to his general understanding of the relationship of numinous experience to religious art.(39)

Moreover, Otto's difficulties here are compounded by his insistence that the connection between numinous and sublime experience, at least in more developed religious traditions, is not a contingent, but a necessary one; that is to say, whenever one experiences the sublime, one inevitably experiences the numinous at the same time. The excitation of numinous feelings by the sublime through the law of the association of analogous feelings is not an accidental anamnesis but a necessary process, brought about by the schematization of the numinous by the sublime in more developed states of religious consciousness. However, the problem with this claim is simply that Otto does not even begin to provide any concrete evidence (in the form of reports of religious experience, consisting of analogies and ideograms of numinous experience, accompanying reports of sublime experience) to substantiate his argument, let alone provide enough documentary evidence to persuade the impartial observer of the plausibility of his claim. Moreover, his argument is not strengthened by the quantity of independent, cross-cultural evidence suggesting the frequency with which sublime experiences occur unaccompanied by religious

experiences. We must conclude that Otto's claim about the necessary connection between numinous and sublime experience in the spiritually more evolved religious traditions is unconvincing.

(vii) The Problem Created for Otto's Psychology of Religion by the Final Chapter of The Idea of the Holy

There is also a second significant criticism of The Idea of the Holy which needs to be discussed. In the main body of The Idea of the Holy Otto traces the source of beliefs in the existence of God or gods to numinous experience. Numinous experience is conceived of on a quasi-perceptual model, and religious beliefs are understood to be analogous to empirical beliefs, that is depending on some acquaintance with something outside the self. Just as empirical beliefs are constructed upon experiences of objects outside the self, so religious beliefs depend upon some meeting with God or some confrontation with some other numinous sense of presence outside the self. In all such cases Otto assumes the existence and unlimited availability of profound religious experiences, visionary or mystical, which form the basis for the conviction that there has been a momentous personal encounter with the deity; and most important of all he assumes that no religious experience requires the intervention of some more specially endowed religious figure. His whole psychology of religion, his talk about the numinous, Ahndung, divination, schematization, the means of expression of the numinous and the law of association of analogous feelings assume that no intervention by any natural or supernatural being is necessary for successful direct encounter between man and the deity. Right through The Idea of the Holy Otto allows the reader to assume that anyone can have a religious experience, if only he has the inclination and is prepared to use every opportunity to encounter the numinous.

However, in the final chapter of The Idea of the Holy (chapter XXI), which supposedly summarizes and concludes the entire discussion of the text, Otto contradicts the whole of his previous argument about the mechanisms leading to the creation of religious experience, and instead claims rather paradoxically that all religious experience has to be awakened by more highly endowed spiritual beings who are prophets. Otto appears to be saying that prophets are enablers of religious experience, but since I find the language of the final chapter so puzzling, I shall quote the passage in full which seems to do so much to undermine the general argument of his psychology of religion. He says:

A priori cognitions are not such as every one does have - such would be innate cognitions - but such as every one is capable of having.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The loftier a priori cognitions are such as - while everyone is indeed capable of having them - do not, as experience teaches us, occur spontaneously, but rather are 'awakened' through the instrumentality of other more highly endowed natures. In relation to these the universal 'predisposition' is merely a faculty of receptivity and a principle of judgement and acknowledgement, not a capacity to produce the cognitions in question for oneself independently. This latter capacity is confined to those specially endowed. And this 'endowment' is the universal disposition on a higher level and at a higher power, differing from it in quality as well as in degree. The same thing is very evident in the sphere of art: what appears in the multitude as mere receptiveness, the capacity of response and judgement by trained aesthetic taste, reappears at the level of the artist as invention, creation, composition, the original production of genius...It is very similar in the domain of the religious consciousness, religious production, and revelation. Here, too, most men have only the 'predisposition', in the sense of a receptiveness and susceptibility to religion and a capacity for freely recognizing and judging religious truth at first hand...The higher stage, not to be derived from the first stage of mere receptivity, is in the sphere of religion the prophet. The prophet corresponds in the religious sphere to the creative artist in that of art: he is the man in whom the Spirit shows itself alike as the power to hear the 'voice within' and the power of divination, and in each case appears as a creative voice. Yet the prophet does not represent the highest stage. We can think of a third, yet higher, beyond him, a stage of revelation as underivable from that of the prophet as was his from that of common men. We can look beyond the prophet, to one in whom is found the Spirit in all its plenitude, and who at the same time in His person and in His performance is become most completely the object of divination, in whom Holiness is recognized apparent.

Such a one is more than Prophet.

He is the Son.⁽⁴¹⁾

This passage is very difficult to understand for many reasons and obviously creates many problems. For instance, what does Otto mean precisely by 'awakened through the instrumentality of other more highly endowed natures', and what is a highly endowed nature? Again, what does he mean by the 'prophet', and whom would he recognize as a prophet? Is he thinking only of Old Testament prophets or would he perhaps recognize the element of prophecy in Muhammed and other non-Christian charismatics? Again, is Otto really claiming that only the prophet has the ability to locate the Spirit within as well as the power of divination, religious faculties which elsewhere in the text of The Idea of the Holy he attributes to all men without distinction? Are we to conclude from this that, contrary to the rest of the text of The Idea of the Holy, all Christians believe in God, not because they have personally encountered Him, but because they rely on prophets who have met Him? Again, if the relationship between the ordinary believer and the prophet creates problems, then the relationship between the prophet and the Son creates even more problems. These are only some of the difficulties of this passage, which seems to be so out of step with the rest of the argument of The Idea of the Holy, even the chapters on divination which precede it, as to lead me to conclude that there is little value in attempting to reconcile it with the remainder of the work.(42)

(viii) Otto's Understanding of the Relationship between Numinous and Mystical Experience

Having given attention to some of the most serious weaknesses in The Idea of the Holy, I want now to consider an important dimension of Otto's theory of religious experience which has been thoroughly misunderstood by most recent scholars. I refer to his definition of the relationship between the constituents of numinous experience (devotional and mystical forms of religious experience). Now an examination of this issue has to

be situated within the context of the general acceptance by students of religion of a sharp distinction, even a radical antagonism, between devotional (prophetic) and mystical forms of religion. Perhaps the work of Friedrich Heiler at the beginning of the century offers one of the clearest statements of the contrasting aims and directions of prophetic and mystical religion.⁽⁴³⁾ Certainly, it has been very influential on all later scholarship in the fields of phenomenology of religion,⁽⁴⁴⁾ Old Testament prophecy⁽⁴⁵⁾ and theology of world religions,⁽⁴⁶⁾ and has led most recent writers to identify devotional with numinous experience and to contrast this with mystical experience. Whoever was responsible for the identification of the term numinous with prophetic religious experience, there is no doubt that since Smart's influential statement of the opposition of numinous to mystical experience⁽⁴⁷⁾ hardly any English language writer has questioned the meaning of the term numinous. Most writers speak without any inhibition about a distinction between numinous and mystical experience, in spite of the fact that Otto himself would have found such a distinction unintelligible because he explicitly identifies mystical with numinous experience.⁽⁴⁸⁾

In fact, it is because of what has come to be accepted as a transparent difference between numinous and mystical experience, that several scholars have criticized Otto for his lack of sensitivity to the varieties of religious experience,⁽⁴⁹⁾ and Smart has even accused him of defining religious experience too narrowly and thereby not adequately representing the nature of mysticism, which he defines as the quest through contemplation for inner insight and peace.⁽⁵⁰⁾ (Whatever criticisms one might make of The Idea of the Holy, one which must be patently absurd, in the light of the number of references to mysticism in the text, is that Otto did not give enough attention to this dimension of religious life.) Furthermore, several commentators have expressed misgivings about the difficulty of reconciling Otto's concept of numinous

experience with the Friesian concept of Ahndung, which has been so influential in all of Otto's work and is mentioned in the closing chapters of The Idea of the Holy, since Ahndung is a form of aesthetic and mystical experience which seems to be antagonistic to numinous experience, and particularly to its supposed 'dualism'.(51)

However, all these criticisms depend upon a fundamental misunderstanding of Otto's ideas about the relationship between numinous and mystical experience, which can only be rectified by a detailed examination of Otto's most significant references to mystical experience in the text of The Idea of the Holy. It is such an examination which will lead us to recognize that Otto is attempting to demonstrate the similarities between devotional and mystical forms of religion, and that, notwithstanding the opinion of some writers who either misinterpret or completely ignore Otto's comments on mystical experience,(52) such an account is neither incoherent nor eccentric. Now I shall argue that what contemporary phenomenologists of religion can learn here from Otto is that prophetic and mystical forms of religious experience should not be opposed to one another, but should be interpreted as complementary forms of religious life, each to be understood in the light of the other. It is to some vindication of this thesis, and especially to some consideration of Otto's challenging observations about mysticism, that I now turn.

Otto defines numinous experience in terms of four moments or types of experience, the mysterium, the tremendum, the fascinans and the augustum, and it is significant that he can find all four of these moments in examples of mystical experience. Of course, it will hardly be surprising if the fascinans and the mysterium dimensions of the numinous are to be found in mystical experience.(53) More significant is the discovery of examples of the tremendum moment of the numinous in mystical experience. Thus Otto, in the context of his discussion concerning the element of 'overpoweringness' in the numinous (majestas) and his distinction between

the consciousness of 'createdness' and 'creaturehood', by which he means the sense of 'impotence and general nothingness as against overpowering might, dust and ashes as against "majesty"', says that

we come upon the ideas, first, of the annihilation of self, and then, as its complement, of the transcendent as the sole and entire reality. These are the characteristic notes of mysticism in all its forms, however otherwise various in content. For one of the chiefest and most general features of mysticism is just this self-depreciation (so plainly parallel to the case of Abraham), the estimation of the self, of the personal 'I', as something not perfectly or essentially real, or even as mere nullity, a self-depreciation which comes to demand its own fulfilment in practice in rejecting the delusion of selfhood, and so makes for the annihilation of the self. And on the other hand, mysticism leads to a valuation of the transcendent object of its reference as that which through plenitude of being stands supreme and absolute, so that the finite self contrasted with it becomes conscious even in its nullity that 'I am naught, thou art all'.(54)

This, Otto explains, is his 'creature consciousness' stressed to excess,(55) and it is noteworthy that he pursued his interest in this self-depreciation in mysticism in his later work, Mysticism East and West,(56) which was devoted to a comparison of the mysticism of Sankara and Eckhart. There he attempted to demonstrate the similarity between mystical and devotional forms of religion, not only by repeating his claim that mystical experience is a form of numinous experience, but also by arguing that there is a common theistic foundation in the mysticism of Eckhart and Sankara(57) and that for both thinkers the augustum element of the numinous is significant since their teachings are not systems of metaphysics but doctrines of salvation.(58)

Otto continues his argument about the tremendum in mysticism by referring to the energy, or the urgency, of the majestas which can find expression in voluntaristic forms of mysticism, and here he is obviously thinking primarily of Christian forms of mysticism. He says:

In mysticism too, this element of 'energy' is a very living and vigorous factor, at any rate in the 'voluntaristic' mysticism, the mysticism of love, where it is very forcibly seen in that 'consuming fire' of love, whose burning strength the mystic can hardly bear, but begs that the heat that has scorched him may be mitigated, lest he be himself destroyed by it. And in this urgency and pressure the

mystic's 'love' claims a perceptible kinship with...the scorching and consuming wrath of God; it is the same 'energy' only differently directed.(59)

Again, continuing the argument about the tremendum in mysticism much later in the text, Otto refers to its horrible expressions particularly in Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions, but also to a lesser degree in Christian mysticism as well. He says:

...there has never been in the West a mysticism of horror, such as we find in certain kinds of Indian mysticism, both Buddhist and Hindu - in Bhagavad Gita, chapter XI - in some forms of the Siva and Durga worship, and in the horrible form of Tantrism. Yet, though the tremendum element in Christian mysticism is subdued, it is not entirely lacking. It remains a living factor...in the 'abyss', the 'night', the 'deserts' of the divine nature, into which the soul must descend, in the 'agony', 'abandonment', 'barrenness', taedium, in which it must tarry, in the shuddering and shrinking from the loss and deprivation of selfhood and the 'annihilation' of personal identity.(60)

In support of this statement he cites passages from the writings of Suso, St. John of the Cross and the relevant passage of the Bhagavad Gita which describes the transfiguration of Krishna in the presence of Arjuna.(61)

In the light of this passage, we can now see how misleading is Smart's remark about the theophany of Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita being paradigmatic of numinous experience,(62) since for Smart numinous experience (to repeat) excludes, rather than includes, mystical experience. It is also interesting to note that Otto's argument about the tremendum being expressed in forms of 'mysticism of horror' can find much further support from the extensive literature of Jewish and Islamic mysticism with which, unfortunately, Otto was completely unfamiliar. There is much evidence in Jewish Gnosticism and Kabbalah as well as Sufism which would strengthen Otto's argument about the tremendum in mysticism.(63)

However, our interpretation of Otto's concept of mysticism cannot be complete until we take account of his claim that 'mysticism is the stressing to a very high degree, indeed the overstressing, of the non-rational or supra-rational elements in religion...'(64) to which the

appropriate response is stupor!(65) In other words, mysticism is more purely numinous than simple theism which is more rational,(66) and this preponderance or exaggeration of the non-rational in mysticism, this emphasis on the 'wholly other', may express itself in the following way. It may take the form of a claim that the numinous, in being 'wholly other' than what is or than what can be thought, is completely different even from 'Being itself', and therefore can only be described as nothing. Otto argues that such is the source of language about nothing among western mystics, and such also is the source of the Mahayana Buddhist concept of the void or emptiness, sunya. Such emptiness or void, although a colourless concept, is in the strongest possible sense positive, discovered in feeling alone. It is simply the stressing to the point of exaggeration or paradox the non-rational or numinous dimension of Buddhist religious experience which cannot find an alternative appropriate form of expression.(67)

Clearly, once again, Smart's definition of Buddhist religious experience as mystical as opposed to numinous is misleading,(68) suggesting as it does an antagonism between Buddhist and other forms of religious experience which, from our discussion above, it seems that Otto never intended. While Otto would recognize manifest differences between predominantly tremendum and mysterium forms of numinous experience, he would not, therefore, argue that they should be interpreted as being antagonistic to each other.

We can conclude this examination of textual references to mysticism in The Idea of the Holy, by noting again that Otto insists that mystical experience is more purely numinous than other more devotional forms of religious experience which are more rational, and that, notwithstanding this, devotional forms of experience are similar to mystical forms of experience.(69) Otto seems to argue that there is more that unites

mystical and devotional forms of religious experience than most other scholars throughout this century have been prepared to acknowledge. He asserts:

Each of the two, the personal and the mystical, belongs to the other, and the language of devotion uses very naturally the phrases and expressions of both commingled. They are not different forms of religion, still less different stages in religion, the one higher and better than the other, but the two essentially united poles of a single fundamental mental attitude, the religious attitude. In Luther's conception of faith they are found in this relation openly manifested, where 'fides' denotes both 'fiducia' or trust - a term implying personal intercourse - and 'adhaesio', or intimate contact, a term essentially mystical.(70)

Clearly, Otto's reference to Luther's concept of faith here renders his attempt to unite devotional to mystical forms of religion transparent.(71)

(ix) The Relationship between Numinous Experience and Ahndung

Having defined Otto's understanding of the relationship of mystical to numinous experience, we can now turn to consider two important questions in the light of this definition. The first concerns the relationship between numinous experience and Ahndung. Davidson has argued that these two forms of religious experience are irreconcilable, and that Otto fails to recognize the modification of the Friesian idealism which is involved in his mature theory of religious autonomy in The Idea of the Holy. While proclaiming his allegiance to Fries in the last chapters of this work,(72) Davidson claims that Otto fails to understand that his theory of numinous experience contradicts the tenets of Fries's philosophy of religion, and that this in turn creates a metaphysical difficulty for his own philosophy of religion which he is never able completely to resolve.(73)

Numinous experience, Davidson argues, possesses autonomous religious meaning and value of its own in the form of the sense of numinous sanctity, the conviction of sin and the assurance of salvation which are not to be found in the moral category of purpose and the aesthetic idea of

beauty of Ahndung. The experience of Ahndung amounts to an awareness of the eternal purpose apprehended in the majesty and beauty of the natural universe. For Fries, religious experience unites reason, morality and aesthetics, but although it is an independent form of apprehension, it contains no autonomous meaning and value of its own, which is why Otto rejects it in The Idea of the Holy and replaces Ahndung with the concept of numinous experience which creates irreducibly religious ideas distinguishable from those of reason, ethics and aesthetics.(74)

Furthermore, to underline the differences between Ahndung and numinous experience, Davidson documents Otto's changing attitudes to the sublime.(75) As he points out, Otto in his The Philosophy of Religion, reflecting the profound influence of Fries's aesthetic conception of the religious experience of Ahndung, argues that the experience of the sublime is of a religious nature.

'Unquestionably', he asserts:

...the profounder element, that which rises above 'frigid taste' to the vivid sentiment of beauty and sublimity, is actually of a religious nature.(76)

Again, he says:

The experience of the sublime has in itself so incontestably the nature of obscure comprehension of the ineffable, of a subsumption under the ideas of religion, that the point has never even been seriously controverted.(77)

However, as Davidson observes, and as I have already indicated in previous discussion concerning numinous and sublime experience, when writing The Idea of the Holy Otto felt compelled to contradict this claim.

Religious feelings are not the same as aesthetic feelings and the 'sublime' is as definitely an aesthetic term as the 'beautiful', however widely different may be the facts denoted by the words.(78)

Clearly, as my earlier discussion emphasises, Otto is sensitive to the similarities between religious experience and experience of the sublime in this passage,(79) but equally clearly, whereas in The Philosophy of

Religion this sensitivity leads him to identify the two, in The Idea of the Holy his theory of numinous experience leads him to distinguish between them.

Bastow also examines the relation between Ahndung and numinous experience, noting that Ahndung is an aesthetic experience in which the world is seen as one and as necessary, and also pointing to the similarity of Ahndung to mystical experience, an experience in which 'the classifications and contingencies of the phenomenal world disappear.' However, Bastow argues that this Ahndung must be quite distinct from numinous experience, since the numen is 'separated by an infinite and awful gulf from the earthly being who experiences him.'(80) Following on from this, Bastow proceeds to list the three basic types of Ahndung or religious feelings which lie at the heart of religious life for Fries, which are enthusiasm at one's place as a free agent in the world, submission to one's fate in the world and trust in or devotion to eternal goodness as being the ultimate law of reality, and he then questions whether these emotional reactions to the world can be identified with numinous experience. Again, he argues that these religious feelings do not reflect the 'dualism' of numinous experience, 'the sense of, or emotional reaction to belief in, the numen as a distinct entity.'(81)

Now obviously these criticisms of Bastow and Davidson call for some comment. I shall deal with the remarks of Bastow first. Bastow's argument invites two kinds of critical response. The first can be directed at his understanding of the term numinous experience which, because of its supposed 'dualism', overlooks the fact that Otto himself identifies numinous with mystical experience.(82) Thus Bastow simply ignores Otto's general claim concerning the similarities between devotional and mystical forms of religious experience. However, this remark forms only the background to the second and more important criticism that I want to make concerning Bastow's argument, namely, his

failure to understand how Ahndung could possibly be identified with numinous experience. Clearly, Ahndung can easily be accommodated by Otto's more liberal definition of numinous experience. Bastow's difficulty of reconciling Ahndung and numinous experience is created by his faulty definition of the latter. Furthermore, one must surely question Bastow's conclusion that the three types of Ahndung he describes are irreconcilable with the more conventional experiences of simple Christian theism. Of course, there are differences between devotional experiences and the religious experiences Fries describes, but there are similarities as well, and similarities which are sufficiently striking for us to object to any argument which claims that there is a sharp contrast between Ahndung and conventional devotional religious experiences. I suggest that we misunderstand Fries's theory of religious experience and, therefore, Otto's as well, if we overlook important similarities between Fries's religious feelings of enthusiasm, submission, and devotion or trust and the more familiar religious feelings of Christian theists.(83)

Furthermore, when we turn to Davidson's arguments about a tension between Ahndung and numinous experience, we can raise similar objections about the dangers of overlooking important similarities between Ahndung and more conventional religious feelings. Davidson complains that Ahndung, although it unites reason, morality and aesthetics to create an independent religious form of apprehension, possesses no autonomous meaning and value of its own. The difference between numinous experience and Ahndung is that the latter does not possess a sense of numinous sanctity, the conviction of sin or the assurance of salvation, which are irreducibly religious and cannot be found in either moral or aesthetic experience.

However, in spite of Davidson's own extensive chapter on the Friesian idealism in his study of Otto's work, he fails to recognize obvious similarities between Ahndung and numinous experience which should be clear

from our previous discussion concerning Bastow's arguments. The conviction of sin of numinous experience clearly has much in common with Fries's humble resignation to one's fate, conscious of one's own guilt.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Similarly, the self-reliance of the mind on its eternal destiny surely resembles what Davidson calls the 'assurance of salvation'. Finally, even Fries's trust that the world is ruled by eternal goodness and the devotion which is generated by such trust can be seen to have much in common with both Davidson's 'assurance of salvation' and his 'sense of numinous sanctity', even if such trust and devotion appear to be based on experiences which are partly moral and aesthetic as well as religious.⁽⁸⁵⁾ I conclude, therefore, that Davidson is unjustified in contrasting numinous feelings with Ahndung in the way that he does, and I propose, once again, that what is needed is a model of religious experience which will be as sensitive to the similarities between experiences as to the differences between them.

Moreover, this conclusion, I would argue, is unaffected by Otto's changing attitude to the relationship between sublime and religious experience which Davidson discusses. Although, as Davidson points out, Otto's distinction between numinous and sublime experience suggests that his earlier ideas about religious experience were substantially transformed by his theory of religious autonomy introduced in The Idea of the Holy, this does not mean that, in order to develop coherently the theory of numinous experience, he was forced to discard completely the Friesian philosophy which was so influential on the formation of his thought and especially the mystical dimension of that philosophy. Otto could incorporate the mystical dimension of Fries's thought into his theory of numinous experience and yet reject his identification of sublime with religious experience, without creating insuperable difficulties for his philosophy of religion. In other words, although Davidson correctly delineates major changes in Otto's theory of religious experience between

the writing of The Philosophy of Religion and The Idea of the Holy, he has exaggerated the difficulties that such changes create for his metaphysics as well as for his phenomenology. His concept of the numinous is sufficiently flexible to be able to incorporate Fries's ideas about mysticism.(86)

(x) An Evaluation of Otto's Account of the Relationship between Mystical and Devotional Forms of Religion

Having discussed the problem of Ahndung in Otto's philosophy of religion, I shall now attempt to evaluate Otto's account of the relationship between mystical and devotional forms of religion, by situating his ideas about numinous experience within the context of more recent debate about taxonomies of religious experience. Of course, this could be an enormous task because of the vast quantity of literature which has been devoted to this subject, but I have no intention of either surveying the growing literature devoted to the varieties of mystical experience or of detailing the history of recent discussion concerning differences between prophetic and mystical forms of religious experience. Rather, more modestly I want merely to compare a few significant examples of accounts of relations between mystical and devotional forms of religious experience with Otto's own ideas about the varieties of numinous experience.

Clearly, we must begin this discussion by noting once again that one of the most important arguments in The Idea of the Holy is that there are fundamental similarities between mystical and devotional forms of religious experience, a proposition which appeals, as we have already seen, on the one hand, to evidence of familiar features of devotional experience which can be found in mystical experience and, on the other, to Otto's use of the Friesian concept of Ahndung. However, we must bear in mind that these are not the only forms of evidence that Otto uses to

support this argument. He also cites other reasons for his conviction that there is no radical antagonism between mystical and other forms of numinous experience. For example, he appeals to the authority of Theodore De Wette's concept of Ahndung which he calls divination in The Idea of the Holy, and which in a later work he defined as the mystical intuition related 'to an object to which it had never been applied by the old mystics, namely, to the factual in history.'(87) Here, indeed, is a bold attempt to reconcile devotional and mystical forms of religious experience.

Again, Otto's concern with reconciling these two types of religious experience is reflected in much of his other writing on bhakti movements in India which I have not previously referred to in this essay.(88) Bhakti traditions to a greater or lesser extent have synthesized mystical and devotional forms of religion, and this fascinated Otto as it has since interested many other scholars because of the similarities between some bhakti religious experiences and some Christian mystical experiences.(89) Obviously, Otto's extensive research on bhakti reflects his desire to understand devotional and mystical forms of religious experience as complementary, rather than as antagonistic, to one another. Similarly, we may note in passing that much more recently another student of bhakti, John Carman, recognizing the mediating or synthetic function of bhakti mysticism, has also argued that mysticism more generally should not be understood as one of the poles of what Peter Berger calls a polarity between two types of religious experience, namely, the experiences of 'confrontation' and 'interiority'. His experience with bhakti convinces him, as it previously convinced Otto, that to conceive of mystical experience as the feeling of 'interiority' as opposed to the feeling of 'confrontation' is simply to misunderstand such experience.(90)

However, Otto's account of numinous and mystical experience just presented is likely to invite several objections from phenomenologists and philosophers of religion. For example, it is clear that many forms of religious experience are obviously not like bhakti experiences which can unite feelings of 'interiority' or union with those of 'confrontation'. Many, if not most, religious experiences are either one or the other, not both. However, it is important to recognize that the purpose of Otto's argument is not to lead us to overlook genuine differences between types of religious experience, but rather to make us aware of the middle ground where such distinctions may be obscured, since only this awareness will remind the student that mystical and devotional forms of religion, as I have said already several times, are not antagonistic but complementary to each other.

But there is a second far more challenging criticism to be made of Otto's account of numinous and mystical experience, and it is one which finds most explicit definition not in Smart's distinction between the numinous and the mystical but in Wainwright's definition of mysticism.⁽⁹¹⁾ Wainwright insists that the term 'mystical experience' properly refers only to unitary states of consciousness.⁽⁹²⁾ While acknowledging the work of scholars who have argued that visions and even magical and occult powers are an important dimension of the lives of many mystics,⁽⁹³⁾ and while citing several examples of visions 'associated with mysticism,'⁽⁹⁴⁾ he rejects the suggestion that such visions and other paranormal experiences should be properly defined as mystical experiences.

He offers several reasons for confining mystical experiences to unitary states of consciousness. Firstly, he says:

Buddhist and Christian mystics tend to be suspicious of visionary and occult phenomena and to distinguish them from other more valued experiences.

Secondly, he argues that most of this century's important work on mysticism has been done by people who define mysticism in this way and that to alter what is now a widely accepted definition only invites confusion. Thirdly, he claims that visions and other occult phenomena, because they are culturally conditioned and empirically falsifiable, are likely to be empirically false. Since this is the case, if they are separated from unitary states of consciousness, then the case for the cognitive validity of the latter is strengthened. It is on such grounds as these that Wainwright argues for his definition of mysticism, and on the strength of this definition rejects Otto's claim that mystical experience is a species of numinous experience.

However, I suggest that Wainwright's argument is itself vulnerable to several criticisms. Firstly, it is not clear that Christian mystics are always suspicious of visions and auditions, and distinguish them from more valued experiences; and it is also not clear that Mahayana Buddhists would fail to see the value of visions of Bodhisattvas and Pure Land Buddhas.⁽⁹⁵⁾ In any case, it is extraordinary that Wainwright should choose to construct a definition of mystical experience on the basis of the material from only two religious traditions, while deliberately ignoring the evidence of other religious traditions.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Secondly, to preserve a definition, which on other grounds is demonstrated to be questionable, invites even greater confusion than to reject what is presently a widely accepted definition. Thirdly, to exclude visions from the study of mysticism just because this allows the scholar to avoid difficult and complex issues about conflicting truth claims is simply to surrender the possibility of deepening our understanding of mystical traditions and mystical experience in important ways. I conclude that Wainwright's narrow definition of mysticism does little to enhance our understanding of that phenomenon, and that Otto's more widely defined concept of mystical experience is far more fruitful for future research.

Furthermore, I would argue that Wainwright's definition of mysticism prevents us from recognizing significant similarities between the visions of mystics and prophets, which are likely to influence our ideas about the plausibility of Otto's thesis about the relationship between numinous and mystical experience. In fact, several scholars have written about surprising similarities between the visions of prophets and mystics,(97) but without drawing any conclusions about any continuity between mystical and devotional experiences. However, a recent growth of interest in shamanism has facilitated a new sensitivity to the similarities between the visions of prophets and mystics, since the shaman is often understood to occupy the role of both prophet and mystic either simultaneously or consecutively.(98) Clearly, the study of shamanism can provide further support for the plausibility of Otto's wider definition of mystical experience, as it does particularly when it is incorporated into a more general phenomenological study of mysticism such as that produced by Robert Ellwood.(99)

To conclude this discussion of the numinous and the mystical, it will be interesting to compare Otto's ideas again with Smart's account of the numinous and the mystical, only this time not in order to criticize Smart's concept of the numinous, but rather in order to locate precisely where the differences between these two thinkers really lie. It is significant that Smart, like Otto, is interested in the middle ground between the poles of 'interiority' and 'confrontation', and looks for religious experiences where devotional and mystical forms of religion converge.(100) However, whereas Otto explains such convergencies by extending his definition of mysticism so as to accommodate such hybrid forms of religious experience, Smart by contrast argues that such experiences simply express a mixture of numinous and mystical 'strands'. In other words, Smart's theory of religious experience seems to present the concepts of the numinous and the mystical as ideal types rather than

as concrete religious experiences which can be found in pure form in empirical religious life.(101) Smart's contrast between the numinous and the mystical is in effect a hermeneutical tool which resembles the kind of ideal type distinctions which sociologists of religion tend to construct in order to study religious institutions.(102)

For example, Smart argues that whereas Theravada Buddhism and Islam stand at the poles of the mystical - numinous spectrum of religious experiences, various forms of Hinduism, Christianity, Mahayana Buddhism and Jewish and Islamic forms of mysticism express various mixtures of the numinous and the mystical. Understanding the variety of religious traditions and the varieties of religious experience comes to depend on analysing the varying mixes of numinous and mystical experience just as we analyse a chemical compound. Bhakti depends upon a particular quantity of the numinous and a particular quantity of the mystical, and the proportion between each will change from one religious tradition to the next. By contrast, to repeat, for Otto bhakti experience suggests that the concept of mystical experience must be extended to include tremendum forms of numinous experience. It is clear that although Otto and Smart share an interest in the common ground between the extremes or poles of religious experience, they have developed very different theories of religious experience to explain this common ground.

(xi) A Concluding Observation concerning the Varieties of Numinous Experience

Finally, in concluding this chapter I have one more point to make about Otto's contribution to the phenomenology of religion, and this once again concerns his ideas about the varieties of religious experience. From one isolated and tantalising passage in his analysis of the mysterium in The Idea of the Holy Otto implies that the varieties of religious experience are determined not merely by different moments of the

numinous, the mysterium, the tremendum, the fascinans and the augustum, but also by different intensities of these moments which create various mixes and, therefore, various experiences.(103) The implication here seems to be that the excess of any one moment of numinous experience provides the dominant quality of any religious experience, and that it is useful to understand some moments of numinous experience as becoming more intense as others grow weaker.(104) Harold Turner commenting on this process uses the analogy of the moving spotlight, which is human consciousness playing across the whole spectrum of numinous experience and lighting up now one section and now another, but not bringing it all into view at the same time.(105)

However, as Turner points out, Otto only discusses this process in the context of individual religious experience, and fails to note that this process can also be used to explain significant differences between whole religious traditions. In other words, the quality of each religious tradition could be interpreted in terms of the mix of the tremendum, mysterium, fascinans and augustum in much the same way that Smart speaks about a variation of mix between the numinous and the mystical and indeed the incarnational strands in different religious traditions. Clearly, this observation offers great scope for the phenomenology of religion, since it can present explanations for varieties of doctrine, ritual, art and even forms of religious organizations and types of religious authority across many different religious traditions. However, it is important to recognize the possibility that the mix of different moments of numinous experience in any religious tradition may not remain fixed over a long period, or, in other words, that relations between these moments may be continually changing, continually producing new forms of religious experience. The phenomenologist must be sensitive to such a possibility when examining the history of any religious tradition, and he must avoid assuming that once one constituent of the

numinous, such as the tremendum or the mysterium, establishes its domination over a religious tradition, that domination will remain unchallenged over many centuries. Relations between constituents of the numinous within any religious tradition may change for many reasons, and not least in response to concrete historical changes of a political, sociological, psychological and even economic nature. Such non-religious factors, which provide the concrete historical setting for any particular religious tradition, are likely to influence any changes in the relations between different moments of numinous experience which may occur during the development of that tradition.

Chapter V

Numinous Experience and the Philosophy of Religion

(i) Introduction

This essay, in drawing attention to issues in The Idea of the Holy which previous interpreters have almost completely ignored, has attempted to present a balanced account of Otto's theory of religious experience. Particular emphasis has been placed on the evocative nature of religious language and on the contribution of schematization, divination and the direct and indirect means of expression of the numinous to religious experience. In addition, we have demonstrated that Otto's account of the relationship between numinous experience and religious language provides a sound epistemological foundation for his psychology of religious experience. And finally, some attempt has been made to assess the influence of Otto's work on the phenomenology of religion.

Clearly, The Idea of the Holy displays a tangled network of many different types of argument, some of which are difficult to reconcile with others. Yet equally clearly, this essay has demonstrated that beneath the strains created by Otto's competing intellectual ambitions there is a reasonably coherent account of religious life: all religious life is founded upon an irreducible religious experience, numinous experience, which is totally unlike any non-religious experience; and while it resists straightforward description, it is capable of being evoked through analogical language. Moreover, numinous experience is genuinely cognitive, and yet is only possible because of man's religious sensitivity. Such a quasi-perceptual model of numinous experience together with Otto's Friesian epistemological ideas concerning Wissen, Glaube and Ahndung constitute the most important strands of his theory of

religious experience; and the task of this final chapter is to offer a general assessment of this theory in the light of recent literature in the philosophy of religion.

To be specific, this chapter will consider four particular issues which are of interest to philosophers of religion, and which are inevitably very significant in any appraisal of Otto's theory of religious experience. These issues are as follows:-

- (1) The cognitive status of numinous experience. Are numinous experiences veridical?
- (2) Related to issue (1) the explanatory power of the concept of numinous experience and its ontological standing. In particular, this issue is concerned with Otto's handling of evidence for numinous experience and with the question of what it is, even whether it is necessarily religious.
- (3) The unmediated nature of numinous experience, which in sharp contrast to other mediated forms of religious experience involves a direct 'sensing' of the numinous object.
- (4) Related to issues (1) and (2), questions concerning the irreducibility of religion and religious studies. Is explanatory reduction, contrary to Otto, valuable or necessary, or is it simply destructive, not just of religion but also of the discipline of phenomenology of religion? These questions in turn raise several further issues concerning definitions of the phenomenology of religion and the significance of Otto's work for the discipline.

(ii) The Cognitive Status of Numinous Experience

Otto claims that any account of the elements of our experience of the numinous is more than merely a description of ourselves as experiencing subjects. The numinous is felt as objective (outside the self), and this feeling is indubitable, according to Otto, because it is a priori.⁽¹⁾ In

fact Otto criticizes Schleiermacher for thinking that supplemental inference or interpretation is needed in order to pass from states of feeling as effects to the character of the divine as their cause.(2) Yet, in spite of the a priori nature of numinous experience and all of the epistemological difficulties which it raises, much of The Idea of the Holy is devoted to demonstrating that numinous experience is a form of numinous perception which invites comparison with ordinary perception. Commentators are correct to draw attention to a theory of numinous sensibility in The Idea of the Holy,(3) and although Otto is anxious to distance himself from the 'empiricist and pragmatist standpoint' of William James by emphasizing the a priori character of numinous experience,(4) he nevertheless accepts the value of James's famous

sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call 'something there', more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed.

We can indeed speak of Otto's numinous experience as a direct numinous sensing of a numinous object and profitably compare it with James's theory of mystical experience. Just as James regards mystical experiences as direct perceptions of fact for those who have them, and - at least for the recipients of mystical experience - as having a similar cognitive status to ordinary sensations, so Otto also, when he is concentrating his attention on the immediacy of numinous experience and an analysis of its qualities rather than discussing the epistemological problems surrounding the religious a priori, understands numinous experiences to possess a cognitive status comparable with that of ordinary perception. Of course, his explicit language about the religious a priori in The Idea of the Holy separates him from this 'empiricist' or 'pragmatist' position on the cognitive status of numinous experience. Nevertheless, much of the language of The Idea of the Holy does indeed suggest that Otto is satisfied with the 'pragmatist' position insofar as

it emphasizes the immediacy of numinous experience, and only dissatisfied with it insofar as it fails to provide the cognitive certainty which he believes is offered by his account of the religious a priori.

Accordingly, since his account of the religious a priori suffers from epistemological difficulties which do not plague the 'pragmatist' position,⁽⁵⁾ and since the 'pragmatist' position on numinous perception is considerably less complicated than the account of the religious a priori, it will be profitable to our assessment of whether or not numinous experiences are veridical to consider first the cognitive status of the 'pragmatist' position, and defer until later consideration of the difficulties attaching to the religious a priori. If it is found that the 'pragmatist' position concerning numinous perception offers a coherent account of cognition, then it will be shown that there is no need for Otto to look to the Friesian idealism to secure the cognitive status of numinous experience, and it will be unnecessary for us to consider further the complex epistemological difficulties which are so damaging to Otto's account of the religious a priori. Alternatively, if it is demonstrated that the 'pragmatist' position is incoherent or implausible, then some assessment of whether Otto's account of the religious a priori can guarantee the cognitive status of numinous experience will be necessary.

In fact it will be argued that the 'pragmatist' position does not establish that the cognitive status of numinous experience is similar to that of ordinary perception, but rather suggests that it is anomalous with regard to the distinction between objective and subjective experiences, and that Otto's account of the religious a priori does nothing to remedy this situation. However, it will also be argued that this conclusion should not be construed to be damaging to religious life or religious experience, and that Otto is wrong to think that it should.

Do numinous experiences have the kind of evidential value that we associate with sensations? Can we argue that the existence of numinous experiences provides evidence for the existence of some supernatural being, perhaps even God? Certainly, several recent commentators have argued that numinous or mystical experiences put the experiencers in direct contact with something beyond the experience itself, just as ordinary sensations are evidence of objects and states of affairs independent of those experiences. We shall begin our assessment of the cognitive status of numinous experience by examining this argument.

Recent attempts to compare religious experience with ordinary perception are largely responses to C.B. Martin's influential attack on earlier, less sophisticated versions of the same argument, which in turn can be traced back to James's theory of mystical experience. It is therefore useful to begin this assessment by endeavouring to understand the full force of Martin's attack, before proceeding to evaluate some of these recent attempts to offer an account of numinous perception. Martin insists that one cannot argue for the existence of God from the existence of personal religious experience. For a religious experience to be a veridical experience of God, that is, for one to know that a supposed experience of God has really brought one into contact with an independent being, God, more is needed than simply the force of the experience, that is the sense of immediacy or the feeling of certainty found within the experience. Rather, as in the case of ordinary sensations, what is needed are various independent check up procedures, but procedures which Martin claims are typically absent from the religious life, playing no part in the evaluation of religious experiences. Martin observes:

Certainly, people have had special sorts of experience which incline them to claim with the greatest confidence that their experiences are of God. But whether the experiences are or are not of God is not to be decided by describing or having those experiences. For whether anything or nothing is apprehended by experiences is not to be read off from the experiences themselves. The presence of a piece of blue paper is not to be read off from my experience of a piece of blue paper. Can a photograph reveal? Can

I touch it? What do others see? It is only when I admit the relevance of such checking procedures that I can lay claim to apprehending the paper, and indeed, the admission of the relevance of such procedures is what gives meaning to the assertion that I am apprehending the paper.(6)

We can conclude that, since such checking procedures have no place in religious experience, numinous experience cannot be veridical experience of God.

How can one respond to such an argument? Two alternative strategies have been adopted in response to Martin's challenge. The first is to suggest that Martin places excessive emphasis on the importance of checking procedures in the case of ordinary sensations; and that unless we have good reasons to doubt a particular experience, we have no need for checking procedures in order to establish that that experience is veridical. The second is to argue that Martin in fact overlooks important checking procedures that particular religious traditions have instituted in order to test whether unusual religious experiences, and particularly mystical experiences, are true. Let us examine these responses in detail.

The first, as I have indicated, is that Martin is unreasonable to suppose that it is not experience which establishes the independent existence of the object of that experience, but the checking procedures which follow it. Many philosophers have objected that one can only reasonably demand that such procedures be adopted for experiences which one has good reason to doubt.(7) Since we do not have good reason to doubt most of our ordinary experiences, we can conclude that generally checking procedures are not necessary to establish that such experiences are veridical. Only in cases where we are uncertain about the content of an experience (or some constituent of it) or about its reference or context are independent checking procedures necessary to determine its cognitive status. Moreover, many commentators have drawn attention to the epistemological difficulties which excessive recourse to checking procedures, as in Martin's position, can lead to.(8) They point out,

often invoking Wittgenstein, that at some time the checking has to stop. It is not possible to demand that every experience be verified before accepting it, since the process of checking an experience itself involves other experiences whose reliability must be at least provisionally taken for granted.(9)

It is against the background of these observations that several philosophers have argued that we should treat experience - all experience - as normally reliable. Things usually are as they appear to be. For example, Richard Swinburne offers a defence of what he calls the 'Principle of Credulity'.(10) If someone has a sense experience on the basis of which he believes that he is perceiving X, then it is reasonable, barring some positive reason to the contrary, to suppose both that the experience is veridical and that the experient really is perceiving X. This is far from the claim that experience is infallible. It is rather a claim that experience provides prima facie evidence which should normally be accepted, unless we have stronger evidence that leads us to doubt or discount the experience. Swinburne then proceeds to extend this principle to religious experience, arguing that whenever someone has an experience on the basis of which he believes that he is perceiving God, then it is prima facie reasonable to suppose that he really is veridically perceiving God. In this way Swinburne suggests that religious experiences ordinarily enjoy a presumption of veridicality (unless we have evidence to the contrary), and therefore can be used to argue for the existence of God.

How strong a case does Swinburne make for the presumption of the veridicality of religious experience? Clearly he is aware of qualitative differences between religious experiences and ordinary perceptions, and he obviously knows that there are sometimes good reasons for doubting that someone is having an experience of God. However, he insists that, in spite of some differences between religious experiences and ordinary

impressive, in fact, that if ordinary perceptions enjoy a presumption of veridicality, then religious experiences do as well. Any religious experiences which are found to be deceptive are simply identified by Swinburne as exceptions to a general rule that religious experiences are presumptively veridical.

But is such a conclusion justified? Surely the differences between religious experiences and ordinary perceptions are far more impressive than Swinburne allows. Not only is God, the presumptive object and cause of religious experience, totally unlike anything else in the world; but religious experience is qualitatively profoundly different from ordinary experience in ways we have spoken about at length in chapters II and III. Numinous experience possesses unique characteristics not to be found in any non-religious forms of experience, which surely gives it a strange and unfamiliar feel. If we add to this the fact that religious and especially mystical experiences are often perceived to be transient and rather shapeless, then we are forced to recognize that there may be rather special epistemological obstacles to veridical religious experience which do not exist in the context of ordinary veridical experiences.

In short, because of their unfamiliarity religious experiences may be significantly more vulnerable to mistaken identification and mistaken interpretation than Swinburne has recognized - in fact so much so as to call into question his presumption that religious experiences are veridical experiences of God unless we have evidence to the contrary. It is not only tough-minded atheists who deny religious experiences the cognitive status they believe ordinary perceptions to have, because of their unverified assumptions about religious experiences being subjective or untrue. Even more sympathetic commentators on religion, as they become more sensitive to the distinctive features of religious experience, are bound to regard Swinburne's 'Principle of Credulity', as applied to

religious experience, as uncritical on the grounds that Swinburne simply underestimates the significant phenomenological differences between religious and ordinary perceptions.

This, however, does not mean that it is established that, contrary to Swinburne, religious experiences have no cognitive status. Rather, we are lead to the conclusion that due to impressive differences between religious and ordinary perceptions, more is needed to establish the presumption of veridicality of religious experiences than simple appeal to Swinburne's 'Principle of Credulity' itself. In fact, it may be that this presumption of the veridicality of religious experience can only be demonstrated when Swinburne's 'Principle of Credulity' is supplemented and supported by another principle, namely, the principle of agreement among those who pursue religious experience.⁽¹¹⁾ If it can be established that there is, in fact, substantial agreement among religious believers about their experiences, this will provide important independent evidence for the plausibility of Swinburne's presumption that religious experience is veridical experience of God.

We shall now turn to consider this principle of agreement among religious believers, not only in order further to assess the plausibility of Swinburne's argument, but also because it provides the second important response to Martin's challenge that religious experience cannot be veridical experience of God since there are no checking procedures in religious life. We shall examine the argument that, contrary to Martin, there are religious tests to establish whether religious experiences are true, and that these principally take the form of substantial agreement about the contents of religious experiences within religious traditions.

Galen Pletcher is one of several philosophers who have recently argued that if agreement among religious believers - and specifically mystics - about their religious experiences is discovered, then a

external object of experience, whatever the religious believers themselves take their experiences to be referring to. He suggests that, just as agreement is necessary to establish that ordinary perceptions are veridical, so similar agreement among mystics can be found which supports the objective validity of their experiences. He says:

.... the agreement of mystics about what they 'perceive' may be regarded as mutually supportive testimony, much in the same way that we regard agreement about matters of ordinary perception. Since we fashion an objective world out of our own experiences in the perceptual realm by constant checking up on one another, it seems at least plausible that the mystics' own agreement among themselves can testify to the validity of their own experiences, and the truth of their testimony.(12)

Arguing that private perceptions are all the evidence we have of the external world and that we must rely on agreement among them to decide which perceptions to believe, he concludes that when mystics 'agree, with remarkable independence from one another, that there is some feature or features of the world that the rest of us are missing, that agreement deserves respect as a positive testimony'.(13)

Unfortunately, however, Pletcher's argument suffers from a lack of awareness of the complex issues raised by the argument from agreement. Not only does he not consider the significance of different degrees of agreement and the concrete tests which religious traditions often introduce to establish whether religious experiences are veridical; he also fails to discuss religious experiences where agreement with fellow believers is missing, or even perceived to be unnecessary. It is only useful to draw attention to agreement among mystics and to arrive at conclusions based on such agreement, if one is at the same time prepared to explain cases where there is a failure of mystics to agree about their experiences. For these reasons it is profitable to turn away from Pletcher's work to that of another far more sophisticated writer who discusses all of the issues just cited: William Wainwright.

Wainwright, like Pletcher, attempts to respond to Martin's challenge that mystical experience does not have a similar cognitive status to sense perception, but is rather subjective or private, more like migraines and stomach aches than like experiences which have objective reference and are public. Against Martin, he proposes that we should explore the analogy between mystical experience and sense experience, and that we should consider whether, in fact, like sense perception, mystical experience allows one to 'know something which we could not know, or know as easily, in other ways, and... (know) that the knowledge in question is non-inferential.'⁽¹⁴⁾ Wainwright is impressed by the similarities between mystical experience and sense perception, so impressed as to argue that a good case can be made for the view that mystical experiences have a similar cognitive status to sense experiences (although he concedes that this is a matter of judgement concerning which reasonable people may differ); but unlike Swinburne and Pletcher, he marshalls a substantial amount of evidence (including evidence concerning agreement among mystics) to support his thesis. Let us examine this evidence.

Wainwright begins by observing that mystical experience is often reported as a kind of 'seeing' or 'tasting' or 'touching'.⁽¹⁵⁾ Extending the analogy to sense perception further, he proposes that both sense experience and mystical experience are noetic - in other words they both have an object which is believed to be independent of the experiencer. Moreover, he claims that 'on the basis of both types of experience corrigible and independently checkable claims' are made about something other than the experience itself, and 'in each case there are both tests for determining whether or not the object of experience is real and tests for determining whether or not the apparent perception of that object is a genuine one.'⁽¹⁶⁾ (In other words, mystical experiences are not perceived

to be self-certifying.) It will now be useful to evaluate such tests in order to establish how plausible Wainwright's case is for the cognitive status of mystical experience.

Wainwright distinguishes between two types of test. The first is the type which is specifically introduced by a religious tradition, but which would not usually be relevant to veridical sense perceptions and would not normally be of interest to critics like Martin (not least because there is little explicit appeal to agreement among mystical experiences). The second is the type which appeals explicitly to agreement among religious experiences, but which is sometimes regarded as having more significance for observers outside of a mystical tradition than for mystics within it. In each case, Wainwright argues that the differences between checking procedures for religious experience and for sense perception can be explained by the different characteristics of their respective objects.

Wainwright has much to say about the first type of test, although he is clearly more interested in tests for determining whether a religious experience is a genuine experience of its postulated object than in tests for determining whether the postulated object of religious experience is real. Wainwright observes that mystics usually look to their respective theological traditions either to confirm or not to confirm that the object of their religious experience is real, although even here there are tests, other than theological commitments, which are relevant. For example, considerations of logic are capable of upsetting a claim that a postulated object of a religious experience is real. Against Stace, Wainwright argues that claims about religious objects cannot be true if the concepts of these objects are self-contradictory.⁽¹⁷⁾ Presumably also, if a mystic had an experience of a postulated religious object which was felt to be incompatible with another religious object which was accepted by tradition, he would feel called upon to carry out further tests to establish whether the postulated object was real.

However, there are considerably more tests to determine whether an experience of a religious object accepted by tradition is a genuine perception of it, than whether the postulated object of a religious experience is real. Wainwright observes that especially in the context of theistic mystical traditions various tests have been used to distinguish experiences of God which are veridical from those which are not; and he lists six criteria which are employed in the Christian, particularly the Catholic, community (although presumably these criteria can also be found to be employed in non-theistic mystical traditions) to establish whether mystical experiences are genuine perceptions of God. These six criteria are as follows:-(18)

- (1) 'The consequences of the (mystical) experience must be good for the mystic (and) ... must lead to, produce, or reinforce, a new life marked by such virtues as wisdom, humility and charity.'
- (2) 'One must consider the effect which the experience has on others. For instance, (whether it) ... tends to build up the community or weaken it.'
- (3) 'The depth, the profundity and the 'sweetness' of what the mystic says on the basis of his experience counts in favour of the genuineness of that experience.'
- (4) 'We must examine (whether) what the mystic says on the basis of his experience ... agrees or disagrees with orthodox talk.'
- (5) 'It will be helpful to determine whether the experience in question resembles other mystical experiences regarded as paradigmatic by the religious community.'
- (6) 'We must also consider the pronouncements of authority (whether these come from) ... the spiritual director, guru, master or ... community as a whole.'

Wainwright is, of course, aware that tests such as these are quite irrelevant to sense perceptions. Nevertheless, he suggests that such tests do contribute significant evidence for the plausibility of the claim that mystical experience has cognitive status. He argues that these six tests are similar to tests which are employed 'to determine whether an apparent perception of an object is a genuine perception of it, that is ... similar to the tests which take things into account like the position of the observer and the condition of his sensory equipment.' On the other hand, the dissimilarity between the criteria listed above for mystical experience and the tests which are used to establish whether an apparent perception of an object is a genuine perception of it can be explained, according to Wainwright, by the different characteristics of the respective objects of mystical experience and sense perception. In this way Wainwright seeks to establish a correlation between tests applied by religious traditions to mystical experiences and tests applied to sense perceptions.

Of course such a correlation, even if it is agreed that it exists, is not decisive in confirming the cognitive status of mystical experience. What it can do, however, is to offer additional evidence for the cognitive status of mystical experience, if it is discovered that there are other reasons for arguing for its cognitive status. Perhaps the most important other reason for arguing for the cognitive status of mystical experience is that there may well be, as many observers have pointed out, substantial agreement among mystical experiences. It is to an examination of the claim that there is substantial agreement among mystical experiences - Wainwright's second type of test to determine whether mystical experiences are, in fact, veridical experiences of God (or of whatever else is conceived to be divine) - that we now turn.

Wainwright begins his argument by dismissing the kind of cross-cultural agreement among mystical experiences which several philosophers have cited as providing evidence for the cognitive status of such experiences.⁽¹⁹⁾ He points out that while such agreement is similar to the cross-cultural agreement of sense experiences, it is also similar to the cross-cultural agreement of experiences of migraines and stomach aches which are paradigm cases of non-cognitive experience.⁽²⁰⁾ Rather, Wainwright is interested in another sort of agreement, namely, agreement among mystical experiences within concrete religious traditions. He notices that just as people who have sense experiences can normally describe conditions under which others will be able to have similar experiences, so mystics, likewise, are able to prescribe procedures which are likely to lead to similar introvertive experiences. Thus, he argues, the fact that most of us have never had mystical experiences can be explained by the failure of most of us to attempt to use the mystic's techniques,⁽²¹⁾ and accordingly we can conclude that the fact that mystical experiences occur relatively infrequently does not count against their cognitive status. What does count for or against their cognitive status is their agreement or disagreement with other mystical experiences when similar procedures are carried out to obtain such experiences. If it is shown that mystics believe that agreement between their experiences and the experiences of others counts for the cognitive status of those experiences (and for the claims about the world or 'reality' which are based on them), and that disagreement among them counts against their cognitive status, then we will have found a significant analogy between mystical experience and sense experience.

However, the problem with this test is, as Wainwright points out, that it produces ambiguous results.⁽²²⁾ Although many mystics acknowledge that agreement between their experiences and the experiences of others in the same tradition leads them to be more confident of the cognitive value

of their experiences than they would otherwise be, many others seem to be unperturbed by the lack of agreement, attributing this to incorrect employment of religious techniques for attaining religious experience. Moreover, mystics usually make no distinction between those experiences obtained by employing such religious techniques and those which occur spontaneously. All similar religious experiences are believed to confirm the cognitive value of the mystic's experiences, regardless of whether these experiences are the result of using religious techniques such as prayer or meditation, or whether alternatively they are brought into being by an omnipotent inscrutable divine will without any apparent human preparation for them. Mystics often argue in this context that whether or not one has a mystical experience will depend purely on the divine will, there being no set of techniques which can alone ensure divine illumination. Accordingly, we can conclude that since divine revelation can be highly selective, it is not clear at just what point a mystic should begin to be worried by the absence of agreement between his experiences and those of other mystics in the tradition.⁽²³⁾ Clearly, God's nature (or the nature of whatever else is conceived to be divine) is quite different from the nature of physical objects. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that mystical experiences cannot be either confirmed or not confirmed in the same way that sense experiences are.

However, such a conclusion is profoundly damaging for the claim that mystical experience has a similar cognitive status to sense perception. Against Wainwright it must surely be argued that, in the light of what we know about mystical experience, it cannot claim the kind of objective reference that we typically attribute to sense perception.⁽²⁴⁾ There is clearly, as the previous discussion by Wainwright himself indicates, just as much separating mystical experience from sense perception which is objective and public as distinguishing it from subjective and private

many students of mystical experience have observed, mystical experiences much resemble non-religious emotions, feelings and moods of inner life which are paradigm cases of subjective experience; and although mystical experiences typically feel as though they have objective reference and are not simply wholly the product of interior psychological activity, the feeling that they are the product of something outside the self provides no guarantee that they actually are. As I have already noted several times, the feeling that a mystical, or more generally religious, experience is objective can provide no certainty that it is.

From all this we can conclude that the pragmatist argument for mystical experience of Wainwright (and indeed James) fails to demonstrate that mystical experience has a similar cognitive status to sense perception. However, we should be absolutely clear that this conclusion does not entitle us to be certain that mystical experience cannot be an experience of an external reality. Rather, it leaves us with an uncertainty concerning the cognitive status of mystical experience which I do not believe can be eliminated. In fact all that we know about mystical experience (including the widely held belief in selective revelation discussed by Wainwright and the powerful feeling that the experience is noetic) leads me to the conclusion that it could have objective reference without us being able to be certain that this is so;⁽²⁵⁾ and it is this observation, together with the recognition that the nature of the object of mystical experience (where there is an object) is typically profoundly different from the nature of all physical objects, which leads me to argue that the cognitive status of mystical experience is anomalous with regard to the distinction between objective and subjective experience. I propose, in other words, that mystical experience be understood to have a distinctive cognitive status of its own.⁽²⁶⁾ Indeed, it could provide the basis of a special form of knowledge inaccessible through other forms of mystical or religious knowledge.⁽²⁷⁾

The conclusions that we have reached concerning the cognitive status of mystical experience clearly also apply to Otto's numinous experience. Our review of the arguments of Swinburne, Pletcher and in particular Wainwright makes it clear that what I have called the 'pragmatist' argument (tracing its ancestry back to James) cannot establish with certainty that numinous experience is veridical, but rather, once again, suggests that it has a special cognitive status. Indeed, it is evident that Otto himself was aware of many of the objections to the 'pragmatist' argument which I have cited, and this is why he was anxious to distance himself from James's position in spite of all that he admired in his work, especially his emphasis on the religious sense of presence.

Instead, Otto wanted to find a way to demonstrate philosophically that any account of our experience of the numinous must be more than merely a description of ourselves as experiencing subjects. He wanted to prove that the numinous is felt and known beyond any doubt at all in the experience itself to be an experience of a divine being outside the self, thus dispensing with the need to establish divine causes of religious experience through subsequent inference or interpretation; and this he did through appealing to his account of the numinous a priori. As I explained at the beginning of chapter one,⁽²⁸⁾ by accepting Fries's inversion of Kant's critical idealism, Otto could argue not only that numinous experience represents a special and separate form of genuine cognition quite independent of the cognition of sense experience, but also that such a priori numinous experience gives rise to a form of knowledge which is absolutely certain, indeed to a certainty which can never be found in a posteriori experience. In fact we can see from Fries's profound influence on The Idea of the Holy that Otto believed numinous experience to be free from the cognitive uncertainties which are inseparable from sense experience.⁽²⁹⁾

However, it is clear from the epistemological difficulties surrounding the numinous a priori which were discussed at the beginning of chapter I, (30) that Otto's attempt to free numinous experience from all doubt cannot succeed. There are several reasons for this. To begin with, as I have just pointed out with regard to the pragmatist argument for mystical experience, the feeling of objectivity within numinous experience provides no conclusive evidence for the objective reference of that experience; and the Friesian idealism which is so influential on The Idea of the Holy, even where it is connected with the feeling of objectivity within numinous experience, cannot guarantee the cognitive status of such experience, no matter how intense or vivid it may appear. It must be recognised that, contrary to Otto, numinous experience may be vulnerable to mistaken interpretation, just as other feelings are, and that all that Otto's Friesian idealism is seeking to do is to argue against this possibility. Otto's numinous a priori, in fact, amounts to an assertion that numinous experience is invulnerable to doubt; but he fails to see that more is needed than such an assertion, that indeed some evidence outside the experience itself is required to justify the assertion. In short, Fries's inversion of Kant's critical idealism does nothing to eliminate the cognitive uncertainty which we have found to be attached to all religious experience.

The second reason why Otto's attempt to free numinous experience from all doubt cannot succeed is that, because of the Friesian strand in his thinking, there is a danger that religious experience will be understood to be wholly the product of our own subjectivity rather than something which happens to us through the actions of an independent agent. As we saw in chapter I, we find this argument in the work of Moore, and more recently in Bastow. Moore, it will be remembered, argues that due to the influence of Fries, Otto's work suffers from an 'exaggerated apriorism'.

structural aspects of numinous experience will be treated as wholly the product of our a priori cognitive constitution, with the result that we are led to observe that there is nothing in numinous experience which is a posteriori.⁽³¹⁾ Of course, such exaggerated apriorism does provide a kind of certainty, but it is that of subjective experiences, not that which Otto is looking for: the certainty of objective experiences.

Similarly, Bastow, as we saw, argues that Otto was undecided about whether numinous experience is subjective or objective - that is whether numinous experience is something human beings create by actively interpreting and evaluating their earthly surroundings, or whether alternatively it is something which is thrust upon them by a divine being independent of them.⁽³²⁾ In fact this ambiguity in the cognitive status of numinous experience, discussed by both Bastow and Moore, suggests a conclusion which was long ago proposed by John Baillie.⁽³³⁾ That is that Otto sought to combine two absolutely incompatible claims, namely the claim that numinous experience is like sensation in referring to an object outside the self, and is thus a posteriori, with the claim that numinous experience possesses the cognitive certainty of a priori experience. As Baillie points out, Otto is forced to adopt a contradictory position in arguing that numinous experience is like sensation and yet, nevertheless, a priori; for is it not the case that sensation is of the very essence of the a posteriori, so that it is impossible to conceive what can be meant by an a priori sensation, which is what Otto conceives numinous experience to be?

From all this, we can conclude that Otto's numinous a priori, constructed upon the Friesian idealism, cannot provide numinous experience with the cognitive certainty that Otto is looking for. Contrary to Otto, numinous experience remains anomalous with regard to the distinction between objective and subjective experiences, as we argued earlier, in

it must be emphasized that such numinous experience should be understood to have a distinctive cognitive status of its own, and that our conclusions concerning Otto's claims about the numinous a priori should not be construed to be prejudicial to religious life or religious experience. Indeed, we believe it is justifiable to argue that Otto is in fact wrong to think that the failure of the numinous a priori to secure the cognitive certainty of religious experience destroys the value of that experience.

Accordingly we propose, contrary to Otto, that, in the light of the failure of both the pragmatist and idealist arguments to demonstrate that numinous experience is objective, we adopt an approach which brackets out questions concerning its cognitive status (except to recognize, as we have already observed, that it could have objective reference without us being able to be certain that this is so) and concentrate on its practical significance for inner religious life.⁽³⁴⁾ If we adopt this position, which I want to call a non-cognitive position, then we shall see that even in the absence of any certainty concerning the cognitive status of numinous experience, such experience appears to have value for human life. Otto is wrong, I believe, to maintain that his challenging psychology of religious experience, which explores the distinctive features of numinous experience, is inseparable from the epistemological issues associated with such experience. On the contrary, it is possible to recognize the challenge and the value of numinous experience for religious life, which Otto calls 'a mental state ... perfectly sui generis and irreducible to any other,'⁽³⁵⁾ without having to accept the epistemological claims which he makes about such experience. This is what I mean by what I call a non-cognitive reading of Otto's psychology of religious experience. We can continue to be interested in the cognitive claims of Otto's exciting religious psychology, including the claim that numinous experience contains powerful feelings that the experience is noetic and invulnerable

to doubt, without either accepting or rejecting such claims.(36) In this way the student of religion can recognize the importance of numinous experience for any religious tradition.

Numinous experience can be seen to provide the religious believer with many of the experiences he is searching for: feelings of well-being, happiness, security, moral purposes, psychological integration, but most important of all, the most exquisite religious bliss which surpasses all understanding and for which a man may be prepared to sacrifice all else. In such an observation, Otto can be seen to be offering us a theory of religious experience. It is not the theory that he thinks he is offering, which must be rejected because Otto fails to provide the empirical evidence necessary to demonstrate that numinous experience is veridical. Rather, it is a different theory based upon a non-cognitive account of religious experience, and it is testable only insofar as it can be demonstrated, on the one hand that numinous experience does possess the life transforming properties (religious bliss, moral purpose, etc.) that have been claimed for it,(37) and on the other hand that numinous experience is a distinctive, irreducible experience which cannot be confused with any other and is easily identifiable as unmistakably religious.(38) It is to a consideration of Otto's handling of evidence for the distinctive features of numinous experience that we now turn, in order to assess the explanatory power of the concept of such experience and its ontological standing. In particular, we shall carry further our discussion of the cognitive status of numinous experience by considering whether it lends itself to non-religious interpretation.

(iii) The Explanatory Power of the Concept of the Numinous

Does numinous experience exist; or is what Otto calls numinous experience merely the result of his misinterpretation of non-religious experiences? Is numinous experience easily recognizable, and if so, how

does Otto demonstrate that it is a distinctive, irreducible experience which cannot be confused with any other non-religious experience (aesthetic, moral, emotional etc.)? These questions are clearly significant for our appraisal of the cognitive status of numinous experience, and they will be used to assess Otto's handling of evidence for it. In this way we shall be able to reach some conclusions concerning the explanatory power of the concept of numinous experience and complete our discussion about its ontological standing.

Does numinous experience lend itself to non-religious interpretation, in spite of the passion with which Otto insists that it is irreducibly religious? Many philosophers of religion have recently maintained that it does, recognizing how damaging such a claim would be to its cognitive status. If it can be shown that numinous experience is not what Otto understands it to be, but something else, something non-religious, then the conclusion that the concept of the numinous possesses no useful function in religious life and should be eliminated from all informed discussion about religion will become more attractive than it would otherwise be. It is therefore useful to scrutinize such claims, since we will acquire a better understanding of Otto's concept of the numinous by seeing why such claims fail to recognize the unique features of numinous experience - that is which characteristics of numinous experience they misinterpret or fail to identify at all. We shall examine three types of claim which, with increasing sophistication, seek to demonstrate that numinous experience can be interpreted non-religiously. The first argues that all numinous experience is reducible to another, more fundamental experience which, while intelligible within a religious context, can equally plausibly be interpreted in the light of man's secular, psychological needs. The second claims that while some numinous experiences are religious, others are not; and the third contends that numinous experience

is wholly the product of our inner life and therefore subjective, although it continues to have profound value for human life comparable to that of aesthetic experience.

Martin Prozesky's explanation of numinous experience offers us an example of the first type of claim to be examined here, the crudest type, namely that all numinous experience is reducible to some other non-religious experience.⁽³⁹⁾ Prozesky argues that it is primarily man's feeling of overwhelming insignificance in the face of the world which is transformed into numinous experience. This uncompromisingly reductionist approach to religious experience is similar to Durkheim's, because, like it, it argues that religious experience is not what it appears to be, not what it claims to be, but in reality something else. Prozesky says:

Holiness, the awesome and fascinating mystery of Otto's famous book, is the face of the cosmos as seen by finite, groping, vulnerable beings living out their frail lives within its vastness and under its power to bless and destroy. Somewhere in it the probing mind rightly senses the presence of that fusion of the greatest value, power and mystery which is signified by the concept of the sacred. We do not need to suppose that in addition to the surrounding, naturally experienceable cosmos there is a further, independent reality called the holy without which the experiences so carefully investigated by Otto could not take place.

Moreover, he proposes that we should reject Otto's claim that we have a distinctive mental capability for sensing the numinous or the holy.

Religious experience, even as defined by Otto, is accessible through ordinary mental processes and no special religious sense has ever been shown to exist.

However, Prozesky fails to recognize the unique features of numinous experience, because he is intent on offering what the American philosopher C.L. Stevenson called a 'persuasive definition'⁽⁴⁰⁾ of religious experience. Prozesky seeks to demonstrate what religious experience is really like, (the experience of the insignificance of man in the face of the cosmos which is felt to possess the greatest value, power and mystery), but all that he in fact succeeds in doing is to signal that he

is prepared to ignore all characteristics of religious experience which he regards as inessential to a definition of such experience. In other words, he specifies beforehand what will count as a religious experience and argues that all other features of such experience (such as the distinctive features of numinous experience which Otto draws attention to) are not really religious at all, but merely secondary products of it.(41) It is only in this way that he can argue that we do not need to suppose that there is a religious reality (the holy or the numinous) independent of the natural world and a special religious sense which is capable of perceiving it.(42)

The second type of claim, which seeks to demonstrate that numinous experience can be interpreted non-religiously, can be illustrated by the argument of John Gaskin, who observes that numinous experience can be either religiously or agnostically received.(43) Numinous experience is not one of uniquely experiencing God, or whatever else is conceived to be the divine, and the mistake of thinking that it is, Gaskin points out has been facilitated by the profound influence exerted on 20th century studies of religious experience by William James's The Varieties of Religious Experience, which confines itself almost entirely to numinous experience which is numinous religious experience. However, Gaskin argues that there are experiences which are properly called numinous, but which are not taken as experiences of God or god; and he cites as an example the shiver of fear or awe which is the kernel of the numinous experience that people have when they focus their attention upon the profound immensity of the universe which engulfs them.(44) He argues that:

What we have in these cases is the hesitant, ambiguous inference of the design argument and the cold rational possibilities of the cosmological argument presented with the force of an immediate experience of nature or of the universe at large; but it is wonder and immensity of the cosmic questions filling us with a shiver of awe and fear without an accompanying perception of anything which, without hopeless confusion of the issues, could be called God or god.(45)

Moreover, these experiences form a very indistinct boundary with another species of numinous experience at its least specifically religious. This is what Gaskin calls the numinous pantheist experience, which he characterizes as the awareness of nature as somehow alive, awesome, powerful, wonderful, and at times terrible. Gaskin believes that this experience is most easily associated with Wordsworth's poetic celebration of 'the living other in nature'(46) and he cites as an example of this a famous passage from Tintern Abbey:

And I have felt ... a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of men:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

He also offers us a more recent example of this numinous pantheist experience from a 1963 poem, On the Sea of the Hebrides, by an unknown poet who through his experience of the highlands of Scotland appears to discover an experience of the living numinous power in, or discernable through, nature.

In such a place as this the very wind is like a prayer:
 Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden -
 For I am the meeting of the land and the sea,
 I am the presence on the hills and in the far islands,
 I am the living air,
 I am the light beyond the light of the sun,
 I am the face hidden in the mist,
 I am the watcher at the threshold of the dawn.

This, Gaskin exclaims, is the numinous, in the words of Otto 'pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship.' But he observes that apart from the second line, the feeling of the poem is not Christian, or even religious in any specific sense. He sums up his attitude to the experiences described here in the following way:

I think it is useful to label experiences of this type numinous pantheist. They are numinous inasmuch as the senses of awe, worship, and mysterium tremendum are present, although they are not focused upon any historically established god or interpreted within any

particular metaphysic of the world, religious or otherwise. They are pantheist inasmuch as they are usually associated with nature, or with some awesome aspect of nature.

However, in order to fully comprehend Gaskin's position we need first to examine the challenging comments concerning Otto's numinous experience made by another philosopher, H.D. Lewis, since Gaskin is attempting to respond to them, and criticize them.

Gaskin is emphatic in rejecting Lewis's claim that all numinous experience is religious and cannot be agnostically received.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Lewis argues that numinous experience must be restricted to the experience 'of finding God in some way present in the world', and he declares that 'whatever further interpretation may be in order here, it is certainly not one which leaves it open whether God exists or not.'⁽⁴⁸⁾ Lewis is, in fact, criticizing those who argue that the numinous experience is available to the sceptic as well as the Christian, and that it is qualitatively sufficiently neutral as to allow both theistic and non-religious interpretations.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Such a position, Lewis claims, is an attempt to salvage more for atheism than the case allows. It suggests that the atheist can share with the Christian all that is valuable and desirable in numinous experience, without himself being a believer and therefore having to pay the price of being a believer. However, all that this argument does is to conceal the true nature of numinous experience. What is vital in this experience is a quite specific impression of awe and inexpressible strangeness which only occurs when there is an awareness of an infinite and transcendent reality. What the atheist who claims to have numinous experience is really doing is to confuse numinous experience, which is uniquely religious, with rather different impressions of awe and strangeness which we discover in our experience of nature as well as in poetry. Many, if not most, experiences of a power in nature (what we could perhaps call experiences of the elemental) are quite different from

numinous experiences, and the religiously sensitive observer will be able to discriminate between them on the grounds that only numinous experiences are of God.

Moreover, in support of this position Lewis criticizes Otto and those of his interpreters who appear to contribute to the confusion between numinous experiences and secular impressions of awe and strangeness found in experiences of nature by speaking of the numinous in nature as some quality inhering objectively in things or places.⁽⁵⁰⁾ There are many clear examples of this in the text of The Idea of the Holy⁽⁵¹⁾, although Lewis argues that Otto cannot have seriously meant the numinous to be understood in this way. In fact Lewis claims that whatever else is a quality of objects in this way, the numinous certainly is not. We may speak of sensing the numinous quality of some awe inspiring scene or hallowed spot, but this, Lewis emphasizes is metaphor. The numinous does not haunt a place like a smell or mist, and Lewis concludes that although we may sense a numinous 'atmosphere', this 'atmosphere' has no existence apart from ourselves.

We must now assess the value of Lewis's position in order to establish how serious Gaskin's challenge is to Otto's claim for the uniquely religious nature of numinous experience. As we shall see, some of Lewis's observations about numinous experience help us to recognize that Gaskin fails to identify the distinctive features of such experience. On the other hand, we shall also discuss the weaknesses in Lewis's position which Gaskin himself justifiably draws attention to. We shall see that, notwithstanding the force of some of Lewis's comments about numinous experience, there is some value in Gaskin's position, even if he does not successfully challenge Otto's claim for the irreducibly religious nature of such experience. In fact it will be demonstrated that a proper

understanding of Otto's numinous experience requires us to adopt a position which incorporates features of both Lewis's and Gaskin's interpretation of such experience.

Let us turn first to a consideration of what is of value in Lewis's interpretation of numinous experience, which Gaskin fails to understand. What Lewis's interpretation of numinous experience focuses our attention on, which Gaskin's position overlooks, is the unique, specifically religious features of such experience, which are otherwise in danger of being confused with similar, non-religious, feelings of awe and inexpressible strangeness resulting from our confrontation with nature. There is, as Lewis points out, a quite specifically numinous feeling of awe and inexpressible strangeness which is only experienced when there is an awareness of an infinite and transcendent reality; and such a unique feeling must be distinguished from similar feelings arising out of our experience of the power of nature, which are aesthetic experiences, or perhaps experiences of the elemental. This is why Lewis argues that numinous experience cannot be qualitatively sufficiently neutral as to allow, both religious and non-religious (particularly aesthetic) interpretations.

Indeed, we can better understand the force of Lewis's argument here by identifying the specific weaknesses in Gaskin's attempt to challenge the claim that numinous experience is irreducibly religious and inaccessible to the sceptic. As we have previously explained, Gaskin cites examples of two kinds of numinous experience which he regards as not specifically religious. The first type of numinous experience he discusses is the shiver of fear or awe, which people have when they focus their attention with wonder on the profound immensity of the universe which engulfs them. Here such feelings are often accompanied by, or the result of, vast cosmic questions (aspects of the design argument or the

cosmological argument) presented with the force of an immediate experience of nature or of the whole universe, but without any accompanying perception of anything which could be called God or god.

However, the problem with this type of experience is that we cannot be sure that it is a numinous experience. It may not be correct to identify it as a numinous experience but as a sublime experience, as Otto's concept of the sublime, as we have seen previously in chapter IV, is sufficiently elevated to provide an adequate description of this experience. It will be remembered that Otto argues that:

the sublime exhibits the same peculiar dual character as the numinous: it is at once daunting, and yet again singularly attracting, in its impress upon the mind. It humbles and at the same time exhorts us, circumscribes and extends us beyond ourselves, on the one hand releasing in us a feeling analogous to fear, and on the other rejoicing us.⁽⁵²⁾

Clearly such a definition of the sublime must lead us to question how Gaskin can be so certain that the kind of experience he describes above is a numinous experience. What he fails to recognize is that more evidence is needed to establish whether the experience of the shiver of fear or awe resulting from man's contemplation of the profound immensity of the universe really is a numinous one. There are two kinds of evidence which would justify Gaskin's claim that the experience under consideration is a numinous experience. The first is the specific reference to divine beings, which Gaskin has already ruled out;⁽⁵³⁾ and the second is the reference to detailed descriptions of numinous experience, in language sufficiently intelligible to make clear what it is that qualitatively distinguishes numinous experience from all other kinds of experience, and especially sublime experience. In the absence of these forms of evidence, particularly the second, we must conclude that the experience that Gaskin describes is not a numinous, but a sublime, experience.⁽⁵⁴⁾ There is nothing at all disconcerting about this conclusion.

It is also clear that we shall reach a similar conclusion with regard to the second type of numinous experience which Gaskin claims is not specifically religious, that is what he calls 'numinous pantheist' experience. Again, contrary to Gaskin, there must be considerable doubt about whether the awareness of nature as somehow alive, awesome, powerful, wonderful and even terrible is really a numinous or a sublime experience; and such doubt can only be dispelled by the acquisition of sufficiently detailed reports of the qualitative features of the experiences under consideration. In the absence of such evidence we must frankly admit that we are bound to remain uncertain as to whether particular experiences are numinous or sublime. A typical example of this uncertainty can be found in the passage from Wordsworth's poem, Tintern Abbey, quoted earlier, which Gaskin regards as a fine illustration of the numinous pantheist experience he is trying to draw attention to. The problem with this passage is that it is impossible to decide whether it is the result of an aesthetic or a mystical experience. More evidence is needed to establish whether the passage betrays a feeling of genuine identity between the poet and the living power in nature or not. If it does, then it is an example of a mystical experience; but in that case we must then focus our attention on the nature of the power that the poet is uniting with. Can we really be certain - as certain as Gaskin is - that the 'motion and... spirit, that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things' is not religious? I am not sure that we can; and if we cannot be certain about this, then Gaskin's proposition that numinous pantheist experience is a form of non-religious numinous experience must appear unconvincing. On the other hand, if further evidence concerning the passage of Wordsworth under scrutiny suggests that the poet was not referring to an experience of mystical identity with the living power in nature, then we can conclude not only that it is not religious, but also that it is not numinous but aesthetic (sublime).

Similar difficulties are also to be found in Gaskin's appraisal of the second poem that he presents to the reader for discussion, On the Sea of Hebrides. Once again, without independent evidence, the poem leaves us wondering whether the words of mystical identity with the meeting of land and sea, the presence on the hills and in the far islands, the living air, the light beyond the light of the sun, the face hidden in the mist and the watcher at the threshold of the dawn are meant to be understood literally or are only metaphorical expressions. Once again we must demand further evidence in order to establish whether the poem is referring to an aesthetic or a mystical experience. Moreover, Gaskin is totally unjustified in assuming that because the poem mentions the act of worship (in such a place as this the very wind is like a prayer), it must be concerned with numinous experience, and particularly with the mysterium tremendum moments of the numinous. Gaskin erroneously assumes that worship is always evidence of numinous experience, and fails to recognize that it is often associated with non-numinous forms of religious experience. In short, if Gaskin is to go beyond the unsubstantiated assertion that the poem is referring to the mysterium tremendum and yet is not religious, then he will have to provide independent evidence for this, and this is precisely what he has not done.

Having identified the weaknesses in Gaskin's attempt to demonstrate that numinous experience is capable of being interpreted non-religiously, as well as what is of value in Lewis's interpretation of numinous experience, we are now in a position to consider the weaknesses in Lewis's argument as well as what, if anything, can be salvaged from Gaskin's argument.

There are two major weaknesses in Lewis's argument and each is the result of the other. The first is that Lewis claims that numinous experience must be restricted to an experience of God; and indeed he even argues, as we pointed out earlier, that whatever further interpretation of

numinous experience may be in order, it is certainly not one which leaves open the question of whether God exists.(55) Now the problem created by such a definition of numinous experience is that it is too narrowly circumscribed, excluding several types of religious experience which Otto identifies as numinous experience. For example, how are we to reconcile Lewis's definition of numinous experience with Otto's claim that mystical experience of non-theistic religious traditions, and of Buddhism in particular, is indeed a form of numinous experience?(56) Again, Lewis's definition of numinous experience appears to exclude all transient, rather shapeless experiences which may lie on the boundary between numinous and aesthetic experiences (especially experiences mediated by our awareness of nature), if there is no reference made by them to specific, divine beings.

This brings into focus for us the real difference between Lewis's interpretation of Otto's numinous experience and my own. For Lewis an experience can only be a numinous experience, that is a religious experience, if there is some evidence in it of an awareness of some easily identifiable divine being named and revered by some established, sacred tradition. Lewis's definition of numinous or religious experience is essentially conservative; it is restricted to experience which occurs in a readily recognizable religious context, and of course such experience is of a specific divine being who is given authority by that tradition. By way of contrast, my own attempt to define the parameters of numinous experience is governed by a search for sufficiently detailed records identifying what is qualitatively distinctive in it, regardless of where it may be found, rather than by allowing a specific religious context or the lack of it to determine whether a particular experience is to be defined as a numinous one or not. Of course many, perhaps most, numinous experiences occur within a readily recognizable religious context; but I disagree with Lewis that all numinous experiences do. Some numinous experiences do not occur within the context of a well established

religious tradition. In other words we may discover specifically numinous qualities or details in the reports of experience, but without any initial awareness of any specific divine being or reality. An example of this might be a numinous experience mediated, or produced through the association of analogous feelings, by an awareness of some aspect of nature. But notice here that I am not suggesting, as Lewis and Gaskin do, that as a consequence of this observation we must conclude that some numinous experiences are non-religious and thus available to the sceptic. Rather, I am proposing that my argument leads us to recognize the need for extending the boundaries of our definition of religious experience: not all religious experience is transparently about God or gods, and yet all numinous experience is religious experience. What this conclusion suggests is that, unlike Lewis, I am interested in the margins of numinous experience and religious experience, and that I expect to discover, given sufficient research, evidence that the incidence of numinous experience is far more widely distributed than Lewis believes. Moreover, in contrast to Lewis, I am interested in the changing forms of numinous experience brought about by its changing contexts, and the constant challenges such changes present to our understanding of such experience.

The second major weakness in Lewis's argument, which is clearly related to the first, is that he objects to Otto's references in The Idea of the Holy to the numinous in nature as some quality inhering objectively in things and places, on the grounds that the effect of this is to confuse numinous experience with secular impressions of awe and strangeness found in experiences of nature. Lewis argues that Otto cannot have seriously meant the numinous to be understood in this way, although it is quite clear from Otto's many references to the concrete numinous qualities to be found in particular places, things and people in the world⁽⁵⁷⁾ that this 'objective' dimension of numinous experience pervades all his thinking

about religious experience. Contrary to Lewis, Otto's talk about the numinous quality of an awe inspiring scene or hallowed spot is far from being mere metaphor.(58)

The problem with Lewis's position concerning numinous experience is that he is forced to reject Otto's references to the numinous as some concrete quality in objects and places in the natural world, because of the way he defines numinous experience. It will be remembered that, although Lewis emphasizes that such experience is qualitatively distinct from other forms of experience (including, or especially, aesthetic experiences) he can only identify it as such if it specifically refers to some divine being or reality. He makes no attempt to discover and analyse what is qualitatively distinct in numinous experience, as Otto does, but instead relies merely on an assertion that numinous experience, which always occurs in a religious context, is quite different from other forms of experience without explaining why this is the case. This is why Lewis fears that, in the absence of some reference to God, it will be impossible to distinguish numinous experiences mediated by nature from secular impressions of awe and strangeness found in aesthetic experiences of nature. We can thus conclude that it is Lewis's failure to explore, and to understand, the specific, unique qualities of numinous experience (which Otto is so concerned to draw attention to), together with his rather too narrow definition of such experience, which leads him to reject Otto's references to a concrete numinous quality in the natural world.(59) Moreover, we can see that Otto's references to this concrete numinous quality in the natural world only have any value when they are connected with his very detailed analysis of the qualitative features of the elements of numinous experience.

Finally, bearing in mind our criticism of Lewis's interpretation of Otto's numinous experience and our presentation of how it should be understood, we are now in a position to return to Gaskin's argument in

order to establish what, if anything at all, is still of value in it. We have already pointed out that Gaskin does not succeed in demonstrating that numinous experience can be agnostically received and interpreted simply because he does not provide the necessary evidence to establish that particular experiences are numinous rather than sublime. Gaskin, like Lewis, fails to identify the distinctive qualities of the elements of numinous experience, and this is why he confuses (or is likely to confuse) numinous with sublime experiences. However, what is of value, or rather what is the real challenge, in Gaskin's argument is that it alerts us to the possibility that numinous experience (which is religious experience) can occur outside an obvious religious context, that is in the absence of any easily identifiable divine beings. Gaskin reminds us (although we do not construe his argument as he would wish) that numinous religious experience does not need to occur within the context of an established sacred tradition.⁽⁶⁰⁾ It is in this respect that Gaskin's argument is useful in alerting us to the weaknesses of Lewis's argument or any argument like it.⁽⁶¹⁾

The third type of claim, seeking to demonstrate that numinous experience can be interpreted non-religiously, which I want to discuss comes from Ronald Hepburn.⁽⁶²⁾ Hepburn's argument, as we shall see, in some respects resembles that of Gaskin, but in spite of its relative age, and in spite of the fact that it was the specific agnostic challenge to the irreducibly religious nature of numinous experience which Lewis responded to, it remains a very interesting argument and one which is considerably more sophisticated than Gaskin's. It is for this reason that I consider Hepburn's argument worthy of separate treatment.

Like Gaskin, Hepburn begins his argument with the claim that numinous experience is available to the sceptic as well as to the Christian, and that it lends itself to both religious and non-religious forms of

interpretation. He seems to be more sensitive than Gaskin to the specific features of numinous experience which separate it from other forms of experience, including aesthetic experience; and yet he cites as examples not only traditional religious instances of the tremendum (the Israelites' terror on Mount Sinai), but also the dread and fascination before certain phenomena of nature (such as those Gaskin speaks about), and even instances of numinous experience encountered in dreams or under the influence of drugs.

What is common to all numinous experiences is their tremendous impact on those who have them. They are absolutely compelling and authoritative to those who have them, even to those who for other reasons are convinced that God does not, or cannot, exist. Indeed, this is where the real challenge in Hepburn's argument lies. Hepburn is addressing himself to an urgent problem for the sceptic, rather than for the believer. That is: what is one to do with these powerful, momentous, indeed tremendously valuable experiences if one is a sceptic? It is clear that the question poses a serious challenge even to Hepburn himself, and that he has personally suffered immense bewilderment in his attempt to understand his own immediate acquaintance with numinous experience in the light of his religious scepticism.⁽⁶³⁾ What cannot be doubted here is Hepburn's sincerity in his passionate affirmation that numinous experiences are not to be discredited as valueless illusions of the senses or imagination just because one becomes convinced that they cannot refer to God.

But then if one becomes convinced that numinous experiences cannot refer to God, or any other divine being, than what is one to do with them? Now Hepburn argues that since numinous experiences are non-intellectual, any experience of the numinous does not bring with it its own interpretation. Thus, like Gaskin, Hepburn claims that such experience can be interpreted either religiously or non-religiously. Theists may

interpret numinous experiences as encounters with a divine presence, but the experiences themselves do not demand such an interpretation. Indeed, Hepburn in fact wonders whether numinous experiences need necessarily be interpreted as cognitive experiences of any being at all, and argues that if they are interpreted in this way, they can continue to be accepted by the sceptic as the profoundly valuable experiences that they evidently are. Rather than speaking of intimation of a divine presence (an objective experience) as theists do, Hepburn suggests that numinous experiences are subjective because they are merely a reflection of man's inner life. In fact according to Hepburn they are in reality the product of man's unconscious life projected onto the outer world and particularly onto nature. Adopting the language of Freud, Hepburn suggests that numinous experience is the result of projecting certain features of man's inner life (especially the forgotten attitudes and emotions of early childhood) onto nature, as he himself believes he has confirmed by discovering the source of his own recurring numinous dream of a paradise landscape in a forgotten childhood experience of a beautiful landscape on a hill on the outskirts of Edinburgh.(64)

However, it must be emphasized that Hepburn's purpose in offering a psychoanalytic account of the origins of religious experience is not to call into question the value of numinous experience. He is not attempting, like orthodox Freudians, to explain numinous experience away by referring to its source in the unconscious. Rather, he is arguing, in opposition to the orthodox Freudians, that numinous experience is valuable precisely because it is the product of the manipulation of nature by man's unconscious.(65) The purpose of such 'manipulation',(66) and of religion generally, is to deliver man from the ultimate nightmare, namely 'the failure of all efforts towards humanizing the context of life, a nightmare in which other people are seen only as threats to our own existence, and nature as utterly foreign to us...'.(67) Thus numinous experience

possesses a vital function for man's life which is analogous to, although even more important than, aesthetic experience. This function is to transform nature or our environment so that we experience it 'in the light of our own purposes and commitments'.(68) Seen in this light, psychoanalytic explanation of numinous experience does nothing to degrade this experience, but, on the contrary, allows the sceptic to value it without requiring him to interpret it as an intimation of divine presence.

How are we to respond to Hepburn's interpretation of numinous experience, especially bearing in mind the profound value he attributes to it? Clearly, even if there is much to criticize in Hepburn's account of numinous experience, there is also much which supports Otto's claim that numinous experience is a distinctive experience which cannot be confused with any other experience, including aesthetic experience. Hepburn demonstrates that, although he cannot accept the existence of any divine reality, he is capable of recognizing the unique features of numinous experience. In this he vindicates Otto's assertion about the existence of numinous experience, even if he does not agree with Otto concerning its irreducibly religious nature. Thus we see that Hepburn's understanding of numinous experience is considerably closer to Otto's than either Gaskin's or Lewis's. Hepburn does not, like Gaskin, confuse numinous experience with sublime experience; nor does he, like Lewis, artificially restrict the incidence of numinous experience to occasions where there is some well established, readily recognizable divine being or reality. Rather, like Otto, he is led to identify certain experiences as numinous because they possess certain qualities which are not found in other experiences. Hepburn, like Otto, demonstrates that he can recognize the distinctive feelings associated with the mysterium, tremendum, and the fascinans moments of numinous experience, even though he has no desire to give them a religious interpretation.

Where we disagree with Hepburn's interpretation of numinous experience is firstly in his assumption that such experience must be non-intellectual, and secondly in his claim that it is the product of projecting the forgotten attitudes and emotions of early childhood and other features of man's inner life onto nature and other aspects of our environment. To begin with, it should be clear from our discussion of the ineffability of numinous experience in Chapter III that such experience cannot be totally non-intellectual. If it were, then Hepburn could say absolutely nothing about it, and he would certainly not be able to recognize its distinctive features as he is evidently able to do. The fact that Hepburn can attribute a profound value to numinous experience and distinguish it from aesthetic experience, is sufficient evidence against the claim that it is non-intellectual. Of course this observation by itself does not establish, contrary to Hepburn, that numinous experience must be interpreted as a religious experience and given the cognitive status attributed to it by Otto. Indeed, there is, in principle nothing inconsistent in recognizing the distinctive features of numinous experience and yet arguing that because of their peculiar, unfamiliar nature they can be given more than one interpretation.

What is wrong in practice, however, with Hepburn's treatment of numinous experience is that he fails to pay sufficient attention to the unique qualities of such experience when deciding which of a number of competing interpretations of it appears to distort it least. In other words although, as he rightly points out, it may be more difficult to establish which of a number of alternative interpretations of numinous experience is most compatible with it than Otto and other theistic commentators on numinous experience are prepared to admit, he fails to look for the authority of his own interpretation of it in his own concrete numinous experience. Experience should guide, direct, shape and govern interpretation. Yet Hepburn's psychoanalytic account of the origins of

numinous experience is not the immediate result of a concrete encounter with numinous experience, but rather an attempt to explain such experience in the absence of any alternative interpretation of it (including religious interpretation). It is clear that, although Hepburn begins his argument by insisting that interpretation should strive to get as close as possible to concrete experience, he is as guilty of ignoring the peculiar features of experience in his interpretation as those whom he criticizes; for is it not the case that any interpretation of numinous experience which simply locates its source in the unconscious must be by definition divorced from experience?(69) Hepburn's psychoanalytic explanation of numinous experience is no closer to that experience than Otto's theistic interpretation of it.(70) What is needed is an interpretation of numinous experience which respects, indeed reflects, the unique features of that experience without any conceptual distortion, and this Hepburn clearly has not given us.

What conclusions concerning the cognitive status of Otto's numinous experience can we reasonably accept in the light of our criticisms of Hepburn's work, as well as our earlier evaluation of the claims of Gaskin, Lewis and Prozesky? Clearly, to begin with, we must reject the claim(71) that numinous experience is definitely subjective just as we have previously rejected the pragmatist and idealist arguments for its objective status. In other words, there is as much uncertainty surrounding the claim that numinous experience is subjective as there is surrounding the claim that it is objective. In the light of this observation, it seems to me that there are only two interpretations of numinous experience which are possible.(72) Either we argue that it possesses a distinctive cognitive status,(73) being anomalous with regard to the traditional distinction between objective and subjective experiences, or we accept the proposition mentioned earlier that it could have objective reference without us presently being able to be certain

that this is so. Either way, these conclusions concerning the cognitive status of numinous experience only lend support to a most important argument already introduced in this chapter, namely that we should understand Otto's claims about numinous experience non-cognitively. That is to say, we should adopt a broadly phenomenological approach which brackets out questions concerning the cognitive status of numinous experience⁽⁷⁴⁾ and instead focus our attention on its significance for inner religious life, and in particular on its apparent distinctive characteristics.

Phenomenology of religious experience should be concerned with the study of appearances, and our non-cognitive approach to numinous experience allows us to study the life transforming properties that are claimed for it, as well as the specific features which distinguish it from all non-religious experiences. Through this approach one can not only recognize and respect the strongly felt conviction that numinous experiences are objective - indeed noetic and cognitively free from all doubt - without either accepting or rejecting such judgements, but one can also acknowledge and explore their distinctive, irreducibly religious features without assuming that they possess any objective reference beyond themselves. It is clear from our previous criticisms of the claims of Hepburn, Gaskin, Lewis and Prozesky concerning numinous experience, that there are no grounds for arguing that what Otto calls numinous experience is merely the result of his misinterpretation of non-religious experiences. We have demonstrated that Otto focuses his attention on a distinctive irreducible experience, and that the specific features of such experience make it easily recognizable and ensure that it is not confused with any non-religious experiences.

Moreover, as we have demonstrated throughout this thesis, Otto is constantly using language in unconventional ways in order to attempt to prevent the reader from forgetting what numinous experience is like.

Clearly, as we have argued in chapter III, one important purpose of language about numinous experience is to remind the reader of the possibility of having such experience, and in this context we have shown that such language provides a valuable means of stimulating it. However, the converse is equally true: namely that the lack of language about numinous experience will inhibit its incidence. With the disappearance of language about numinous experience, such experience is itself bound to disappear. This observation is similar to a recent persuasive argument by David Hay concerning the incidence of all religious experience. He points out that the currently fashionable lack of religious beliefs and language is a powerful force leading to the inhibition of religious experience, and that we should not distrust religious language but rather treat it as a valuable guide leading us to experiences otherwise inaccessible. In terms resembling my previous argument, he proposes that religious experience is not the result of some misinterpretation of non-religious experiences and that religious language is indeed justifiable. He says:

When people reporting religious experience couch it in the language and conceptions of a formal religious tradition.... critics are entitled to inquire whether preconceptions are not affecting their perceptions; whether they are making an inaccurate appraisal of what is there. The critics may be right, but of course this sort of criticism cuts both ways. As Kuhn has shown, this is always a problem with powerful traditions of knowledge, whether they are political, religious or scientific. It could be argued that the popular paradigm of science, with its nineteenth-century positivist flavour, simply will not allow people to admit that experiences such as we have been examining can exist as anything more than hallucinations or the errors of cranks. (75)

These are sentiments that Otto would surely agree with, because they lie at the heart of his theory of religious experience.

Finally, there is one remaining doubt concerning the irreducibly religious nature of numinous experience which needs to be dispelled. This arises out of Hepburn's discussion, and particularly out of his ability to distinguish numinous experiences from other experiences on the basis of

their distinctive qualitative features, together with his refusal to give these experiences a religious interpretation. Hepburn's refusal to interpret numinous experiences religiously, given his own sensitivity to such experiences, presents us with a real challenge which deserves some response. I suggest that the reason why Hepburn rejects Otto's claims for the irreducibly religious nature of numinous experience can be traced to the cognitive claims associated with his theory of numinous experience or with any other theistic account of such experience. Hepburn believes that numinous experiences are not cognitive, and this is one important reason why he regards them as subjective.

However, I would like to propose that if Hepburn were to adopt a non-cognitive approach to numinous experiences similar to my own, then he would find the claim that numinous experiences are irreducibly religious far less unpalatable. His actual descriptions of numinous experiences create a strong impression that his experiences were indeed religious, but that he had no wish to acknowledge their religious nature for fear of what effect such a judgement might have on his general intellectual outlook on religion and the existence of God. The adoption of a non-cognitive approach to numinous experience would allow Hepburn to avoid these intellectual difficulties, and give him the freedom to recognize what appears to have been the genuinely religious nature of his own numinous experiences. If he were to adopt this position, then he would be able to share in my conviction that the definition of religious experiences (and here I am speaking primarily about numinous religious experiences) is not determined by their objective reference or the lack of it, but rather by their specific qualitative features. He would then be in a position to extend his definition of religious experience beyond its present boundaries, in a way analogous to the way I have already argued for on the basis of my own understanding of numinous experience.

(iv) The Unmediated Nature of Numinous Experience

It has already been demonstrated in this chapter how much Otto had invested in his claim that numinous experience is felt to refer to something objective outside the self, in spite of his exaggerated apriorism, and it has been suggested that such a claim be approached non-cognitively. However, together with such a claim that religious experience involves a direct 'sensing' of a numinous object, Otto makes another persistent claim, namely that numinous experiences are unmediated. In this section I want to evaluate this claim, and in particular to distinguish two different, but easily confused, interpretations of it, one of which, so far not considered, is far more plausible than the other. In summary, I shall argue that although, as I have demonstrated at length in chapter III, Otto is not justified in proposing that numinous experiences are completely unmediated since all experiences are mediated to some degree by previous knowledge and experience, his second proposal (discussed here for the first time) that numinous experience is not mediated by any non-religious experience deserves far more serious attention. Indeed, in the ensuing discussion it will become apparent that in speaking about the unmediated nature of numinous experience in this second sense, Otto is signalling to the reader either that he does not attribute any value to mediated religious experiences or that he simply does not regard mediated religious experiences as authentic religious experiences at all.(76)

In chapter II we saw just how important Otto's desire to evoke numinous experience in his readers was for the argument of The Idea of the Holy. (77) In this chapter we discussed the mechanisms for stimulating such experience, (78) and we emphasized the significance of Otto's law of association of analogous feelings (with its insistence that numinous feeling is unevolvable from any other experience and qualitatively sui generis)(79) for his general theory of religious

experience. It is clear from all this discussion that, together with adopting a quasi-perceptual model of numinous experience, Otto intends to endorse the view that such experience is not mediated by any non-religious experience. Indeed one of the most important functions of the law of association of analogous feelings, so far not considered in this essay, is to ensure that numinous experience is not understood as mediated by any non-religious feeling; and this argument finds particularly lucid expression in the following passage.

The numinous issues from the deepest foundation of cognitive apprehension that the soul possesses, and, though it of course comes into being in and amid sensory data and empirical material of the natural world and cannot anticipate or dispense with those, yet it does not arise out of them, but only by their means. They are the incitement, the stimulus, and the 'occasion' for the numinous experience to become astir, and, in so doing, to begin - at first with a naive immediacy of reaction - to be interfused and interwoven with the present world of sensuous experience, until, becoming gradually purer, it disengages itself from this and takes its stand in absolute contrast to it. (80)

What is apparent from this passage, as well as others which emphasize the numinous 'sense of presence', is how far away Otto's theory of religious experience is from that of those theologians and philosophers who insist that, while religious experience may be psychologically direct, it is mediated by non-religious experiences. It is important to recognize here that Otto's position, that only numinous experiences unmediated by non-religious experiences are an adequate ground for religious belief, is in sharp contrast to that of those theologians and philosophers who argue that unmediated religious experience is not even a possibility. Let us examine some recent literature which insists on the mediated nature of all religious experience, in order to help us clarify the epistemological implications of Otto's rejection of all mediated religious experience as a ground for religious belief.

I want to begin by looking at John Baillie's argument, which insists, contrary to those who adopt a quasi-perceptual model of religious experience, that our experience of the immediacy of God's presence to our

souls is always a mediated immediacy.⁽⁸¹⁾ What Baillie means by this apparently self-contradictory phrase becomes clear in the following passages:

Yet, though we are more directly and intimately confronted with the presence of God than with any other presence, it does not follow that He is ever present to us apart from all other presences. And, in fact, it is the witness of experience that only 'in, with and under'⁽⁸²⁾ other presences is the divine presence ever vouchsafed to us..... God does not present Himself to us except in conjunction with the presence of our fellows and of the corporeal world.

He continues:

.... it seems plain that the consciousness of God is never given save in conjunction with the consciousness of things. We do not know God through the world, but we know Him with the world; and in knowing Him with the world, we know Him as its ground. Nature is not an argument for God, but it is a sacrament of Him.⁽⁸³⁾

It is obvious that in these passages we have an understanding of religious experience which is profoundly antagonistic to any theory of religious sensibility such as Otto's.⁽⁸⁴⁾ And, as if to underline his distance from Otto, Baillie calls on Baron von Hügel, the Roman Catholic mystical theologian, to support his argument. Von Hügel suggests that 'Spirit is awakened on occasion of Sense'⁽⁸⁵⁾ and that the knowledge of God is not during this life given to us in its isolated purity, but only through 'the humiliations of the material order.'⁽⁸⁶⁾ By contrast Otto, at least in the main body of the argument of The Idea of the Holy, speaks of no spiritual disabilities specifically created by our physical embodiment which would prevent us experiencing the numinous in its fullness in this lifetime.

Another significant, and more recent, proponent of the thesis that all religious experience is mediated by non-religious experience is John Smith. He argues that those who believe that we are forced to choose between only two opposing conceptions of the knowledge of God, namely that God is either immediately experienced or only inferred but never present in experience, are mistaken. There is a third conception of religious experience which avoids the difficulties of the other two, and this he

calls interpreted experience. Interpreted experience is of course mediated, but direct, experience, and Smith affirms, like Baillie before him, that every alleged experience of God is also at the same time an experience of something else.⁽⁸⁷⁾ However, Smith goes beyond Baillie in drawing attention to some epistemological implications of this thesis. He argues that God is not present as one ordinary object among others, and since this is so, no singular religious experience can stand in analogy with a sensible experience of an object as evidence that God exists. Smith concludes that whereas direct, mediated experience of God is necessary for religious life, immediate, self-authenticating, religious experience is inimical to it.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Once again, we see in this argument a position which seeks specifically to challenge a theory of religious experience such as Otto's, which does indeed speak of immediate experiences of numinous objects as evidence that God exists.

There is also a third account of the thesis that all religious experience is mediated by non-religious experience, which I would like to introduce. It comes from John Hick, who argues that religious faith consists of experiencing the events of our lives and of human history as something mediating the presence and activity of God. Hick explains what he means in the following way. He proposes, on the basis of Wittgenstein's important observation that seeing sometimes involves discovering new aspects of an object previously unnoticed (as illustrated in the famous example he cites of Jastrow's drawing of a figure which can be experienced as a picture either of a duck or of a rabbit),⁽⁸⁹⁾ that we typically see or experience things in either one way or another without those things changing at all. What changes is the way we see or experience things, not the things themselves, and this is determined by the concepts we bring to our experience of those things. Thus Hick claims that all experience is dominated by particular concepts and involves recognitions which go beyond what is given to the senses. This is what he

means by his assertion that all experience is experiencing or seeing as.(90) Now Hick argues that this general conclusion about experience applies specifically to religious experience. Someone who believes in God can be regarded as experiencing everything as something behind which God lies. Believers experience the world as a world in which God is present and their position is no worse than that of the non-believer. Hick speaks of 'two contrasting ways of experiencing the events of our lives and of human history, on the one hand as purely natural events and on the other as mediating the presence and activity of God.' He continues:

For there is a sense in which the religious man and the atheist both live in the same world and another sense in which they live consciously in different worlds. They inhabit the same physical environment and are confronted by the same changes occurring within it. But in its actual concrete character in their respective 'streams of consciousness' it has for each a different nature and quality, a different meaning and significance; for one does and the other does not experience life as a continued interaction with the transcendent God.(91)

However, once again we see in this argument about 'experiencing as' an understanding religious experience which is profoundly different to Otto's. For is it not the case that Hick's 'experiencing as' is the result of adopting a religious faith, whereas numinous experience, when it occurs, provides a reason for adopting such a religious faith? Moreover, experiencing life and history as the activity of God is not forced upon a person by the nature of the concrete experience of the world which he has. Such religious experience is optional in a way that numinous experience, if it occurs, is not. One cannot choose whether or not to acknowledge the numinous once it enters one's consciousness, but one can, according to Hick, choose whether or not to acknowledge that the events of our lives and of human history mediate the presence and activity of God.(92)

It is clear from all the previous discussion concerning Hick, Smith and Baillie how antagonistic Otto's insistence, that numinous experience involves a direct sensing of a numinous object, is to all accounts of religious experience which insist that it is always mediated by

non-religious experiences. However, there are two epistemological difficulties associated with Otto's thesis that numinous experience is unmediated which need to be resolved. Only if these difficulties can be dealt with satisfactorily, can we accept the plausibility of Otto's claim that it is possible to have unmediated numinous experiences.

The first difficulty concerning the unmediated nature of numinous experience to which we need to address ourselves is raised by the fact that there is another form of mediation to which all experience is subjected, which we discussed extensively in chapter III and which is not to be confused with the form of mediation which we have just been speaking about. This is the mediation to which Katz, Donovan and Moore draw attention.⁽⁹³⁾ They argue that there is no experience which is completely pure or raw, that is completely divorced from all interpretation. That is to say, all experience is mediated by previous knowledge and experience, and there are no exceptions to this rule. Even mystical experiences, therefore, are mediated by previous knowledge (including doctrinal education) and experience (including expectations concerning what kind of experience is likely to occur, or is even possible).

However, there is a problem which this observation creates for Otto's other claim that numinous experience is not mediated by non-religious experiences. This is that it is not easy to reconcile it with Otto's law of association of analogous feelings, which, as we have previously argued, has as one of its most important functions the task of ensuring that a quasi-perceptual model of religious experience is adopted, rather than one which insists that all religious experience is at the same time an experience of something else non-religious. The law of association of analogous feelings, as we have previously pointed out, supports Otto's thesis that numinous experience is unevolvable from any other experience and is qualitatively sui generis, and therefore also supports the thesis that numinous experience is not mediated by

non-religious experience. Yet this law presupposes a mechanism through which religious experience comes into being, which fails to acknowledge the significance of the observations of philosophers like Katz who argue that all experience, religious and non-religious, is mediated by previous knowledge and experience.⁽⁹⁴⁾ As I argued in chapter III, one of the most significant weaknesses of The Idea of the Holy is that Otto failed to recognize the importance of this epistemological principle and accordingly, failed to understand the complexity of all epistemological processes. It is clear, therefore, that this observation must lead us to question the value of Otto's law of association of analogous feelings.

Yet we cannot assume that just because Otto underestimated the complexity of all epistemological processes, and the complexity of the mechanism through which religious experiences come into being, we are therefore forced to reject the law of association of analogous feelings as utterly implausible. It is useful rather to acknowledge the limitations of this account of how religious experience comes into being, while also recognizing that the law of association of analogous feelings can be reconceived in a way that takes into account the important epistemological principle which Otto sadly neglected. The way to proceed, I suggest, is to conceive of the origination of religious experience as the product of two separate, but interacting, cognitive processes: the law of association of analogous feelings and the epistemological process whereby experience is mediated by previous knowledge and experience. Numinous experience continues to be understood as initially arising out of a psychological process of associations to analogues of such experience; but as the religious experience begins to come into being, it is partly shaped, or constituted, by pre-experiential belief patterns and expectations of the religious tradition to which the subject of the experience belongs. There is nothing incoherent in this account of the development of religious experience.

However, it must be emphasized that the cultural conditioning of the religious tradition may in turn influence the psychological mechanism behind the law of association of analogous feelings by determining which analogues to numinous experience are focused upon and which are ignored, thereby in turn determining the nature and the shape of the particular numinous experiences which arise. Thus we see that there is a relationship of collaboration between the psychological law of association of analogous feelings and the epistemological principle that all experience is mediated by previous knowledge and experience which amounts to a complex process of reciprocity; and we can accordingly conclude that although Otto has been justifiably accused of failing to understand the complexity of the mechanism through which religious experiences come into being, there are no grounds for arguing that his law of the association of analogous feelings, if properly reconceived, should be dismissed by contemporary philosophers and phenomenologists of religion as valueless.

Moreover, before concluding our discussion concerning the plausibility of Otto's law of association of analogous feelings, on which his thesis about numinous experience being unmediated by non-religious experience depends, it is worth recalling that in chapter III we challenged the unquestioned assumption of Katz and other philosophers that mystical experience is largely constituted by the tradition in which it occurs. It will be remembered that William Wainwright in particular criticizes Katz's account of mystical experience on the grounds that, although no experience is entirely pure or unmediated, this observation does not entail the further one that the nature of mystical experience is significantly determined by the religious tradition to which the mystic belongs.(96) As Wainwright explains, the contribution of the mystic's tradition to his religious experience may be a relatively minor one.

Now the consequences of this observation for our present discussion are highly significant. For if, as we have argued in chapter III, mystical, and more generally religious, experience is considerably less determined by its particular tradition or context than many other (non-religious) forms of experience, we are justified in concluding that Otto's law of association of analogous feelings has a significantly greater influence on the creation of numinous experience (when it occurs) than the epistemological principle which insists that all experience is mediated by previous knowledge and experience. Indeed we can see, in the light of this discussion, that Otto's law of association of analogous feelings is likely to provide a more satisfactory explanation for the incidence of numinous experience than for the incidence of many other non-religious forms of experience.

The second difficulty in Otto's claim that numinous experience is not mediated by non-religious experiences to which we need to address ourselves, is one which is raised by Harold Turner's discussion concerning indirect means of expression of the numinous, which we introduced in chapter II.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Turner, it will be remembered, observes that Otto hovers between two views of the relation between the numinous and the various means by which it is expressed. According to the first there is a psychological movement from the means of expression of the numinous to the numinous itself by a replacement process, which is contingent rather than necessary. According to the second, however, the numinous, once apprehended, continues to be experienced through its means of expression, which suggests a necessary connection between the two. Now the problem with the second view, especially its language of the numinous being experienced through its means of expression, is that it suggests just the kind of mediation of numinous experience which Otto, as we have just demonstrated desires to exclude from consideration. Indeed it suggests the kind of mediation which as we have just shown, is celebrated in the

theory of 'mediated immediacy' by such thinkers as Baillie and Smith. Moreover, since Turner believes that Otto's much discussed process of schematization serves to make the relation between the means of expression of the numinous and the numinous itself a necessary one,⁽⁹⁸⁾ he appears to be suggesting that schematization should also be identified with the mediation which is here at issue.

However, the problem which is raised for Otto by Turner's treatment of indirect means of expression of the numinous and his consequent endorsement of mediated numinous experience, is not a very serious one. This is because it is created merely by the erroneous assumption that there is only one possible interpretation of the necessary connection between the numinous and its means of expression, namely that the numinous must be experienced through its means of expression. But why should this be so? Why can we not argue that if there is a necessary connection between the numinous and its means of expression, then the former is experienced with, rather than through, the latter? This conclusion not only releases us from the obligation of endorsing the mediation that Otto wishes to distance himself from. It is also supported by our discussion of Otto's law of association of analogous feelings and its relation to his concept of schematization introduced in chapter II.

There we demonstrated that even where there is a necessary connection between the numinous and its means of expression, the law of association of analogous feelings, with its gradual replacement process, was the mechanism through which a person would discover numinous experience. Indeed, we argued that one conclusion we could draw from the identification of schematization with the law of association of analogous feelings is that there are two forms of association of analogous feelings. One is merely a contingent, or accidental process, but the other, identified with schematization, is a necessary process of replacement of the numinous analogue by the numinous itself. This interpretation of the

law of association of analogous feelings must surely convince us that there is nothing incoherent in the proposition that if there is a permanent, or necessary, connection between the numinous and its means of expression, then the numinous continues to be experienced, contrary to Turner, with, rather than through, its means of expression. Accordingly, we can now conclude that there is nothing to prevent us from accepting the plausibility of Otto's claim that numinous experience is unmediated by non-religious experience.

(v) The Significance of Otto's Claims concerning the Irreducibility of Numinous Experience for the Phenomenology of Religion.

We have seen in our earlier discussion concerning the explanatory power of the concept of the numinous and its ontological standing that Otto successfully demonstrates that numinous experience is irreducibly religious. That is to say, we have shown that numinous experience should be understood non-cognitively, and as neither a misinterpretation of some non-religious experience, nor an experience which is accessible to those who are not religious, since there are specifically religious qualities in such experience which are not to be found elsewhere.⁽⁹⁹⁾ This is one meaning of Otto's constant attack on reductionism (the proposition that religion is best understood by going outside its domain to explain it). However, there is a further consequence of Otto's criticism of the reductionist position. Otto wishes not only to defend the authenticity of the religious experience and religious life of the believer. He also wants to insist that the study of religion must not import explanatory theories that are foreign to it, that is that fail to identify what is unique in religious life and experience. The study of religion should not be seeking non-religious explanations for religious phenomena (the presupposition of all reductionist scholarship), but rather to describe their distinctive features (which are likely to be overlooked by

reductionist enquiry) and to offer specifically religious explanations for them. Accordingly, the most significant disciplinary axiom of such study must be that religious phenomena can only be adequately explained by theories unique to the field of religious studies. It is this approach to the study of religion which opposes all reductionism, which we shall discuss in this section. In particular, we shall attempt to elucidate the implications of Otto's rejection of reductionism for later thinking about definitions of the phenomenology of religion.(100)

Of course one important reason why Otto has so often been identified as a precursor of, and contributor to the phenomenology of religion is precisely because of his much celebrated, impassioned opposition to reductionism in the study of religion, which is assumed to be a methodological presupposition of the discipline.(101) We saw in chapter IV that this opposition has been profoundly influential, not only on Gerardus van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade who advocate the use of religious sensibility by the scholar in his study of other religions and do not conceal their religious commitments, but also on Jacques Waardenburg and Ninian Smart, who, unlike van der Leeuw and Eliade, have no desire to endorse the scholar's use of his own religious experience in the phenomenological study of religion, and argue rather that the scholar should 'bracket out' his own religious commitments when studying those of others. It is clear from this discussion, as well as from other recent literature in the field,(102) that the proposition that reductionism and the phenomenology of religion are antipathetic is widely accepted, even by those scholars who believe the discipline of phenomenology of religion to be a 'science of religion'.

However, in recent years a number of thinkers have attacked the rejection of reductionism in the phenomenology of religion as unnecessary, unproductive, confused and even a covert agent of evangelism in the cause of belief. I want in a moment to respond to the challenge that such

thinkers pose, and to demonstrate that such criticisms are in fact unjustified, thereby deepening our understanding of the phenomenology of religion, as well as Otto's contribution to the discipline. But before I do, it is useful to introduce the work of several philosophers of religion influenced by Wittgenstein, who from a completely different intellectual tradition appear to corroborate and lend weight to the phenomenologist's strictures on reductionism. We shall see that such thinkers also reject reductionism in the study of religion, but for reasons that are rather different to those of phenomenologists of religion.

The theory of the irreducibility of religious belief and experience has been proposed by several philosophers of religion attempting to respond to Wittgenstein's ideas on language games. What has come to be known as the 'autonomist position' with respect to religious discourse is especially associated with D.Z. Phillips, Norman Malcolm and Peter Winch, although many other thinkers have also adopted this position.⁽¹⁰³⁾ These writers argue that religious beliefs must be evaluated in strictly religious terms, because they have a different logical status to non-religious beliefs. Indeed a philosopher's task is not to evaluate, or criticise, religious language, but simply to elucidate it, that is to eliminate any confusion concerning its meaning. Accordingly, if one wishes to question the validity or appropriateness of a particular religious belief, the criteria for assessment must be religious; that is to say, any such belief can only be properly understood or criticised by someone who is a participant in the particular religious tradition, out of which it arises. It is incoherent, it is argued, to question the validity of religious beliefs in general, since to do so is to seek to invoke standards of judgement external to all religion. Indeed, to ask for a justification of religion in general is like asking for a justification of science in general. Rather, the criteria of intelligibility of religious discourse are provided by individual concrete religious communities which

define the appropriate public standards for judging the truth and adequacy of religious doctrines and activities. Religion, ultimately, is a separate form of life and religious discourse a separate language game.

Norman Malcolm provides a lucid example of this approach to religion as a separate form of life when he points out that the concept of God grows out of a certain storm in the soul, and that only within a certain form of life could we have the specific idea of religious conscience. Moreover, he argues that without a religious insider's understanding of the religious form of life, the concept of God will appear an arbitrary and absurd construction.(104)

However, Peter Winch provides an even more illuminating discussion about religion as a separate, conceptually self-sufficient form of life, by examining the intellectual presuppositions we bring with us when we attempt to understand another culture, and in particular a primitive society.(105) His observations take their departure from his criticism of Evans-Pritchard's study of Azande magic. Evans-Pritchard, he argues, is mistaken in assuming that because the Azande have a different conception of reality than we do, our scientific conception of reality agrees with what reality actually is like while theirs does not. Evans-Pritchard is not justified in proposing that Azande magical beliefs are based upon an illusion. Indeed, Winch argues that it is a mistake to think that our western scientific discourse provides us with a paradigm against which to measure the intellectual respectability of other modes of discourse, and he offers an example from religious discourse to demonstrate his opposition to Evans-Pritchard's conclusions concerning Azande magic. When God in the book of Job speaks to his recalcitrant, suffering servant out of the whirlwind, demanding to know why he has lost his faith, Winch remarks that we would misunderstand the passage if we thought that Job had made some kind of theoretical mistake, which he might have corrected by further observation and experiment. To opt for such a conclusion is

simply to misidentify the distinctive features of the religious form of life. Similarly, to judge Azande magic by the rules of scientific discourse is to misunderstand that form of life. Just as the concept of God's reality is only given within, and only intelligible within, the religious form of life in which such a conception of God is embedded, so the concept of Azande magical reality is only given within, and intelligible within, the Azande form of life with all its magical practices.

Moreover, this argument is reinforced by Winch's later claim concerning the nature of logic.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Systems of logic, he proposes, are not independent of modes of social life but determined by them and, since this is the case, science and religion each have criteria of intelligibility peculiar to themselves. Within science or religion an action can be logical or illogical⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ but, Winch argues, it makes no sense to assert that science and religion as separate forms of life are logical or illogical. We can conclude from all this that what Winch is proposing is a kind of compartmentalization of modes of discourse or forms of life, and that no criticism of religion is relevant unless it arises from a specific religious tradition and responds to specific difficulties within that tradition.

A similar compartmentalization of modes of discourse or forms of life is also to be found in the work of D. Z. Phillips.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ He argues that religious beliefs and practices do not presuppose any explanatory hypotheses that might conflict with those of science, and this leads him to deny that they entail any assertions at all. Rather, they are simply expressive attitudes and activities. Religious beliefs are not referential, and so do not make any claims about the world; and those who argue to the contrary, Phillips claims, are in fact unconscious reductionists. He says:

If we mean by reductionism an attempt to reduce the significance of religious belief to something other than it is, then reductionism consists in the attempt, however sophisticated, to say that religious pictures must refer to some object; that they must describe matters of fact. That is the real reductionism which distorts the character of religious beliefs.(109)

We can see from this claim about reductionism why Phillips wishes to speak about 'religion without explanation', and we can understand why such strictures on explanation, as well as the earlier arguments of Winch and Malcolm, provide considerable intellectual support for the phenomenologist's rejection of reductionism in the study of religion. In these philosophical arguments about religion as a conceptually self-sufficient form of life we find confirmation not only of the intuition of a phenomenologist of religion like Ninian Smart, who claims that we should 'bracket out' all truth claims of the religious traditions we study and concentrate on sympathetic description rather than reductive explanation,(110) but also of the observation of the scholar, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who contends that a necessary requirement of the validity of any statement about a religion is that it be acknowledged and accepted by adherents of that religious tradition.(111) Bearing all this in mind, we are now ready to respond to the challenge of those thinkers who have attacked the rejection of reductionism in the phenomenology of religion as unproductive, confused and a covert agent of evangelism in the cause of belief.

The first argument I want to discuss is one which proposes that what is involved in reductionism affects theories about religious life and experience rather than the religious life and experience itself. Reductionism is concerned merely with the explanation of one theory by another. It poses no threat at all to the 'thing' (the experiences, beliefs, and actions) which we call religion. Thus the desire to defend irreducible religion, it is argued, is the product of false anxiety, and is pointless. For example, in an influential article in the debate about

reductionism Hans Penner and Edward Yonan propose that reduction is not only harmless, but useful and necessary. Citing Rudolph Otto and Mircea Eliade as the chief critics of reductionism in the study of religion, they argue that:

Our analysis indicates that these views of reduction (of Otto and Eliade) clearly misunderstand what is implied by that procedure. By misunderstanding reduction, they falsify what the other sciences mean by it. As we have shown, reduction is an operation concerned with theories or systems of statements, not with phenomena, data, or the properties of phenomena. For as Nagel⁽¹¹²⁾ has said, "properties", or the "nature" of something, is always stated as a theory. None of the scholars we have examined ... states that reduction wipes out, levels or demeans the phenomena or data being explained. On the contrary, reduction in the sciences implies an explanation of one theory by the use of another The sole purpose of reduction is to offer adequate theoretical explanations and to provide for the continued progress of scientific knowledge.⁽¹¹³⁾

In other words, what Penner and Yonan appear to be saying here is that, because there is such a thing as theoretical reduction, there is no such thing as ontological reduction (the reduction of religious experiences, beliefs and practices to something other than themselves).⁽¹¹⁴⁾

Can such a position be justified? Certainly Guildford Dudley, a leading interpreter of Eliade, thinks that it can.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ He is impressed by the arguments of Penner and Yonan, and proposes that the position of Eliade should be abandoned 'not because the statement that religion is sui generis is false, but because it is part of a general theory that has failed to be useful.'⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Moreover, it is also arbitrary. He says:

Eliade's uncompromising opposition to what he considered 'reductionism' in explaining religious phenomena is, in effect, to insist by fiat that there are no considerations under which this particular programme can be overthrown.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

However, it not at all clear that these observations are self-evident. Why should we assume that Eliade's obstinate opposition to reductionism in the study of religion has failed to be useful? Why should we suppose that Eliade's methodological position is little more than an arbitrary and unproductive dogma? Surely, if anything belongs to the

centre of an intellectual discipline, it must be the independence of that discipline. The centre of the discipline of physics is that things ultimately have a physical explanation. The foundation of biological theory is that living organisms require more explanation than is available solely through physics. Surely, the study of religion requires that a similar assumption be made about its own disciplinary independence. To oppose reductionism in the study of religion is thus to commit oneself to what might be called a disciplinary axiom, which provides a focus for the scholar's attention. Accordingly, we can hardly fail to recognize that the phenomenology of religion has good grounds for rejecting the reductionist theories advocated by Penner, Yonan, Dudley and others. As Daniel Pals has pointed out:

So far as it claims to be an independent discipline the study of religion does face at least a potential threat from reductionist theories. The reduction of biological explanations to physical-chemical ones would not put an end to living organisms, but it might well put an end to biology, at least as a separate science. Similarly, reducing faith solely to the interaction of psyche and society need not spell doom for religion, but it might well bring the demise of Religionswissenschaft.(118)

Moreover, such a demise, Pals argues, would be a great loss, since the value of the discipline should be measured by the results it has produced; and the results produced by several generations of Religionswissenschaft have been enormous. The work of Otto, van der Leeuw, Eliade and others in this tradition, Pals observes, must surely convince the impartial observer that the opposition to reductionism in the study of religion helps the scholar to identify distinctive features of religious life which are otherwise bound to be missed. Those who, contrary to Otto and Eliade and their colleagues or disciples, affirm the value of reductionism in the study of religion are simply unaware of the aspects of religion that they are thereby screening themselves off from.

The second argument concerning the recommendation of reductionism in the phenomenology of religion that I want to discuss comes from Robert Segal, who claims that the position 'of scholars such as Otto and Eliade' is confused and untenable.(119) There are two separate dimensions to Segal's argument which are of interest to students of Otto, and although he confines his attention to specific criticisms of Eliade's methodological presuppositions, we shall see that his criticisms actually have more force in any appraisal of Otto's work than in an evaluation of Eliade's rejection of reductionism. However, we shall also demonstrate that Segal's criticisms of Eliade, and by implication of Otto, are constructed upon an erroneous conception of the nature of the phenomenology of religion, and that accordingly his advocacy of reductionism in the study of religion cannot be justified.(120)

The first dimension of Segal's argument which I wish to discuss is his contention that Eliade, in claiming to appraise religious belief in its own terms, is erroneously identifying his own religious position with that of the religious believers he is studying. Segal points out that Eliade's equation of his own interpretation of religion with the believer's point of view is arbitrary. This is because there is an abyss between Eliade's sophisticated world outlook and that of the believer. The ordinary believer knows nothing about Eliade's thoughts about the 'sacred' or 'the myth of the eternal return'. Nor does he conceive of his own beliefs, practices and experiences within a universal pattern. Indeed the believer reveres only his cosmic tree or sacred stone, and he believes, contrary to Eliade, that his claim to have experienced a divine reality cancels all others. Thus Eliade's religious position can hardly be identified with that of the religious believers he studies.

How are we to respond to this criticism of Eliade, and what are its implications for our appraisal of Otto's contribution to the debate about the nature of the phenomenon of religion? Let us first evaluate Segal's interpretation of Eliade's methodological position.

Has Segal, in fact, really understood Eliade's position? I think that he has not. What Segal is saying is that Eliade assumes that understanding a religious tradition in the believer's terms is the same thing as believing what the believer believes. Segal proposes that Eliade has a simple option as an interpreter of another religious tradition. Either he can simply describe the religious testimony of others without comment or evaluation; or he can actually endorse that testimony. Since Eliade insistently opposes the reductionist theories of religion of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, he is obviously not merely describing the claims of a believer of another religious tradition, but outrightly endorsing them. As Segal says, 'What he (Eliade) must therefore be saying is that the conscious, irreducibly religious meaning of religion for believers is its true one, which means at once its true one for them and its true one in itself'.(121)

However, this explanation of Eliade's position is totally unsatisfactory. It suggests that Eliade appears to be recommending conversion as the apprenticeship for proper interpretation of any religious tradition; but Eliade obviously does not recommend this. The source of Segal's mistaken interpretation of Eliade's position is his assumption that because Eliade opposes reductionism in the study of religion, he must therefore be experiencing the religious tradition he is studying from within, that is as a religious insider. But why should this be so? Why can we not argue that Eliade's opposition to reductionism is perfectly compatible with refusing to endorse the truth claims of the religious traditions he is studying and adopting the position of a

religious outsider, (albeit one who is closer to the religious believers he studies than reductionist students of religion)? There is nothing incoherent in this position.(122)

However, although Segal's strictures concerning Eliade's methodological position can be fairly easily dismissed, they have considerably more relevance to Otto's discussion concerning the place of the scholar's numinous sensibility in the study of religious traditions. In particular, Otto's assumption that there is a connection between the scholar's opposition to reductionism in the study of the religion and his need to use his numinous sensibility in order to discover the numinous in other traditions is clearly a case where Segal's previously mentioned criticisms have considerable force. In fact Otto's position appears to be particularly vulnerable to Segal's charge that the scholar who uses his religious sensitivity in the study of other religious traditions is in danger of failing to distinguish between his own religious position and the position of the religious believers he studies. The problem for Otto is that he thinks that the scholar's numinous sensibility provides privileged access to another religious tradition, and indeed allows him to attain an understanding of that tradition as a religious insider rather than as a religious outsider. But it does not.(123) In fact it is precisely this weakness in Otto's methodological position which makes Segal's rhetoric about reductionism (as well as that of many other recent writers) appear so very plausible. It is regrettable that Otto's unclear thinking about the place of the scholar's numinous sensibility in the study of religions bears much of the responsibility for the stigma which, in the eyes of many, is attached to the opposition to reductionism in the phenomenology of religion.

Nevertheless, from all this we should not conclude that Otto's observations about numinous sensibility in the study of religion cannot be reconceived in a way which avoids the problems raised by Segal. As we

have demonstrated in chapter IV⁽¹²⁴⁾ it is possible to revise Otto's understanding of the function of the scholar's numinous experience in the study of religious traditions, while acknowledging that it continues to have a place in such study. As we have previously shown,⁽¹²⁵⁾ the scholar uses his numinous sensibility to discover inductively numinous experiences which lie behind reports of religious experience or means of expression of the numinous, because he now recognizes that numinous experiences outside his own religious tradition are never directly accessible to him. The scholar now acknowledges that even with the assistance of his own numinous sensibility, his understanding of another religious tradition must always be that of a religious outsider, never that of a religious insider. Thus contrary to Otto, there must always be a distance between the scholar and the religious believers whom he studies which can never be eliminated. Yet, as is the case with the methodological position of Eliade, this distance is much shorter than the distance separating the believer from reductionist studies of sociology, anthropology and psychology. Accordingly, we can conclude that Otto's reconceived position does respond satisfactorily to the issues raised by Segal and that, like Eliade's position, it succeeds in establishing its independence from the endless conflict between religious believers and reductionist students of religion. Indeed, it is such independence that I believe should be a methodological presupposition of all phenomenology of religion.⁽¹²⁶⁾

The second dimension of Segal's argument that I want to discuss is connected with the first. It is his claim that Eliade is wrong to oppose reductionistic interpretations of religion, because outside the view held by the believer himself, reductionist explanations are all that exist. Segal does not subscribe to the view advocated above that the phenomenology of religion should establish its independence from the endless conflict between religious believers and reductionist students of religion. For Segal, the phenomenologist of religion has a choice; either

he can identify his position with that of the religious believer he is studying, which he will do if he himself is a believer, or he will identify his position with that of the reductionist student or religion. There is no other, that is third, way to conceive the methodological position of the phenomenologist of religion. Thus, for a non-believing interpreter of religion, a reductionist interpretation of religious phenomena is the only one possible. In fact Segal's rejection of the tradition of the phenomenology of religion that I have been advocating in this chapter (as well as the last) is so emphatic that it is useful to offer a full statement of his vigorous defence of reductionism in the study of religion in order to see why. He says:

Undeniably, a nonbeliever can appreciate some aspects of a believer's point of view. He can probably appreciate the secular functions of religion for the believer - for example the serenity or the security religion provides The decisive issue is whether he can appreciate the reality of religion for the believer. For how can he do so except by considering the divine real himself? What else can appreciating the reality of the divine mean except accepting it? But then, of course, the nonbeliever would have to be a believer. To the extent that the nonbeliever cannot appreciate the reality of the divine for the believer, he cannot fully appreciate the believer's point of view ...

Take the conventional statement that a nonbeliever can appreciate religion in a believer's own terms. As what can he appreciate it? is the fundamental question. As a response to the divine? But what can the divine mean to him when he does not accept its reality? Unless he reduces it to something else, can it mean anything to him? (Indeed) a nonbeliever would be left with something that he probably not only would have to reduce in order to make sense of it, but would want to reduce in order to make sense of it. (127)

Clearly Segal is here challenging the very axioms of sympathetic, but impartial, phenomenology of religion, and in particular the principle of 'bracketing out' truth claims in the study of other religious traditions. He insists that this is impossible, because the nonbelieving interpreter cannot go outside himself; he cannot escape the fence of his own convictions. This is why reductionism is inevitable.

What is one to make of this extraordinary point of view? Does it help us to acquire a better understanding of the principles of the phenomenology of religion, or on the contrary does it simply prevent any

appreciation of those principles at all? In order to identify the critical issue raised by Segal's argument, we need to reconsider his pointed rhetorical question in the passage above: 'What can the divine mean to him (the nonbeliever) when he does not accept its reality?' One plausible answer to this question which Segal does not consider, indeed, does not appear to be capable of considering is: it can mean everything it means to the believer, except for its reality. The problem for Segal is that he is incapable of understanding, let alone accepting, this answer which provides one of the methodological presuppositions of all phenomenology of religion. Yet this position is hardly difficult to understand, nor uncommon in the academic study of religion. For example, a scholar might deny that Zeus, Apollo or Hermes exists, and yet in spite of this still be able to appreciate almost anything he chose in the vast network of Greek religious mythology. What Segal appears to be incapable of is the critical act of epoché which we find in writers as different as van de Leeuw, Eliade, Smart and Waardenburg; and his profound anxiety about the existence of values and beliefs in other cultures different from his own leads him to an intellectual intolerance which can only be condemned. This intolerance, this insistent refusal to question his own world outlook when confronted by strange, but challenging, materials of other cultures, is reflected in his groundless charge that scholars who oppose reductionism are actually, by so doing, smuggling their religious commitments into their academic work.(128)

This defensive advocacy of reductionism in the study of religion reminds me of those writers who bring similar, intolerant, intellectual assumptions to their criticism of those philosophers of religion we reviewed earlier in this chapter who, influenced by Wittgenstein, adopt the 'autonomist position' in their interpretation of religious discourse and religious life.(129) Kai Nielsen is typical of those scholars who reject the Wittgensteinian claim of Phillips, Winch and others that the

forms of life are all conceptually self-sufficient.(130) In particular, he wishes to challenge the claims that we cannot raise questions about the rationality of a form of life, and that religious discourse is so sui generis that its criteria of intelligibility are entirely contained within itself. Nielsen argues that although understanding a religious form of life must begin inside a religious tradition, this does not prevent the recognition of inconsistencies and elements of incoherence in the form of life as a whole by people who are participants of that religious tradition. Indeed, it is typically the case that people inside a religious tradition will over a prolonged period discover that the entire practice, the entire form of life, is incoherent. It is because the rejection of religion comes from those who have had an intimate acquaintance with it, and not just from agnostics outside any religious tradition, that Nielsen feels justified in asserting that the religious form of life can be criticised as a whole. Contrary to Phillips and Winch, religious discourse is not completely isolated from other forms of discourse, but rather needs to be related to other areas of human knowledge and experience.

We see in this criticism of the 'autonomist position' a defensive, intellectual intolerance which is as uncompromising as Segal's defense of reductionism, and like it, his argument displays a remarkable lack of inhibition. Nielsen's language is that of 'common sense', and it is revealing:

'Reality' (he says) may be systematically ambiguous, but what constitutes evidence, or tests for the truth or reliability of specific claims, is not completely idiosyncratic to the context or activity we are talking about. Activities are not that insulated. As I have already noted, once there was an ongoing form of life in which fairies and witches were taken to be real entities, but gradually, as we reflected on the criteria we actually use for ascertaining whether various entities, including persons are or are not part of the spatiotemporal world of experience, we (that is most contemporary westerners) came gradually to give up believing in fairies and witches. With the relentless evolution of systems of belief in the direction of what Weber called Entzauberung, such conceptions for more and more people became unbelievable. That a

language game was played, that a form of life existed, did not preclude our asking about the coherence of the concepts involved and about the reality of what they conceptualised.

Without a participant's understanding of religious discourse, we could not raise the question of the reality of God, but with it, this is perfectly possible and perfectly intelligible.(131)

Clearly here, Nielsen's language is neither critical nor dispassionate; and it displays an alarming lack of awareness that many 'contemporary westerners' are now calling into question the inevitability of 'the relentless evolution of systems of belief in the direction of what Weber called Entzauberung.' Moreover, he chooses to construct his argument upon the evidence from people who were once believers, but have since challenged and rejected their religious traditions, while ignoring the testimony of believers who have remained satisfied with their religious traditions all their lives. Nielsen provides his readers with no reason why the testimony of those believers who have rejected their religious tradition should be any more reliable than that of those who have not. We can only conclude that Nielsen has not satisfactorily demonstrated his thesis that we can call into question the rationality and coherence of the whole religious form of life, and that he is no more capable of the critical act of epoché, so necessary for the study of other cultures and world religions, than Segal. Indeed his fundamental antagonism to the kind of non-cognitive phenomenology of religion which I have been advocating in this chapter, as well as to Otto's numinous experience in the study of religion, should be transparent.

Finally, I would like to introduce the discussion of reductionism by another philosopher of religion, Wayne Proudfoot,(132) whose position, although considerably more sophisticated than that of Segal and Nielsen, possesses many of the weaknesses of these scholars. My purpose here in reviewing Proudfoot's work is to explore further the significance of Otto's opposition to reductionism for the phenomenology of religion. As we shall see, Proudfoot's criticisms of opponents of reductionism,

including Otto and Phillips, while of some interest to students of religion, are constructed upon a misunderstanding of the objectives of the phenomenology of religion, as these have been defined in this chapter.

Proudfoot's discussion of reductionism in the study of religion is principally focused upon what he sees as the need to distinguish between two different kinds of reduction: descriptive reduction and explanatory reduction. Descriptive reduction is the failure to identify an experience according to the description given to it by the subject. To describe an experience in non religious terms when the subject himself describes it in religious terms is to misidentify it. This is what Proudfoot regards as real reductionism, which he believes should be emphatically rejected by all students of religion since it precludes an accurate identification of the subject's experience. By contrast, explanatory reduction is perfectly justifiable and very common. It consists in offering an explanation of an experience (already correctly identified from the subject's point of view) in terms that are not those of the subject and that need not be either familiar or acceptable to him.(133) Proudfoot argues that there is nothing disreputable about such explanation, and that its value depends upon how well it can account for all the evidence which is being examined.

However, as Proudfoot points out, opponents of reductionism typically seek to call into question the value of explanatory reduction by failing to distinguish it from descriptive reduction. In this way they justify their claim that any account of religious experience 'must be restricted to the perspective of the subject and must employ only terms, beliefs, and judgements that would meet with his approval'.(134) Proudfoot concludes from this that opponents of reductionism are employing a 'protective strategy' in which 'the subject's identifying description becomes normative for purposes of explanation, and inquiry is blocked to insure that the subject's own explanation of his experience is not contested'.(135)

Proudfoot discusses several scholars whom he regards as erroneously opposing explanatory reduction, and thereby adopting what he calls an 'apologetic strategy'. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, whom we mentioned earlier, is one such scholar. He prevents further inquiry into the nature of religious life by insisting that 'no statement about a religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion's believers'.(136) Smith argues that in order to understand the Qur'an as a religious document, one must approach it in the same spirit as a Muslim would, and read it as if he already believed it to be the word of God. The scholar's task is to learn to see the world through the eyes of the religious believer and to share in his experience. Then he is in a position to elicit the experience of the believer in his readers. However, the problem with this approach to religious materials, according to Proudfoot, is that it assumes that the scholar, in order to understand the beliefs of another religious tradition, must endorse those beliefs, and is not at liberty to propose explanations of them which compete with those of the believers being studied.(137)

Another opponent of explanatory reduction to whom Proudfoot gives considerable attention to is, not surprisingly, the philosopher D.Z. Phillips. We have already examined the significance of Phillips's plea for 'religion without explanation', and his proposition that religious beliefs and experiences are not referential and therefore cannot come into conflict with any other forms of knowledge and experience. Proudfoot, however, understands Phillips to be adopting a 'protective strategy' here by confusing descriptive reduction with explanatory reduction, and thereby again ensuring that the religious believer's explanation of his experience is not challenged.(138) He offers as examples of this Phillips's criticisms of the reductionist accounts of religion of Durkheim and Freud. He argues that Phillips misconstrues these accounts of religion as instances of descriptive reduction when, in fact, they are instances of

explanatory reduction, pointing out that although we are perfectly free to disagree with the hypotheses of either Durkheim or Freud, Phillips's dismissal of these is based on a misunderstanding of their status. The result of this misrepresentation of the arguments of Durkheim and Freud is not merely to preclude instances of explanatory reduction which are considered by most modern students of religion to be implausible, but to prevent all explanatory reduction. We shall return in a moment to a further consideration of Proudfoot's objections to Phillips's opposition to reductionism. However, before doing this, we should examine Proudfoot's criticisms of Otto's account of numinous experience. Only then will we be in a position to offer a proper assessment of Proudfoot's explanatory reduction.

Proudfoot observes that Otto effectively resists explanatory reduction by incorporating a causal claim into his definition of religious experience. For an experience to be a numinous experience, it must come from God. Here is Otto's 'protective strategy'. Proudfoot says:

Otto has formulated the rules for the identification of the numinous moment in experience in such a way as to prevent the "reduction" of religious experience by its being subsumed under any explanatory or interpretative scheme The rules (for the identification of religious experience) have been drawn up so as to preclude any naturalistic explanation of whatever feeling the reader may have attended to in his or her own experience.⁽¹³⁹⁾ Such restrictions guarantee ineffability and mystery. If it can be explained, it is not a religious experience.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

Proudfoot concludes that although Otto appears to be offering a neutral phenomenological description of numinous experience, he is actually proposing a dogmatic formula designed to evoke or create a particular sort of experience. Accordingly, despite Otto's protests to the contrary, a claim about the cause of numinous experience is central to his identification of that experience as religious.

How are we to respond to these criticisms of Otto? To begin with, we should observe that Proudfoot's understanding of Otto's numinous experience possesses some of the weaknesses of the theory of religious

experience of the philosopher, H.D. Lewis, whose interpretation of Otto's work we reviewed earlier in this chapter. In particular, like Lewis, Proudfoot claims that it is the cause of, and the reference for, numinous experience which defines it as religious. However, as we have previously shown, this conclusion is incompatible with Otto's repeated insistence that it is the distinctive, qualitative features of numinous experience which define it.

There are two related problems for Proudfoot here. The first is that, while we can agree with Proudfoot that there is quite clearly a causal claim connected with the identification of an experience as a numinous experience, we cannot agree with his assessment of the place of this claim in any definition of such experience. Whereas Proudfoot regards religious beliefs (about the cause of religious experience) as determining the qualitative features of numinous experience,⁽¹⁴¹⁾ Otto quite clearly believes that causal claims arise out of preceding numinous experiences which inform them. Whatever the epistemological objections which are raised against Otto's position here,⁽¹⁴²⁾ Proudfoot obviously misinterprets Otto's comments about the relationship between numinous experience and the cause of that experience. The second problem for Proudfoot is that because he is interested primarily in the cause of numinous experience - that is in explanatory reduction - he fails to give sufficient attention to the distinctive features of numinous experience and their significance in Otto's argument. In fact he construes Otto's emphasis on the unique features of numinous experience to be a part of a deliberate, 'protective strategy' of opposing explanatory reduction, whereas Otto argues in opposition to all reductionists that explanatory reduction diverts attention away from the distinctive features of numinous experience.⁽¹⁴³⁾

The problem with Proudfoot's interpretation of Otto's numinous experience is that it fails to recognize what in Otto's eyes is a most important contribution which the study of numinous experience has to make to the more general study of religion. By focusing his attention on the distinctive features of numinous experience, the scholar is led to recognize the unique, irreducibly religious features of any religious tradition, features which cannot be explained by reference to any non-religious knowledge or experience. The study of religion is not principally of what religion has in common with other areas of knowledge and experience, but of what is irreducibly religious. This is the methodological principle which Otto has bequeathed to later phenomenology of religion, and it is one which is bound to be obscured by Proudfoot's emphasis on explanatory reduction.

Proudfoot's failure to understand the challenge of Otto's methodological position here is even better illustrated by his discussion of Phillips's opposition to reductionism. It will be remembered that Proudfoot regards Phillips's opposition to explanatory reduction in the study of religion not as a plea for neutrality with respect to the truth of religious beliefs, but rather as concealing a substantial religious commitment. In fact Proudfoot discusses what he calls Phillips's appeal to the force of religious experience, which he sees as a device that can be used to avoid explanatory reduction. The force of a religious experience for Phillips is what he calls the impressive character of religious beliefs and practices, which cannot itself be explained; and it is this force of religious experience which Phillips asks his readers to focus their attention upon rather than on any reductive explanation. It is clear that Phillips's appeal to the impressiveness of religious beliefs has the same methodological function as Otto's appeal to the distinctive

characteristics of numinous experience, and that his argument here merely reiterates many of Otto's original objections to reductionism. Phillips says:

One may be interested in investigating the consequences of various religious beliefs for other social movements and institutions, or the historical development of religious beliefs. Yet, such investigations would not be an investigation into the impressiveness of the beliefs. The impressiveness may be elucidated - we have seen how symbol may be placed alongside symbol - but it cannot be explained.(144)

However, Proudfoot is not satisfied with this defence of the impressiveness of religious beliefs, perhaps because these beliefs fail to make any particular religious impression on him. In any case, he regards Phillips's argument about the impressiveness of religious beliefs as employing a 'protective strategy' and as concealing a substantial religious commitment, saying:

Force or impressiveness is not defined independently, but is said to be that which is lost whenever an attempt is made to explain religious phenomena. This remark suggests that what is really distinctive about religious phenomena is their resistance to explanation, or their anomalous status with respect to all natural explanations. No attempt to explain them can be permitted without losing their distinctively religious character. The impressiveness of religious phenomena is identified as that which is lost whenever explanations are proposed for those phenomena.(145)

What Proudfoot is proposing here is that Phillips uses his claim about the impressiveness of religious beliefs merely to ensure that such beliefs are never subjected to explanatory reduction. But, of course, Phillips does nothing of the sort. It is clear that Proudfoot completely misconstrues Phillips's intentions here, and that, contrary to Proudfoot's comments above, Phillips does define the impressiveness of religious beliefs independently of any explanation of such beliefs. However, the real problem for Proudfoot here, as is the case with his interpretation of Otto's work, is that he fails to recognize that Phillips's reason for opposing explanatory reduction is that such explanation diverts the scholar's attention away from the impressiveness of religious beliefs. If the scholar's study of religion is dominated by an interest in explana-

tions for religious belief, this is bound to prevent him from giving his attention to the distinctive, irreducibly religious features of religious life. Once again, we see in Phillips's work an attempt to focus the study of religion on what is uniquely religious in any religious tradition and to subordinate any non-religious explanations of religious phenomena to such intellectual activity. It is a pity that Proudfoot fails to understand this.

Moreover, when we consider the kind of explanatory reduction that Proudfoot is interested in, our misgivings about his understanding of the study of religion can only be increased; for his discussion concerning explanatory reduction is in fact rather confused. It will be remembered that he defines explanatory reduction as the offering of an explanation of an experience in terms that are not those of the subject and that need not be either familiar or acceptable to him.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ However, his exposition of it is plagued by two principal problems. The first is that he generally fails to define the reason why a scholar might seek explanatory reduction, beyond mentioning the ill-defined goal of furthering the scholar's knowledge or understanding. He usually speaks about historical and cultural explanation, but without specifying the scholar's purpose in seeking such explanation. The second problem is that he does not offer many examples of explanatory reduction, and most of those which he does discuss are difficult to reconcile with his definition of such explanation above. Indeed, I shall argue that most of his examples of explanation could more plausibly be called instances of what he himself speaks of as 'identifying description' than instances of explanatory reduction. I shall return in a moment to discuss those examples of explanation which appear to generate confusion; but before I do, I would like first of all to examine a relatively straightforward and unproblematic example of explanatory reduction which Proudfoot offers to his readers for consideration.

Proudfoot is discussing the need to explain the force of a religious experience. He argues that such an explanation must satisfy the observing scholar, and that it can only do this 'if it makes clear why the experience has the power it has for the subject'. He continues to elucidate what he means by explanatory reduction in the study of religion, by offering an example from another area of experience:

Knowing that my partner takes the log on the trail ahead to be a bear is sufficient for me to understand why it has a dramatic effect on his emotions and behaviour. I have elucidated his fear by identifying the object of that fear as he perceives it, and I can see how the fear was occasioned. I can understand his fear without sharing his perception.(147)

Clearly, here, in this example of mistaken perception there is an assumption that the observer is in a better position to understand the true reference for the experience than the person having the experience. If this case is truly representative of what Proudfoot means by explanatory reduction in the study of religion, then such explanation obviously is very similar to the classical reductionist explanations of Freud and Durkheim, in spite of Proudfoot's insistence that the reader is free either to endorse or reject such explanations. The scholar is able to lead his audience from the 'unreal', that is the world of the believer, to the 'real', whatever the scholar takes to be the ultimate reference for those religious beliefs and experiences. Here there is no doubt about the purpose of the scholar's seeking an explanation for a religious belief or experience: he is searching for the truth. But it is equally clear that if this is all that Proudfoot means by explanatory reduction, then the religious believer will have very good reasons to distrust it, and the phenomenologist of religion also.

The problem with this account of explanatory reduction is that it forces Proudfoot to adopt a methodological position which is remarkably similar to that of Segal, discussed earlier. Like Segal, Proudfoot is unable to find a third position for the observing scholar which is

independent of the endless conflict between the believer and the reductionist student of religion. Like Segal, his account of explanatory reduction appears incapable of making room for the 'bracketing out' of truth claims, which I have emphasized in this chapter as being a central feature of the discipline of phenomenology of religion; and finally, like Segal, Proudfoot erroneously identifies the opposition to reductionism with the scholar's failure to distinguish between his own religious position and the religious position he is studying. This is clearly one important and justifiable reason for his criticism of the methodological position of Wilfred Cantwell Smith,⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ and, as we have previously demonstrated, this is also one of the most serious criticisms which can be made of Otto's contribution to the phenomenology of religion.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ However, as we have also previously argued, there is no necessity to associate the phenomenologist's opposition to reductionism with any mistaken belief that he is able to understand another religious tradition 'as a religious insider'. The methodological position of the phenomenologist of religion, as I have defined it, allows him at the same time to oppose Proudfoot's explanatory reduction and to attain the knowledge and experience of another religious tradition as a 'religious outsider', albeit one who is closer to the religious materials he studies than the advocate of reductionism in the study of religion, and consequently far more sensitive to the irreducibly religious features of the religious materials he studies.

Having given our attention to the kind of explanatory reduction which is relatively straightforward and easy to understand (although, as we have seen, likely to be emphatically rejected both by the religious believer and by the phenomenologist of religion) we are now in a position to return to a consideration of the kind of explanatory reduction which, as I indicated earlier, is likely to generate confusion because it is difficult to reconcile with Proudfoot's initial definition of explanation.

Proudfoot, in fact, is interested in explaining why people in particular cultural situations choose to identify some of their experiences as religious. He is clearly influenced here by Steven Katz's epistemological observations, and particularly by his thesis that it is through previous religious education that the believer learns to identify which kinds of experience qualify as examples of religious experience and which do not. Katz argues that the believer is given the criteria used to evaluate, and correctly identify, religious experiences by his religious tradition, and Proudfoot believes that it is such criteria which provide an adequate 'explanation' for religious experiences. Thus he says:

If the concepts and beliefs under which the subject identifies his or her experience determine whether or not it is a religious experience, then we need to explain why the subject employs those particular concepts and beliefs. We must explain why the subject was confronted with this particular set of alternative ways of understanding his experience and why he employed the one he did. In general, what we want is an historical or cultural explanation.(150)

Again he says:

What must be explained is why they (the religious believers) understood what happened to them or what they witnessed in religious terms. This requires a mapping of the concepts and beliefs that were available to them, the commitments they brought to the experience, and the contextual conditions that might have supported their identification of their experiences in religious terms. Interest in explanations is not an alien element that is illegitimately introduced into the study of religious experience. Those who identify their experiences in religious terms are seeking the best explanations for what is happening to them. The analyst should work to understand those explanations and discover why they are adopted.(151)

However, the problem which such passages raise is that they are difficult to reconcile with Proudfoot's initial definition of explanatory reduction, which, it will be remembered, is an explanation of an experience in terms that are not those of the subject and that need not be either familiar or acceptable to him. Surely these passages, with their constant references to how the believer understands and explains his own religious experiences, should more plausibly be interpreted as referring to instances of what Proudfoot calls 'identifying descriptions' rather

than to examples of explanatory reduction.⁽¹⁵²⁾ To insist on speaking of what is described in such passages as explanatory reduction only generates confusion, as must be clear when we compare the kind of explanation being reviewed here with the kind which we examined previously, where Proudfoot attempts to explain the force of a religious experience for the religious believer on the basis of his mistaken perception or lack of understanding.

In fact there is only one way in which we could construe the passages cited above as referring to explanatory reduction rather than to identifying description. That is if we take Proudfoot to be arguing⁽¹⁵³⁾ that the observing scholar has a greater understanding of the way a religious tradition may influence or determine the identification and evaluation of religious experiences than the religious believer himself. That is to say, the believer is aware that he is seeking explanations for why he identifies particular experiences in religious terms and that he is guided in this activity by his religious tradition, but he is unaware of many of the most significant factors contributed by the religious tradition which determine his formulation of those explanations. It is assumed here that only the observing scholar has at his command all the necessary historical and cultural information to allow him to make an informed judgement about how the believer learns to identify which kinds of experience qualify as examples of religious experience and which do not.

However, if even this is the position that Proudfoot intends to adopt, it is likely to elicit two related objections from phenomenologists of religion. The first is merely that Proudfoot's position invites all the criticisms of straightforward explanatory reduction discussed earlier. The second is that Proudfoot fails to define the reason why a scholar might be interested in explanatory reduction, beyond mentioning his need to further his understanding of historical and cultural explanation. But this is not enough. What the scholar must do is specify his purpose in

seeking historical and cultural explanation, beyond searching for the truth, and in particular offer reasons why he regards such explanatory reduction as more valuable than the irreducibly religious features of religious life that the believer is likely to be interested in. What is needed here is for Proudfoot to offer his readers an explanation of why he regards his own understanding of the religious experience of the believers he studies as more reliable than their own, and this is something he does not do. This, indeed, is one of the most important reasons why the phenomenologist of religion is likely to reject Proudfoot's explanatory reduction - both the kind we have just been discussing and the more straightforward kind we reviewed earlier.

Notes - Chapter I

1. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion (Princeton, New Jersey, 1947), p.186.
2. J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience (New York, 1938), p.84.
3. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion p.180.
4. Ibid., p.183.
5. H.W. Turner, Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students (Aberdeen, 1974), p.52.
6. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy (Second English Edition - Oxford University Press (Galaxy Books, 1958), p.174.
J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience p.110.
7. Eg. J.P. Reeder Jr., 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy', Religion and Morality ed. G. Outka & J.P. Reeder Jr., (New York, 1973), pp.275-276.
R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion pp.187-188.
8. Ibid.,
9. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion pp.166-171.
10. J. Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion (London, 1928), pp.243-245.
11. S. Holm, 'Apriori und Urphanomen bei Rudolph Otto', Rudolph Otto's Bedeutung für die Religions - Wissenschaft und die Theologie Heute: Beihefte der Zeitschrift für Religions - und Geistesgeschichte ed. Ernst Benz (Leiden, 1971), p.81. Cited by J.P. Reeder 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy', Religion and Morality ed. G. Outka & J.P. Reeder, p.277.
12. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.7.
13. Ibid., p.9.

14. J.C. Flower, Psychology of Religion (London, 1927), appendix II.
15. J.P. Reeder, 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy', Religion and Morality ed. G. Outka & J.P. Reeder, pp.277-278.
16. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.113.
17. Ibid., p.114.
18. H.W. Turner, Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students p.52.
19. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.177.
20. The profound influence of the 'anthropological' critique of reason of the early 19th century German philosopher, Jakob Fries, on Otto's epistemology in The Idea of the Holy will receive extensive consideration in this essay, and particularly in chapters II and III. For further information concerning the work of Fries, see R. Otto, The Philosophy of Religion (London, 1931), trans. E.B. Dicker, chaps.I-XI; R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion, chap.V.
21. J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience p.103.
22. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.10-11.
23. Ibid., p.113.
24. D. Bastow, 'Otto and Numinous Experience', Religious Studies, Vol.12 (1976), p.174.
25. Ibid., p.175.
26. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.143-144.
27. Ibid., p.145.
28. Eg. ibid., p.11.
29. Ibid.,
30. For the best discussion of this problem, see J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience pp.92-95.

31. M. Diamond, Contemporary Philosophy and Religious Thought (New York, 1974), pp.94-96.
32. Eg. R. Hepburn, Christianity & Paradox (New York, 1966), p.47.
Hepburn describes a recurring numinous dream of a paradise landscape, which he later interpreted in Freudian terms after discovering this landscape on a hill on the outskirts of Edinburgh. He had, in fact, visited this hill as a child.
33. J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience p.95.
34. E.J. Sharpe, Comparative Religion, a History (London, 1975), p.165.
35. E. Evans-Pritchard, Theories of Primitive Religion (London, 1965), p.44.
36. U. Bianchi, The History of Religions (The Hague, 1975), pp.173-174.
37. Th.P.van Baaren, 'Science of Religion as a Systematic Discipline', Religion, Culture and Methodology (The Hague, 1973), p.40.
38. D. Allen, Structure & Creativity in Religion (The Hague, 1978), pp.61-62.
39. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion pp.76-77, 131, 156, 168, 170-171, 172-178, 184-185.
B.E. Meland, 'Rudolph Otto', A Handbook of Christian Theologians ed. D.G. Peerman & M.E. Marty, (New York, 1965), p.182.

The whole question of numinous worth in The Idea of the Holy is referred to by Otto in Chapter III in his description of 'creature-feeling', in Chapter VIII where he addresses himself to the problem of sin and atonement and in the whole of Part I of Religious Essays, a Supplement to The Idea of the Holy (London, 1931), which is mainly an extensive elaboration of themes discussed in Chapter VIII of the main work. These passages clearly reflect, as Davidson has rightly insisted, the profound influence of Ritschl as well as Otto's conscious determination to go beyond Schleiermacher's romantic theory of religious feeling. Incidentally, Harvey translates the title of

Chapter VIII 'Das Sanctum als numinoser Wert. Das Augustum' rather loosely as 'The Holy as a Category of Value', whereas this phrase should be translated more precisely as 'The Sacred as Numinous Value. The August'.

Unfortunately the term 'sacred' is ambiguous in a relevant way here, since it could equally be identified with the holy (Das Heilige) or with the numinous or with neither!

40. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp. 7,9,10,12,60.
41. H.W. Turner, Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students pp. 10-11.
42. Ibid., p. 10.
43. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p. 60.
44. H.W. Turner, Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students p. 29.
45. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p. 61.
46. Eg. J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience p. 91.
47. Ibid., p. 81.
48. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp. 35,61.
49. It is significant that Otto was still committed to this concept of divination and the Friesian concept of Ahndung when he wrote Mysticism East and West (New York, 1932). See p. 268 of that work.
50. Bastow argues in this way in his article 'Otto and Numinous Experience' already referred to.
51. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p. 143.
52. Ibid., pp. 60-65.
53. Eg. ibid., pp. 28,59,63.
54. Ibid., pp. 95,181,184.
55. Ibid., chapters IV,V,VI.
56. Ibid., p. 7.
57. Ibid., p. 135.

58. J.F. Fries, Wissen Glaube und Ahndung p. 122, and J.F. Fries, Religionsphilosophie pp. 97-107, cited in R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion p. 147.
59. R. Bambrough, 'Intuition and the Inexpressible', ed. S.T. Katz, Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis (London, 1978), pp. 200-201 & 206-213.
60. See pp. 31-32 of this essay and R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp. 13,30,34.
61. See pp. 26 and 32 of this essay and R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp. 19,26,35,60,77,107,184.
62. W.T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy (London, 1960), pp. 291-294.
63. See also Turner's Commentary p. 19 and Davidson's essay pp. 118-119 for similar responses to the kind of challenge presented by Stace. Both writers speak about the need to interpret the term 'wholly other' figuratively or as an ideogram.
64. Eg. P. van Buren, The Edges of Language (London, 1972), chapter III.
65. Eg. P. Donovan, Interpreting Religious Experience (London, 1979), chapters 2 and 4. S.T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism', Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis ed. S.T. Katz.
66. Although strictly speaking Otto himself cannot be called a phenomenologist of religion because he did not specifically speak of himself as one, I consider it justifiable in this essay to speak of a phenomenology of religion in Otto's work, because his methodological observations concerning the study of religions have been so influential on subsequent phenomenology of religion.
67. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy chapters XV and XVI.
68. G. van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation (London, 1938), pp. 671-690.

69. M. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York, 1959), trans. W.R. Trask; M. Eliade, Images and Symbols (New York, 1969) trans. P. Mairet.
70. J. Waardenburg, Reflections on the Study of Religion (The Hague, 1978).
71. N. Smart, The Phenomenon of Religion (London, 1973), chapter I.
72. Eg. J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience p. 91.
73. F. Heiler, Prayer (New York, 1932).
74. N. Smart, Reasons and Faiths (London, 1958).
75. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion, pp. 156-157.
76. D. Bastow, 'Otto and Numinous Experience', Religious Studies, vol. 12 (1976), p. 170.
77. Ibid., pp. 171-172.
78. There is one possible exception to this statement in the form of a highly ambiguous passage in Mysticism East and West pp. 158-159, which speaks about a distinction between the 'deity of mysticism' (god without modes) and the personal deity of simple theism. However, the passage goes on to define mysticism as a predominance of the numinous over the rational in religious feeling and, therefore, I find no significant deviation from the position taken earlier in The Idea of the Holy.
79. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp. 21,22,24,25,29,30,36-37,105, 106,107,194,197-207.
80. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
81. Ibid., p.29.
82. Ibid., p.197.
83. Ibid., p.194.
84. Ibid., pp.105-106.

85. Ibid., p.202.
86. Ibid., pp.204-207.
87. C.B. Martin, Religious Belief (New York, 1959).
88. R. Swinburne, The Existence of God (Oxford, 1979).
89. G. Pletcher, 'Agreement Among Mystics', Sophia 11 (1972), pp.5-15.
90. W.J. Wainwright, Mysticism (Brighton, 1981); 'Mysticism and Sense Perception', Religious Studies 9 (1973), pp.257-278.
91. This bracketing out of questions concerning the cognitive status of numinous experience is profoundly influenced by the phenomenology of religion of Gerardus van der Leeuw and Ninian Smart.
92. R. Hepburn, Christianity and Paradox (New York, 1966).
93. M. Prozesky, Religion and Ultimate Well-Being (London, 1984).
94. J.C.A. Gaskin, The Quest for Eternity (Harmondsworth, 1984).
95. H.D. Lewis, Our Experience of God (London, 1970).
96. Incidentally, the mediation spoken of here is not to be confused with the mediation which will be discussed in chapter III of this essay, namely that associated with the claim that all experiences are mediated to some degree by previous knowledge and experience.
97. Indeed, this is one of the most important functions of his law of association of analogous feelings.
98. J. Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (Oxford, 1939).
99. J.E. Smith, Experience and God (New York, 1968).
100. J. Hick, 'Religious Faith as Experience-As' in Talk of God, ed. G.N.A. Vesey (London 1968), pp.20-35.
101. D.Z. Phillips, Religion Without Explanation (Oxford, 1976).
102. P. Winch, 'Understanding a Primitive Society', The American Philosophical Quarterly Vol.1 (October, 1965), pp.307-25.
103. Robert Segal, 'In Defense of Reductionism', Journal of the American Academy of Religion 51, No.1 (March 1983), pp.97-124.
104. W. Proudfoot, Religious Experience (Berkeley, 1985).

Notes - Chapter II

1. N. Smart, 'Rudolph Otto and Religious Experience' Philosophers and Religious Truths (London , 1964), p.117.
2. R. F. Davidson's otherwise fine study of Otto, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion, provides us with an example of the unfortunate tendency among Otto's interpreters to pay insufficient attention to his psychology of religion in The Idea of the Holy. Davidson insists on a purely epistemological explanation of the holy, in terms of an autonomous religious category of meaning and value, and argues that

To offer an ultimate explanation of the religious consciousness in terms of a specific and independent religious emotion would relegate the matter (of the holy) to the domain of the psychologist and perhaps justify the criticism that Otto was reviving the already discredited 'religious instinct theory'. His explanation of the holy in terms of an autonomous religious category of meaning and value, however, certainly does not admit of either inference. Here the philosopher has rightly insisted upon the incompetence of the psychologist as such to render final judgement; and it is here that Otto's position must be validated or disproved. p.76-77.

However, the problem with this observation is that it leads him elsewhere to argue that Otto has illegitimately attempted to substantiate his theory of religious experience by an appeal to Schleiermacher's idea of religious feeling, while refusing to recognize his large debt to the theology of Ritschl, which only confuses and weakens his religious epistemology. (p.131.) But as Davidson is himself forced to admit, Otto does argue for numinous feeling as itself an independent type of knowledge which contains within itself cognitive certainty. What Davidson has, in fact, done is simply to opt to ignore the significance of the psychological dimension of Otto's work, because it appears to impede his own attempt to clarify the sound epistemological foundations of Otto's

theology, and, in so doing, has given too much attention to the influence of Ritschl in the development of Otto's theology at the expense of the profound impact of Schleiermacher on his work.

Incidentally, for further explanation concerning the use of the word 'psychology' in this chapter, see note 46. For now, it is sufficient to point out that the term 'psychology' in Otto's mind is concerned with introspective analyses of religious states of consciousness and, in particular, religious feelings.

3. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.2-5.
4. Ibid., p.3.
5. Ibid., pp.3-4 & pp.26-27. Notice here, by the way, that Otto in his attitude to the growing study of comparative mythology shares Max Muller's romantic distrust of language, preferring numina without nomina to nomina without numina.
6. Ibid., pp. 4,7,10,13,30,59,63,184-185.
7. Ibid., pp. 7,27,29,30,63,141.
8. Ibid., pp.13,26,30,34,35,77,135,141,184-185,191-192. This theory of religious experience obviously confirms that Otto was still heavily influenced by the Friesian theory of Ahndung and Glaube when he wrote The Idea of the Holy.
9. Ibid., p.7. See also p.12.
10. This is confirmed at the beginning of his analysis of the tremendum moment of the numinous on p.13, where he says:

This pure positive we can experience in feelings, feelings which our discussion can help to make clear to us in so far as it arouses them actually in our hearts.

Again, at the end of his rather brief discussion of direct means of expression of the numinous, he says on p.61:

But where the wind of the spirit blows, there the mere 'rational' terms themselves are indued with power to arouse the feeling of the non-rational....He who 'in the spirit' reads the written word lives in the numinous.

Incidentally, this is part of a longer passage which is very important for a deeper understanding of Otto's psychology of religious experience, and I shall be returning to it later.

11. Ibid., pp.41-49.
12. Ibid., pp.42-44.
13. Ibid., p.44. Incidentally, it is significant that this declaration immediately precedes Otto's discussion concerning schematization.
14. Ibid., pp.14 & 15.
15. See chapter III of this essay for a detailed consideration of this theme in Otto's work.
16. It is in this light that we must understand Otto's warning on p.8 that whoever does not already know what religious experience is like should read no further.
17. Ibid., pp.19,24,26,35,60,107,184.
18. Ibid., pp.107-108. Here Otto argues that the results of confounding ideograms with rational concepts are mythology and the 'pseudo-science' of theosophy, the monstrous science of God built upon a systematization of ideograms understood literally. It is interesting that at this time Otto included among the wicked theosophists no less a thinker than Eckhart!
19. Ibid., pp.19,35.
20. Ibid., pp.61-65.
21. Formally introduced ibid., pp.45-49, but referred to throughout the work and significantly mentioned prior to this discussion on pp.6 & 31.
22. One significant exception is Turner's fine commentary on The Idea of the Holy, where he displays some sensitivity to the question of the association of analogous feelings, especially in the context of his discussion of indirect means of expression of the numinous.

Unfortunately, however, he has not recognized that discussion about the law of association of analogous feelings needs to be extended to the concept of schematization itself, and in so doing has failed, like other commentators, to see that there are two connected dimensions of meaning and psychological movement in the concept of schematization, not one. See below.

23. Ibid., p.60.
24. Ibid., p.61.
25. Ibid., p.61.
26. Ibid., pp.12-40.
27. Ibid., p.62.
28. Ibid., pp.63-65. Otto also gives considerable space to illustrating how the sublime can be expressive of the numinous on pp.65-71 which I shall return to later.
29. Ibid., p.65. See also pp.143-144.
30. See especially Phaedrus 249D-252C, which describes the soul's recollection of ideal beauty through the sight of beautiful object in the physical world. Worldly beauty reminds the soul of its divine source beyond this physical world in which it participates, and leads the soul to regrow its wings, which means that through the experience of worldly beauty the soul learns to recognize what the real nature of transcendental beauty is like. What we have here is a doctrine of education in which, as the initiate climbs the spiritual ladder ascending beyond the physical world, so he rediscovers the nature of divinity which he had forgotten. Plato here conceives the ideal teacher as a midwife, who merely brings to birth what already exists in the person. The teacher has nothing really new to tell his students; his task is merely to help his students to get into the position from where they can see for themselves that reality is far more extraordinary than they ever expected, because it offers

intimations of divine being. Now there is no doubt that there is an important maieutic function in the thread of Otto's argument in The Idea of the Holy. The world is not all that it seems and Otto seeks to remind his readers what the numinous in the world is like by simply talking about it. He cannot offer any literal description of the numinous; all he can do is to bring to the reader's attention a host of analogies to the numinous, in the hope that in this way he (the reader) can discover what the numinous is like for himself. Clearly, there are significant similarities here between Otto's theory of education and Plato's, and similarities which lead one to speculate whether Otto was deeply influenced by Plato's argument when writing The Idea of the Holy. Certainly, this impression is not questioned but only strengthened when we come to consider his concepts of schematization and divination, as well as what he sees as the important relationship between the numinous and the sublime. Only an explicit reference to Plato's eros seems to be missing from Otto's work, but even this concept seems to be implicit in much of Otto's searching for the numinous.

31. H. W. Turner, Rudolph Otto 'The Idea of the Holy' - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students (Aberdeen, 1974), p.30.
32. Turner believes that schematization serves to make the relation between the means of expression of the numinous and the numinous itself a necessary one, and as we shall soon see, this appears to be a plausible interpretation of the psychological function of the concept of schematization in Otto's theory of religious experience. However, it should be noted that there is one feature of Turner's discussion concerning the relationship between the numinous and its indirect, and analogous means of expression over which I wish to take issue. That is Turner's assumption that if there is a necessary connection between the former and the latter, then the former, once

recognized, continues to be experienced through the latter. I would prefer that if there is a necessary connection between the numinous and its means of expression, then the numinous is experience with, rather than through, its means of expression. Turner's use of the word 'through' suggests that numinous experience is mediated by non-religious experiences, but this suggestion runs directly counter to Otto's persistent claim that numinous experience is unmediated. For further detailed discussion concerning this vexed question of mediation, and in particular Turner's understanding of the mediated nature of some numinous experiences, see chapter V of this essay.

33. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.6.

34. Ibid., pp.45 ff.

35. Ibid., pp.139-140.

36. The problem with this passage is that it is meant to support Otto's argument for

the a priori knowledge of the essential interdependence of the rational and the non-rational elements in the idea of God.

However, it does precisely the reverse of this, since the evolutionary dimension of the process of schematization contradicts the idea implicit above, namely, the belief that the 'holy' is a complex a priori category combining the numinous and the rational in a completely static relationship. For further details concerning the difficulty of maintaining that the ethical has an essential connection with the numinous in the face of Otto's evolutionary perspective, see particularly J. P. Reeder, 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy', Religion and Morality edited by G. Outka and J. P. Reeder, (1973), and R. F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion (1947), Chapter VII. I shall return later in this chapter to the a priori knowledge of the essential interdependence of the rational and the non-rational

elements in the idea of God, to offer my own interpretation of the nature of the connection of the rational and the numinous in the holy and thereby to introduce a new interpretation of the meaning of schematization in Otto's work.

37. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.141-142.
38. Ibid., pp.45-46. Otto also refers to the connection between the sublime and the holy on p.63, where he says that this connection becomes established as a legitimate schematization and is carried on into the highest forms of religious consciousness....a proof that there exists a hidden kinship between the numinous and the sublime which is something more than a merely accidental analogy....
39. Ibid., p.46.
40. Ibid., p.48.
41. Ibid., pp.109-111.
42. Ibid., pp.112-116, & 136-142.
43. Ibid., p.109.
44. Ibid., p.110.
45. Ibid., p.111.
46. Some explanation of how the word 'psychological' is being used in the subsequent discussion is necessary here. It must be emphasized that the term 'psychology', as it is used in this chapter, should not be confused with the kind of hard scientific psychology which traces its ancestry back to the 19th century fathers of experimental psychology, Weber, Fechner, Helmholtz and Wundt. The 'psychological' claims that we shall be examining generally cannot call on the kinds of evidence to support them which are available to those scholars involved in comparative, developmental, abnormal and social psychology; and it is for a similar reason that Otto's 'psychology' should not be identified with any of the widely recognized schools of psychology such as Structuralism, Functionalism (Cognitive Psychology), Associationism, Gestalt Psychology, Behaviourism and Psychoanalysis.

Rather the term 'psychology' should be understood in a far more loosely defined way. It should be construed to refer to the kind of general introspective enquiry which was very fashionable among philosophers and theologians of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This is certainly how Otto understands the term, which he explicitly associates with introspective investigation concerning religious feelings. On p.10 of The Idea of the Holy he criticizes Schleiermacher's claim that the feeling of absolute dependence is the source of all religious feeling, on the grounds that such a claim 'is entirely opposed to the psychological facts of the case'. In fact, for Otto there is another feeling element, ignored by Schleiermacher, which has immediate reference to an object outside the self, and he claims,

This is so manifestly borne out by the experience that it must be about the first thing to force itself upon the notice of psychologists analysing the facts of religion.

It is also interesting to note who he chooses to cite as an example of a psychologist analysing the facts of religion. William James, with his interest in 'the stream of consciousness' and his famous reference in The Varieties of Religious Experience to an intimation of the divine in terms of 'a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call "something there"' is surely not a surprising choice for Otto. In spite of his desire to distance himself from James's 'empiricist and pragmatist standpoint', Otto in his detailed analysis of the moments of numinous experience displays an interest in purely descriptive psychology which is similar to that found in The Varieties of Religious Experience. In fact, this interest in descriptive psychology in The Idea of the Holy may explain why the phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl, who conceived phenomenology as an introspective analysis of all forms of experience without assuming any conceptual presuppositions about

such experience, regarded Otto's study as 'a masterly phenomenological analysis of the religious consciousness.' (See J. Macquarrie, Twentieth Century Religious Thought (London, 1971), p.213).

This, of course, does not mean, however, that there are no epistemological ramifications for Otto's psychology of religious experience. As we have demonstrated in chapter I of this essay (see p.12-22), Otto makes some very specific epistemological claims about the source and cognitive status of religious experience which have attracted many different kinds of criticism; and these claims cannot be separated from his psychology of religious experience, not least because they provide philosophical explanation for his psychological observations about religious life. Nevertheless, I want to propose in this chapter that it is possible to profitably study Otto's psychology, as defined above, in isolation from his epistemology (with all of its problems), and, in so doing, to focus the reader's attention on a dimension of the argument of The Idea of the Holy which has received insufficient attention from Otto's interpreters. I shall, in fact, argue that the rewards for focusing our attention on Otto's psychology in isolation from his epistemology are considerable; that, thereby, we discover a psychology of religious experience which is challenging and innovative, but unfortunately usually overlooked by those who are rightly troubled by the problems created by Otto's epistemology. (For further discussion concerning the value of studying Otto's psychology in isolation from his epistemology, see my examination of this issue in the course of my elucidation of the cognitive status of numinous experience in chapter V of this essay.)

47. Ibid., p.136.

48. Ibid., pp.140-141.

49. Unfortunately, Otto confuses his position here, since he elsewhere regards the ideograms of the 'wrath of God' and the 'grace of God' as merely inadequate analogies of the tremendum and fascinans moments of the numinous, which are intended to be used to evoke the numinous rather than describe it. See pp.19 & 35. Thus Otto hovers between two views of the concepts of the wrath and grace of God. The first is that they refer only to the numinous dimensions of the divine, whereas the second suggests that they refer to the holy, that is the numinous and the moral or rational aspects of the divine as well.
50. Ibid., p.141.
51. Ibid., p.135.
52. Ibid., pp.2, 4, 59, 63.
53. Ibid., pp.13, 26, 30, 34, 35, 77, 141, 184, 185, 191-192.
54. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion (Princeton, New Jersey, 1947), p.188.
55. J.P. Reeder, 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy', Religion and Morality ed. G. Outka & J.P. Reeder, (1973), p.270. However, notice that Reeder unfairly chastises Davidson here for misunderstanding Otto's concept of schematization. Contrary to Reeder, Davidson does not argue that schematization for Otto provides rational comprehension of numinous experience, but only that it would if the term were understood in a strictly Kantian way. Indeed, Davidson proceeds to reject this interpretation and argues that schematization for Otto is a synthesis of two independent and a priori categories, the moral and numinous in the category of the holy, a conclusion which is precisely the same as that of Reeder himself.
56. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.136 & 139-140.

57. Even Turner, who is otherwise sensitive to the importance of the law of association of analogous feelings in Otto's work, fails to connect this law with the concept of schematization.
58. Ibid., pp.45 ff.
59. Ibid., p.44. See note 13.
60. Ibid., p.45.
61. Ibid., p.65.
62. Ibid., p.45.
63. Ibid., pp.45-46.
64. Ibid., p.61.
65. Ibid., p.63.
66. Ibid., p.64.
67. Ibid., pp.140-141.
68. It is interesting that Otto implies the same law of association of analogous feelings, when the first introduces the element of fascination in the numinous on p.31. There he refers to the schemata on the rational side of the numinous as parallels, so once again suggesting a relation of correspondence between the rational and the non-rational in the elements or moments of the holy.
69. Ibid., p.61.
70. Ibid., p.63.
71. Ibid., p.141.
72. Eg. See R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion (Princeton, New Jersey, 1947), pp.186-189.
73. For some explanation of the meaning of the word 'psychological' here, see note 46 of this chapter.

74. Davidson, although acknowledging the importance of Fries's idealism in The Idea of the Holy, fails to recognize the place of the psychological dimension of his ideas in this work, especially in the context of Otto's presentation of his account of the a priori categories of the numinous and the rational.
75. See chapter I of this essay, p.14, and J.P. Reeder, 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy, Religion and Morality ed. G. Outka & J.P. Reeder, (1973), pp.277-278. Notice, also, that it is this Friesian definition of the a priori categories so profoundly influential on Otto's thinking, which led J.M. Moore in Theories of Religious Experience p.103 to argue that there is an exaggerated apriorism in The Idea of the Holy; that is to say, there is a sense in which religious experience is wholly the product of our a priori cognitive constitution and that there is nothing in it which is a posteriori. For further details, see chapter I of this essay, pp.14-17.
76. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.114.
77. Ibid., p.112.
78. Although Turner refers to this passage on p.39 of his commentary, and notes there the peculiar nature of Otto's rational schema as a priori, unfortunately he fails, as others before him have done, to recognize their psychological function of arousing numinous feelings.
79. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.137. Of course, this passage, celebrating Plato's assertion in the Republic of the connection of the rational to the divine, interpreted in isolation from other relevant passages, could be understood as suggesting an account of the religious a priori similar to that of Troeltsch, who insists that particular religious ideas are genuinely self-evident. This, you will remember from chapter I, was the definition that Baillie gave to

Otto's religious a priori, but it is clearly inadequate since it fails to recognize the important Friesian dimension of this concept. See J. Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion (London, 1928), pp.243-245. It is also obvious that the intuitive certainty referred to in this passage cannot be confused with the certainty given in logical judgements, since the connection of the rational to the non-rational in the idea of the divine can never be a logical one, as Otto himself affirms on the preceding page.

80. For further information on the Friesian epistemology, see especially R. Otto, The Philosophy of Religion sections A and B and R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion chapter V. Incidentally, notice how Fries's idealistic theory of Ahndung and Glaube offers a Kantian route to nature mysticism, to what R.C. Zaehner has named the panenhenic, rather than the pantheistic, experience in his Mysticism, Sacred and Profane and to what W.T. Stace has referred to as extrovertive mysticism in his Mysticism and Philosophy. For further details of the unifying vision in Fries's idealism, see R. Otto, Mysticism East and West appendix III, which demonstrates that even in 1924, some seven years after the first publication of The Idea of the Holy, Otto was still profoundly influenced by Fries. For instance, on p.266 Otto asserts that the unifying vision of Fries 'could not be otherwise or better described than by the mystical intuition of Eckhart...' For more discussion concerning Fries's mysticism, see the examination of Otto's concept of divination below.
81. In fact, as will be soon demonstrated, Otto's account of divination owes more to De Wette than to Fries.
82. R. Otto, The Philosophy of Religion p.163.
83. Ibid., p.164.
84. Ibid., p.165.

85. Ibid., pp.166-167. See also p.200. It is also significant that Otto recognizes in these passages, especially on p.164, that De Wette's distinction between Reason and Understanding suggests an interesting perspective from which to re-examine the traditional reason and revelation dialectic which was so influential in 19th Century Protestant theology, especially after Kierkegaard opposed faith to reason and destroyed the Hegelian synthesis of beauty and truth. In fact, Otto argues that the over-worked reason and revelation dialectic is not really a genuine theological problem, since what is attacked as Reason, profoundly antagonistic to faith, is really the fallible Understanding, the arbitrary and defective judgements vulnerable to error. By contrast, Reason in De Wette's sense is identical with revelation, lifted above all individual caprice, absolutely free from all error. The reason and revelation dialectic is really a Reason and Understanding dialectic. Clearly, this Reason of De Wette and Fries, which Otto inherits and identifies with revelation, is conceived by him, because it is a priori, to eliminate decisively the problem of the opposition between religious faith and reason in religious life. It is also significant that when Otto establishes a connection between the rational a priori and the numinous through the mechanism of schematization, he is arguing against theologians who insist on the radical transcendence of God and declare that any claim of awareness of God, even through profound numinous experiences, is not really authentic knowledge of the deity. For instance, it is obvious that Otto's theory of religious experience is profoundly antagonistic to the dialectical theology of Karl Barth, and I suspect that Barth's problem with Otto's numinous experience is not that it is too 'wholly other', as other critics of Otto have complained, but that it is not 'wholly other' enough!

Clearly, Otto's theory of religious experience and especially his Friesian idealism raises profound problems for all theologians who insist on opposing absolutely reason to faith and God to the world. For further discussion concerning this problem, consult the extensive literature. E.g. J. Richmond, Faith and Philosophy (London, 1966); K. Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1959); P. Tillich, Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology (London, 1961); J. Macquarrie, Twentieth Century Religious Thought (London, 1971); H. K ung, Does God Exist? (London, 1980). For the view that Otto was a precursor of Process Theology, see J. R. Sibley, 'Rudolph Otto as a Precursor of Process Theology', Encounter, Vol.30 (1969), pp.223-240.

86. This scholastic distinction between two faculties of intelligence, one scientific or discursive (ratio) and the other spiritual and contemplative (intellectus), finds its origin in St. Augustine's Christian Platonism, and in the mediaeval period was particularly important in the theology of the Franciscan School of St. Bonaventure. For further details, see E. Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (London, 1955), pp.336-337.
87. R. Otto, Mysticism East and West p.50. Notice, by the way, that Otto here compares Eckhart's distinction between intellectus and ratio with Coleridge's differentiation of 'understanding' from 'reason', which here again reflects the, by now, familiar distinction of De Wette, elucidated in Otto's The Philosophy of Religion.
88. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.137.
89. Ibid., p.138 - Citing Luther, Weimar ed., XVIII 719.
90. Ibid., p.137 - Citing Republic 11 382E.
91. Ibid., pp.138-139. The Luther passage cited is Table-Talk (Weimar v. 5820). Incidentally, Otto's interest in the mediaeval doctrine of faculties of intellectus and ratio as well as his criticism of

Luther's rage against the 'whore Reason' suggest that, by the time he came to write The Idea of the Holy, his commitment to the Friesian idealism as well as his growing interest in mysticism had led him to experience some difficulty with many aspects of his own Lutheran tradition. This, it seems to me, does much to explain Otto's attempt to emphasize the mystical dimension of Luther's concept of faith. For further details, see The Idea of the Holy appendix VI, pp.204-207.

92. See p.54 of this essay which quotes from The Idea of the Holy p.112.

93. Incidentally, this argument about religious discourse confirms in a manner unimagined by Antony Flew the wisdom of his influential critical essay, Theology and Falsification, where he concludes his argument with the question or challenge put to the religious believer:

What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?

Of course, since Otto argues that theology should refer the religious believer away from all empirical experience, it is obvious that his answer to Flew's question would be 'nothing'. For the full text of Flew's essay, see either A. Flew and A. MacIntyre, New Essays in Philosophical Theology (London, 1955), Chap. VI, or J. Hick, The Existence of God (London, 1964), pp. 225-228.

94. Of course, even here the analogy between the schematization of Otto and Kant is remote since Kant's schematization refers to the process of creating the conditions for empirical experience.

95. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.140-141.

96. Ibid., p.31.

97. Ibid., p.1. This introductory passage tends to undermine attempts by critics to argue that by the time Otto came to write The Idea of the Holy, the influence of Fries on him had begun to decline.

98. See p.50 of this essay and The Idea of the Holy p.61.
99. R. Otto; The Idea of the Holy p.137 - Citing Republic 11 382E.
100. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.46.
101. Ibid., p.61.
102. H. W. Turner, Commentary on a Shortened Version of the Idea of the Holy, A Guide for Students p.50. However, notice that Turner gives this term 'numinization of the rational' a different meaning from my own. He speculates, on the basis of Otto's reference to the numinous infusing the rational from above, that this numinization is the reverse of schematization of the numinous and that numinization is applied especially to morality. Schematization and numinization interact on one another and each is liable to pass over into the other in the development of concrete historical traditions, and whereas Turner understands schematization here to be a process of the rational shaping the numinous, numinization is conceived to have five different effects on morality which are as follows:
- (a) The numinous can provide a further sanction for moral rules or authority.
 - (b) The numinous power can provide an additional dynamic for moral behaviour.
 - (c) Clearer moral insights might actually arise out of numinous experience.
 - (d) Numinous experience may be able to resolve conflicts between competing moral claims.
 - (e) The numinous experience may provide divine models for human behaviour and for understanding such behaviour.

Now although Turner's development of the concept of numinization is different from my own, it is not really in conflict with my thesis concerning the power of religious reason to arouse the numinous.

Indeed, the numinization of the moral may evoke further numinous experience, and I suggest that it will be profitable for the history of religions and the phenomenology of religion to understand Turner's theory and my thesis as complementary.

103. Most of Otto's critics seem unwilling or unable to offer any constructive criticism of divination, and appear to be unaware that this concept possesses an important function in Otto's theory of religious experience which must materially influence any interpretation of the meaning of numinous experience. For instance, even Turner, who is otherwise more sensitive than most critics to the psychological dimension of The Idea of the Holy, avoids grappling with the meaning of the concept of divination, by erroneously identifying it with the sensus numinis, the sense of the numinous. See Commentary p.46. He is evidently irritated by what he understands as Otto's use of the term which appears to have nothing in common with its conventional use in the work of anthropologists and phenomenologists of religion in their study of primal religions. However, had he discovered the proper meaning of divination in Otto's work, he would have realized that Otto's concept represents merely an enlarging of the traditional definition of the phenomenon of divination found in ancient and primitive religions, to cover a religion with an acutely sensitive historical consciousness. Indeed, Otto's concept of divination offers an exciting new direction into which we can extend the accepted social scientific interpretation of the term, and so helps us to recognize that the casting of lots and the interpreting of omens in primal religions have similar religious functions to the interpreting of the facts of history and the contents of a holy book in a world religion like Christianity. Otto's concept of divination suggests not the gulf which separates ancient and primitive religions from Christianity but the surprising

similarities between them. The only writer who has given any extensive attention to Otto's concept of divination is Davidson in chapter IV of his work, and even he fails to connect this concept with Otto's account of schematization of the numinous, apart from which it cannot be understood.

104. See p.16 of this essay and The Idea of the Holy pp.143-144.
105. Ibid., p.144.
106. Ibid., pp.151 & 153.
107. Ibid., pp.145 ff.
108. F. Schleiermacher, On Religion, Speeches to its Cultured Despisers (New York, 1958), to which Otto wrote an interesting introduction. He also gives some space to an explanation of Schleiermacher's ideas in chapter XVIII of The Idea of the Holy.
109. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.146-147. Otto is here making a distinction between a 'hard' and a 'soft' knowledge, and suggesting that, although much of our experience of the world is mediated by 'hard' knowledge, such experience must be supplemented by 'soft' knowledge, if we are to realize the potentialities of a fully human existence and achieve a sense of fulfilment in our lives. This observation of course, provides the background to Schleiermacher's appeal to the cultured despisers of religion. For further discussion concerning this distinction between a 'hard' and a 'soft' knowledge, see chapter III of this essay.
110. I. Kant, Critique of Judgement trans. J.H. Bernard, (New York, 1951).
111. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.148.
112. See pp.57-58 of this essay.

113. A similar consciousness of the eternal is also discovered by Fries in the experience of the sublimity of high spiritual achievement of human endeavour in the world, and this experience in turn gives rise to feelings of exaltation which blend with feelings of devotion to God in a harmony of contrasts.
114. For a full account of Fries's concept of Ahndung, see R. Otto, The Philosophy of Religion chapters IX & X; R. F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion chapter V. Incidentally, the observation that the providence of God forever escapes rational comprehension and can only be apprehended in feelings highlights the necessity of interpreting all religious discourse about the providence of God within the context of concrete religious life and experience. If such discourse is not interpreted within this context, it is bound to appear naive, even ridiculous. Indeed, there are several important lessons for the philosopher of religion here. To begin with, there seems to be little value in criticising arguments for the existence of God which rely on definitions of the providence of God, unless such arguments are first located within particular concrete religious contexts. Philosophical criticism of the so-called teleological argument for instance, has rather limited value for the study of religions, since the teleological argument is an abstraction. There is really no teleological argument. Rather, there are countless heterogeneous statements about the providence of the deity both within and outside the Christian tradition, and many such statements are not arguments at all but simply descriptions of contemplative or even mystical experience which demand to be interpreted within their particular unique religious contexts. This is clearly the case for Fries's feelings of Ahndung which should make us suspicious of all general discussion concerning the teleological argument. Secondly, instead of mechanically criticising the

so-called teleological argument, whether in the form it takes in the writings of Plato or in those of William Paley, philosophers should use their energies to explore the variety of definitions of the providence of God both within and beyond the Christian tradition. Such an exercise may yield much fruit, regardless of where individual thinkers may stand in the existence of God debate. In particular, it may reveal many different forms of religious wonder, so sharpening our criticism of diverse definitions of the relationship between the deity and the world, and thus making us far more sensitive to the variety of forms of theodicy which may be found in different religious traditions. Thirdly, philosophers should be interested in situations in which the conditions for affirming the providence of God are not met, and yet religious believers refuse to deny this providence. In particular, they should search out for the variety of reasons why counter-evidence against the providence of God is ignored. Of course, Flew's challenge, in his Theology and Falsification already referred to, is aware of this question, but unfortunately Flew is totally uninterested in any possible answers to it, simply because he believes that there can be none that are meaningful. One plausible answer to this question is obviously supplied by Fries's concept of Ahndung. This religious feeling may be experienced as so intense, so certain, as to make all evil in the world, including personal misfortune, appear as ultimately insignificant. However, remember that this is only one of many possible explanations as to why the belief in the providence of God may be clung to in the face of overwhelming counter-evidence.

115. Otto explicitly identifies Fries's concept of Ahndung with the mysticism of the 'unifying vision' in Mysticism East and West p.268. Earlier in this work, pp.57-89, he contrasts the mysticism of the 'unifying vision' with the 'mysticism of introspection'. For further

discussion on this division between two types of mysticism, see R. C. Zaehner, Mysticism, Sacred and Profane and W. T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy.

116. R. Otto, Mysticism East and West p.268. Incidentally, De Wette was not the only thinker even in Germany at the beginning of the 19th Century to relate mystical intuition to the factual in history. There was a far more influential thinker in Germany, Hegel.
117. For further details of the concept of Ahndung in the theology of De Wette, see R. Otto, The Philosophy of Religion chapter XIII.
118. R. F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion pp. 154-155.
119. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.169.
120. Ibid., p.170.
121. Ibid., chapter XVII entitled 'The Holy as an A Priori Category, Part 11'
122. Ibid., p.136.
123. Ibid., pp.139-140.
124. Ibid., pp.141-142.
125. Ibid., pp.169-170.
126. Ibid., p.136 See Note 122 above.
127. See p.66 of this essay.
128. See also p.76 of this essay.
129. See p.82 of this essay, citing R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.137. The passage in Plato's Republic under review is 11382E.
130. The expression, it will be remembered, belongs to J. M. Moore. See p.15 of this essay.
131. For further discussion on the impossibility of falsifying the beliefs derived from divination, see my previous remarks on Antony Flew's essay Theology and Falsification in note 93 and my examination of philosophical criticism of statements about the providence of God and the so called 'teleological argument' in note 114.

132. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.144, 151, 153.

133. Ibid., pp.150-153.

134. Ibid., p.153. Incidentally, this conclusion about the nature of Goethe's divination and its relation to Otto's divination of holiness is not contradicted by a previous rather difficult passage on p.151 which says:

By his ignoring of the warning of the book of Job and by applying to the mysterium the standard of the rational understanding and reason and conceptions of human purpose, the non-rational comes to involve for Goethe a contradiction between meaning and meaninglessness, sense and nonsense, that which promotes and that which frustrates human ends.

This passage, of course, refers to the problem of evil in religion and emphasizes that numinous values may be profoundly antagonistic to moral and rational values. However, this passage does not undermine the whole argument previously presented about the nature of divination of the holy, but only reminds us of the all the more remarkable nature of the a priori fusion of the numinous and the rational. There is here a union of the rational and the numinous in the holy in spite of the profound differences between them, and one rather interesting metaphor that Otto uses to express this union is presented early in the argument of The Idea of the Holy p.46. Here he speaks of the

intimate interpenetration of the non-rational with the rational elements of the religious consciousness, (as) like the interweaving of (the) warp and woof in a fabric.....

clearly conveying the image of profoundly dissimilar, perhaps antagonistic experiences knotted together. By the way, it is ironical that Otto has borrowed this metaphor of the warp and woof of a fabric from no less than Goethe himself. See p.153.

135. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.60-61.

136. Ibid., pp.68 and 70.

137. The term 'trigger' was first used by M. Laski in her influential work Ecstasy (London, 1961).
138. Once again, we are using the expression of the philosopher, J. M. Moore, introduced on p.15 of this essay, and identified with divination on p.74.

Notes - Chapter III

1. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy chapters IV, V, VI.
2. Ibid., p.7.
3. Eg. ibid., pp.27, 29, 30, 59, 63.
4. For example, see W.T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy (London, 1960), pp.291-294.
5. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.5, 26, 29-30, 59, 63, 184-185.
6. See for example W.P. Alston, 'Ineffability', The Philosophical Review, vol.65 (1956), pp.506-522.
7. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.26, 28, 59, 95, 141, 181, 184.

It is important to emphasize at the beginning of this discussion that Otto's argument about the 'wholly other' nature of numinous experience cannot be separated from his argument about the 'wholly other' nature of the numinous object. Otto himself makes this clear in the course of his discussion concerning ineffability in The Idea of the Holy, by insisting that numinous experience and the numinous object present the believer with similar epistemological challenges (concerning the limitations of conceptual understanding). It is for this reason that our examination of the meaning of Otto's ineffability claims concerning numinous experience will inevitably involve some consideration also of his ineffability claims concerning the numinous object.

8. See, for example, J. Kellenberger, 'The Ineffabilities of Mysticism', American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol.16, No.4 (October, 1979), which is a very useful article separating out many meanings of the term

'ineffability' used by mystics. Incidentally, Kellenberger also discusses the ineffability claims concerning both mystical experience and the object of that experience.

9. W.T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy p.291.
10. Otto's extensive discussion concerning the analogical nature of language about the numinous, especially his elucidation of the meaning of the mysterium, tremendum and fascinans moments of the numinous in chapters IV, V and VI, presupposes this theory of the relation between theological belief and numinous experience. It is important to keep in mind that this movement in Otto's thinking from experience to theology is central to The Idea of the Holy, in spite of his theory of schematization outlined in chapter II of this essay which suggests that rational schemata stimulate numinous experiences. One significant point to remember is that schemata can only excite numinous experiences already authenticated by a religious tradition. Otto seems to have been unaware of the possibility of such schemata stimulating unprecedented numinous feelings.
11. Once again, this is not to ignore the meaning of the union of the rational with the non-rational in the 'holy' discussed in chapter II, but merely to recognize that the non-rational is the senior or dominant partner in this relationship. See, for example, R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy chapter XIII, especially p.110 which speaks about 'rationalization and moralization on the basis of the numinous consciousness'.
12. Ibid., p.135.
13. S.T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism', Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis (London, 1978), ed. S.T. Katz.
14. P. Donovan, Interpreting Religious Experience (London, 1979), chapter 2.

15. P. van Buren, The Edges of Language (London, 1972), chapters III, IV, V, and VI.
16. R. Bambrough, 'Intuition and the Inexpressible', Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis ed. S.T. Katz.
17. J. Kellenberger, 'The Ineffabilities of Mysticism', American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol.16, No.4 (October, 1979), p.314.
18. See, for example, L.M.S. Griffiths, 'Otto's "Inexpressible"', Sophia, Vol.7 (July, 1968), pp.20-22, as well as Stace's discussion already mentioned above.
19. Notice that Otto, when discussing ideograms for unique numinous feelings, argues that such ideograms can only be understood by a man who has already himself had some numinous experience. See The Idea of the Holy p.60.
20. See pp.104-5 of this essay.
21. See R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.2, 5, 13, 28, 29, 30, 34, 59, 135, 141, 184-185, 191-192. Otto often uses the term 'the numinous' in the course of his discussion concerning ineffability, without indicating whether it is meant to refer to numinous experience or a numinous object. I believe that he does this because he either cannot, or does not wish to separate ineffability claims concerning numinous experience from those concerning the numinous object. Accordingly, I shall use the term 'the numinous' in the following discussion to refer to both numinous experience and the object of that experience, and I shall often cite references to Otto's ineffability claims concerning the numinous object in order to carry forward our understanding of his ineffability claims concerning numinous experience. It is for this reason that many of the passages from The Idea of the Holy cited above refer to a numinous object rather than numinous experience.

22. Ibid., p.5. It is not clear from this very early passage whether the reference to 'the numinous' is meant to draw the reader's attention to a numinous object or a numinous experience.
23. Ibid., p.13. This passage appears to be referring to both the numinous object and the numinous experience.
24. Ibid., p.26.
25. Ibid., p.28. Although this passage, as well as the previous reference to the 'wholly other' (note 24), specifically refer to a numinous object rather than a numinous experience, it is clear from several other references to numinous experience being 'wholly other' (The Idea of the Holy, pp.27, 29, 30, 59, 63) that Otto intends these observations to apply to numinous experience as well. Indeed, these references to the 'wholly other' nature of numinous experience support my contention of note 21 above that Otto either cannot, or does not wish to, separate ineffability claims concerning the numinous object from those concerning numinous experience. Incidentally, this is one of several important passages which lead L.M.S. Griffiths to argue that Otto's inexpressible is logically unintelligible. For further details, see his 'Otto's "Inexpressible"', Sophia, (July, 1968), Vol.7 pp.20-22.
26. Ibid., p.59. This passage illustrates Otto's lack of desire to separate ineffability claims concerning the numinous object from those concerning numinous experience.
27. Ibid., p.95.
28. Ibid., p.25.
29. Ibid., pp.179-186.
30. Ibid., p.181, citing Chrysostom's commentary on 1 Tim. VI, 16.
31. In the same appendix on p.185, Otto supports Chrysostom's argument about the inconceivable in God by declaring, 'that God Himself is not only above every human grasp, but in antagonism to it'.

32. Apart from the substantial discussion concerning analogies to numinous experience, Otto actually introduces the non-rational dimension of deity at the beginning of The Idea of the Holy, fully aware of the epistemological and semantic difficulties which are created by any radical ineffability claim. On p.2 he declares:

Yet, though it (the non-rational) eludes the conceptual way of understanding, it must be in some way or other within our grasp, else absolutely nothing could be asserted of it. And even mysticism, in speaking of it as the ineffable, does not really mean to imply that absolutely nothing can be asserted of the object of the religious consciousness; otherwise, mysticism could exist only in unbroken silence, whereas what has generally been a characteristic of the mystics is their copious eloquence.

Incidentally, notice that the metaphor of 'grasping' here is also used in the passage quoted in note 31 above. Unfortunately, such inconsistencies do not make our task of presenting a clear and unambiguous account of Otto's understanding of ineffability any easier. Nevertheless, I do not think we should be unduly discouraged by such inconsistencies, since our main argument about the meaning of Otto's ineffability claims will be shown to be plausible independently of such inconsistencies and unaffected by them.

33. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion (Princeton, New Jersey, 1947), p.119.
34. H.W. Turner, Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students (Aberdeen, 1974), p.19.
35. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy chapters XIV, XVII, and XXI and, in particular, pp.113, 134, 175.
36. Ibid., p.175.
37. Much in this rule is similar to the argument in J. Kellenberger's 'The Ineffabilities of Mysticism', American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol.16, No.4 (October, 1979), but whereas Kellenberger focuses his attention on the problem of the coherence of bringing ineffability

claims and other claims about the deity together, my argument hinges on revising the actual meaning of the ineffability claims themselves because of what else is said about the deity.

38. Incidentally, Dionysius' demand that the religious devotee 'unlearn' everything he knows about God in order to have some concrete experience of Him, his demand that the devotee enter the proverbial 'cloud of unknowing' which was so influential in mediaeval Christian mysticism, is not a demand addressed to the man who knows nothing about God, to whom it would indeed appear meaningless, but to the man who already knows much about his tradition, perhaps much about the mystical path to God, perhaps even too much. The process of 'unlearning' here clearly can only be meaningful to the learned.
39. See Note 23 above.
40. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.30.
41. Ibid., p.34. Clearly this passage suggests the profound debt that Fries' theory of knowledge owes to the via negativa of mediaeval Christian mysticism.
42. See Note 30 above.
43. Ibid., p.185.
44. This assumption concerning shared religious experiences between writer and reader is, you will remember, proclaimed on p.8, and gives Otto's later ineffability claims a concrete religious context, and with it a concrete religious meaning.
45. See Notes 39 and 23 above.
46. See Note 40 above.
47. See Notes 42 and 30 above.
48. Ibid., p.184.
49. I regard the inclusion of this passage in the text of The Idea of the Holy as most unfortunate.
50. Ibid., p.28. See note 25 above.

51. Ibid., p.26.
52. Ibid., p.59. See note 26 above.
53. L.M.S. Griffiths, 'Otto's "Inexpressible"', Sophia, (July, 1968), Vol.7. pp.20-22.
54. This, of course, explains why W.T. Stace's objection to Otto's talk about analogies to ineffable numinous experience is unjustified. (See Mysticism and Philosophy (London, 1960), pp.291-294, cited by note 4 above.) It is because Stace could never accept the possibility of partial or qualified ineffability, that he was forced to reject what he called Otto's 'Metaphor Theory' as unintelligible. Stace wrongly assumed that if something can be asserted of God, or if something within the deity or religious experience can be conceptualized, this then must destroy the ineffability claim completely. He could not accept that there might be a residue of religious experience or deity which remained ineffable, even after many positive claims had been made about them. This explains Stace's antipathy to Otto's 'Metaphor Theory', a theory he himself espoused in an earlier work, Time and Eternity, in which he insisted that the function of religious language is not descriptive at all but solely evocative. Of course Stace creates his own difficulties here, by failing to realize that the evocative function of religious language is parasitic upon its descriptive function, and it is precisely this mistake which leads him to misunderstand Otto's use of analogy in The Idea of the Holy.
55. Incidentally, it must be remembered that when Otto speaks of the numinous as 'wholly other', this is not a concept he believes he has invented, but one that he has discovered in the writings of many religious traditions. For further details concerning the numinous object and numinous experience as the 'wholly other' in Augustine's writings, the Upanishads and other religious literature, see his 'The

"Wholly Other" in Religious History and Theology', Religious Essays, A Supplement to 'The Idea of the Holy' trans. B. Lunn, (London, 1931), chapter IX.

56. Otto says on p.135 of The Idea of the Holy:

Revelation does not mean a mere passing over into the intelligible and comprehensible. Something may be profoundly and intricately known in feeling for the bliss it brings or the agitation it produces, and yet the understanding may find no concept for it. To know and to understand conceptually are two different things, are often even mutually exclusive and contrasted. The mysterious obscurity of the numen is by no means tantamount to unknowableness.

Incidentally, the original terms translated as 'to know' and 'to understand conceptually' are 'kennen' and 'begriffliches verstehen'.

See Das Heilige p.163.

57. See his On Religion, Speeches to its Cultured Despisers. Notice by the way, that Otto himself wrote an introduction to the 3rd German edition of this work.
58. Principles of Psychology, Vol.1 (New York, 1950), pp.221-2.
59. This epistemological principle of James's psychology of religion is spelt out in some now famous lines in his The Varieties of Religious Experience.

I do believe that feeling is the deeper source of religion, and that philosophical and theological formulas are secondary products...These speculations must, it seems to me, be classed as overbeliefs, buildings-out performed by the intellect into directions of which feeling originally supplied the hint...Feeling is private and dumb, and unable to give an account of itself.... (Therefore) we construe our feelings intellectually...Conceptions and constructions are thus a necessary part of our religion...They are interpretative and inductive operations, operations after the fact, consequent upon religious feeling, not co-ordinate with it, not independent of what it ascertains.

See pp.414-6 of the Fontana Library edition.

60. Other notable examples of the model include Henri Bergson's opposition between 'intelligence' and 'intuition' introduced in his The Two Sources of Morality and Religion and Martin Buber's distinction between I-You and I-It relationships introduced in his influential work I and Thou.
61. See, for example, P. Donovan, Interpreting Religious Experience pp.68-70.
62. Ibid., pp.66-68.
63. In particular, see his discussion of 'original numinous sounds' in appendix III of The Idea of the Holy, as well as his extensive discussion of the 'wholly other' in his essay 'The "Wholly Other" in Religious History and Theology' in his Religious Essays, A Supplement to 'The Idea of the Holy'.
64. M. Buber, I and Thou trans. R.G. Smith, (Edinburgh, 1937).
65. See, for example, R.W. Hepburn, Christianity and Paradox (New York, 1966), pp.30-39, and M.L. Diamond, Contemporary Philosophy and Religious Thought (New York, 1974), pp.123-129.
66. P. Donovan, Interpreting Religious Experience p.68.
67. See P. van Buren, The Edges of Language chapters III, IV, V and VI, to a discussion of which I shall be returning later in this chapter.
68. J. Kellenberger, 'The Ineffabilities of Mysticism', American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol.16, No.4 (October, 1979), p.312.
69. W.T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy chapter 2.
70. Ibid., p.94.
71. See, for example, P.G. Moore, 'Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique', S.T. Katz, Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis, p.110, as well as C.A. Keller 'Mystical Literature' in the same collection. Incidentally, N. Smart's account of interpreting mystical experience in his article 'Interpretation and Mystical Experience', Religious Studies, Vol.1 (1965), pp.75-87, although

considerably more sophisticated than the work of Stace, suffers from similar difficulties. His attempt to distinguish between interpretations which have what he calls a low degree of ramification, and are closer to phenomenological descriptions of experience, and those which have a high degree of ramification, on the basis of the amount of theological or metaphysical speculation which is apparent in the reports of mystical experience, flounders once again on the fact that no raw experience is available for independent comparison with such reports. For further details, see B. Garside, 'Language and the Interpretation of Mystical Experience', International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Vol.3 (1972), pp.99-100.

72. Garside, in the above article, otherwise calls the interpretative, or the conceptual, framework the set and the external stimulus the setting, the total experience being the conjunction of set and setting. Clearly Garside's set and setting correspond to James' distinction between 'knowledge about' and 'acquaintance knowledge' or 'immediate experience'.
73. S.T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis ed. S.T. Katz, p.26.
74. Ibid., p.35.
75. Ibid., pp.58-59.
76. Ibid., p.57.
77. Ibid., p.59.
78. Ibid., p.62.
79. P. Donovan, Interpreting Religious Experience p.29.
80. Ibid., p.28.
81. Ibid., p.23.
82. Ibid., p.24.

83. P.G. Moore 'Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique', Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis ed. S.T. Katz, pp.108-109. Incidentally, what Moore means by the distinction between retrospective and reflexive interpretation is illustrated by mystics who spontaneously offer heretical interpretations of their religious experiences while they are taking place or immediately afterwards, and only later choose to espouse orthodox interpretations of these experiences because of pressure from their religious traditions. For example, there is the famous case of the 11/12th Century Sufi Al Ghazali, who claims that although a mystic may interpret his ecstatic experience as identity with God (ittihad) while it is taking place or immediately afterwards, such a heretical interpretation should be construed to be the result of religious 'drunkenness'. Only when the mystic's drunkenness abates and his reason is restored to him, will he realize that what he thought was identity with God was not that at all, but rather annihilation in God (fana), a state in which there is no contact between the human soul and God. For further discussion concerning this issue in the work of Al Ghazali, see R.C. Zaehner, Mysticism, Sacred and Profane (London, 1961), pp.156-160.
84. It is odd that Katz is unable, or unwilling, in his editor's introduction to Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis to recognize the differences between Moore's position and his own concerning the possibility of abstracting from any account of mystical experience a raw experience, although some explanation for this can perhaps be found in the many other convergences between the ideas of these two writers, some of which will be recounted below.

85. Ibid., p.110.
86. Ibid., p.111. Incidentally, Moore makes it clear that he does not see 'this mutually reinforcing cycle of experience and interpretation' as a closed system, which excludes any possibility of new features of experience and interpretation being introduced into religious life.
87. Ibid.,
88. Ibid., p.112.
89. Ibid., p.116.
90. W.J. Wainwright, Mysticism (Brighton, 1981) pp.18-26.
91. Ibid., p.26. Incidentally, the term 'setting' is taken from Garside's article cited above in notes 71 and 72. The setting, to repeat, is the external stimulus or immediate experience which is contrasted with the set, which is the conceptual framework functioning as a constituent of the experience as a whole. It is both set and setting which make the experience what it is.
92. It is because it is possible to describe experience as a whole (constituted by the 'given' and the interpretative framework), that Wainwright argues, contrary to Katz, that a cross-cultural taxonomy of mystical experience is indeed possible, since there is no need to identify the common core which would form the foundation for this taxonomy with either the 'given' or the interpretative framework.
93. Ibid., p.22.
94. Ibid., p.19.
95. Ibid., p.48.
96. P. Donovan, Interpreting Religious Experience p.29.

97. This theory is obviously a corruption or extension of Wittgenstein's 'seeing as' introduced in his Philosophical Investigations. For a more extensive explanation of what Donovan's position really amounts to, see J. Hick, 'Mystical Experience as Cognition', Mystics and Scholars ed. H.G. Coward and T. Penelhum, (Calgary, 1977).
98. P. Donovan, Interpreting Religious Experience p.29.
99. W.J. Wainwright, Mysticism, p.20.

Wainwright explains what he means by this claim, that there is not a 'necessary' connection between a mystic's tradition and his experience, by offering the following observation:

The gastronomic experiences of Eskimos, Parisians and Vietnamese are quite different. There is a strong correlation between these experiences and their cultures. Nevertheless, it would be absurd to suppose that the connection was anything but contingent, and that a person from a different culture could not have the gastronomic experiences of an Eskimo. Ibid., pp.20-21.

We can, I believe, draw two conclusions from this observation. The first is that the connection between the mystic's tradition and his experience is contingent, by which I take Wainwright to mean, on the one hand, that mystics often do not experience the altered states of consciousness which they are taught by their religious traditions to seek, and on the other, that mystics are capable of having experiences which are profoundly different from those authenticated by their religious traditions, indeed experiences which they may be utterly unprepared for by those traditions. The second conclusion which we can draw from Wainwright's observation is that, contrary to Katz, a person from a different culture can have the mystical experiences of a Buddhist, Hindu or a Muslim. This conclusion is, of course, far more questionable than the first, although Wainwright can reasonably argue against Katz that because a mystic's experience is not constituted by his religious tradition, Katz's objections to the Buddhist having a Jewish (theistic) experience or the Jew a Buddhist

(monistic) one lose some of their force. In fact if it turns out to be the case that the contribution to mystical experience by its religious tradition is relatively minor, then Wainwright can justifiably argue that if a person from a different culture undergoes a proper training for mystical experience, he may well succeed in having, not an identical experience to that of the Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim mystic, but one that is remarkably similar. This claim, of course, is not identical to that which appears to be presented by Wainwright in the passage above, but it is sufficiently similar to it to be emphatically rejected by Katz.

Incidentally, it is because the contribution of the religious tradition to a mystical experience may be insignificant, that Wainwright also argues that, in spite of the strictures of Katz and many others, it is possible that all mystical experience is essentially similar! See p.48.

100. However, there is more to Wainwright's criticism of Katz than this. Wainwright, as I have already said, is critical of Katz's unexplained epistemological assumption that the meaning of any experience is substantially determined by its context, but his interest is confined to the relation between experience and interpretation and the possibility of separating one from the other. Behind Katz's claim that mystical experience is largely constituted by the tradition in which it occurs, there is a phenomenology which is inadequate for the study of mysticism, inadequate because it conceals a reductionism which automatically distorts all claims made by mystics themselves about their experiences. It is this phenomenological reductionism in Katz's writing, unnoticed by Wainwright, which I want here to identify and to criticize.

Katz argues, as I have already said, that there is no unconditioned consciousness, that there is no deconditioning of awareness even during meditation and other mystical exercises which are cultivated in order to free the mystic from all cultural conditioning. Rather, meditation brings about only a reconditioning, a contextual awareness, albeit unusual, but nevertheless the result of specific intentional religious activity. Each mystical tradition teaches the mystic what to seek and what to expect. In Katz's own words:

in almost all cases, if not in all, mystical experience knows, as we have shown, what end it seeks from the inception of its traversal along the 'mystic's way'. Thus the Sufi tariq, the Taoist tao, the Buddhist dharma and the Christian via mystica are all 'intentional', i.e. intend some final state of being or non-being, some goal or union or communion, some sense of release, exaltation, blessedness, or joy. And the tariq, the tao and the via mystica seek different goals because their initial, generative, problems are different...The mind can be seen to contribute both the problem and the means of its overcoming: it defines the origin, the way, and the goal, shaping experience, accordingly.

'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', p.62. Thus Katz concludes that in every mystical tradition there is a self-fulfilling prophetic aspect and that, since words mean what they say (what other function could they possibly have?), the differently defined soteriological goals of different religious traditions are really different because they use different words. We can discover the meanings of these different soteriological goals, by reasonably asking the mystic of each religious tradition to explain (again in words) the purpose of his mystical activity or to describe what he expects to gain from such activity.

However, such a phenomenology invites a number of criticisms. The first is that Katz simply fails to consider sufficiently seriously the difficulties that countless mystics across all the major mystical traditions have with words. Mystics are constantly complaining about their difficulties concerning putting their experiences into words, and the weight of evidence suggests that their complaints must be

taken seriously. Katz appears to be saying that he does not understand what the difficulty in interpreting mystical language is. I suggest that this reveals a significant lack of sensitivity concerning mystical experience. The second difficulty with Katz's argument, related to the first, is that if words do not always mean what they say, then the claim that all mystical life is intentional must be construed as either emptied of significance or as a form of reductionism. In other words, asking a mystic to explain the purpose of his mystical activity may provide us with very little information about the real nature of his mystical experience.

This talk of religious intentions leads me to my next criticism of Katz. It is clear from many mystical reports that although there is much evidence for intentional religious activity in mystical life, such activity, at least in the minds of the mystics themselves, is not the most important factor contributing to mystical experience, and that, in fact, in spite of all preparation and training for religious experience, the most significant cause of that experience is believed to be supernatural. In other words, mystics may, through a number of mystical techniques defined by their respective mystical traditions, appear to precipitate their experiences, and this is clearly Katz's interpretation of what is taking place in mystical life, but this is not how mystics themselves understand their mystical activities and experiences. The effect of Katz's phenomenology appears to be to deny the claim of so many mystics, namely that the cause of their experiences is substantially supernatural. This is what I mean when I say that Katz's phenomenology conceals a methodological reductionism. Of course many mystics will readily recognize the influences of what Moore calls 'incorporated interpretation' in their experiences, but will, nevertheless, insist that their experiences have some unconditioned, non-contextual divine

source. The problem with Katz' contextual particularism is that it seems to allow for no contingent, unprepared for, unexpected, supernatural intervention which is capable of distorting, obscuring or transforming any intentional mystical behaviour (for, contrary to Katz, the mystic at the beginning, or during the traversal, of the mystic way does not always know or understand the goal he seeks), and the reason for this weakness in Katz' phenomenology, I believe, can be traced to his insistence that there can be no 'raw' or 'pure' immediate experience. It is because unmediated experience cannot be identified, that Katz is led to deny what so many mystics affirm, namely that their experiences do indeed transcend all cultural contexts. It is because Katz finds the idea of a 'raw' experience unintelligible, that he insists, contrary to the claims of the mystics themselves, that altered states of consciousness attained through yoga and other contemplative exercises do not constitute a deconditioning but a reconditioning. Again, it is for the same reason that he recognizes a 'self-fulfilling prophetic aspect' in all mystical life, a conclusion that we could hardly expect any mystic of any religious tradition to be able to reach himself. This is hardly an expression of the ideal of impartiality or of van der Leeuw's epoché that we have learned to expect from the phenomenology of religion, for what Katz has done is simply to replace previously formulated undemonstrated phenomenological positions, that either all mystical experience is essentially similar (e.g. Stace and Smart) or that some forms of mystical experience are more valuable or more profound than others (e.g. Zaehner), with his own equally unfounded methodological position, namely that all forms of mystical experience are equally false!

102. I shall have much more to say about this process later in this chapter.
103. The question concerning how similar Moore's position is to that of Katz and Donovan with respect to Wainwright's second criticism is a difficult one to answer. While Moore clearly recognizes doctrinal presuppositions as an important constituent of mystical experiences (since he claims that the lack of such presuppositions is likely to prevent the mystic from experiencing the fullness of mystical states of consciousness), nevertheless, he does not specify how significant a constituent of experience such doctrinal presuppositions are. However, his position is clearly different from those of Katz and Donovan, to the degree that he is prepared to attempt to distinguish a 'raw' experience from several forms of interpretation, and explicitly states that mystical experience is as likely to affect interpretation as mystical doctrine is to affect experience. One must conclude that Moore's position is that while doctrinal presuppositions provide a significant contribution to mystical experiences, they do not necessarily provide an overwhelming contribution to such experiences. The degree to which doctrines contribute towards, or determine, experiences will vary from one context to another, and cannot be established in advance in the absence of concrete documentary evidence. This conclusion, if it is an accurate representation of Moore's position, seems to me to be closer to Wainwright's position than to that of Katz and Donovan, in that it leaves open the possibility of demonstrating in the future, on the basis of proper empirical evidence, that mystical experiences across religious traditions are, in fact, in spite of all cultural variations, essentially similar, while recognizing at the same time that future empirical research could lead one to the opposite conclusion.

116. Ibid., pp. 210-211. Incidentally, Bambrough appears to misunderstand Otto's purpose in discussing the music of Bach's Mass in B. Minor. He complains that Otto's claim that the Incarnatus in the Credo 'serves to express the mysterium by way of intimation, rather than in forthright utterance' (The Idea of the Holy p. 70) is a sign of a pervasive confusion in Otto's thinking, since he is suggesting either that music achieves an utterance which is not forthright, or that this intimation, since it falls short of forthrightness, should not be called an utterance. However, Bambrough misses the point of this passage, because he fails to realize that Otto distinguishes between musical and numinous experience and interprets both as inexpressible. Otto is not making the nonsensical claim that music is not capable of forthright utterance as music, but only that it can intimate the mysterium dimension of the numinous by the process of the association of analogous feelings. One gradually passes over from the musical experience to the numinous experience.
117. P. van Buren, The Edges of Language pp. 65-66.
118. Incidentally, the comments of van Buren and many other thinkers like him concerning language and experience, especially the view that the parameters of language and experience coincide, fundamentally conflict with the theories of language and experience of most Indian schools of mysticism. From the foregoing discussion in this chapter on ineffability, it is obvious that there are many points of convergence between Otto's philosophy of language and that which is implicit in the literature of the Upanishads (see The Idea of the Holy pp. 191-193, and 'The "Wholly Other" in Religious History and Theology', in Religious Essays, A Supplement to 'The Idea of the Holy'), and it is clear that, like Otto, much Indian philosophy is concerned with what in the West is known as the via negativa, which insists on the inability of language to express mystical experience.

Van Buren, of course, on emphasizing the rule-governed, public nature of language following Wittgenstein, insists that 'intuition (is) an unnecessary shuffle', but it is precisely this public, rule-governed nature of language which so many Indian schools of philosophy insist is inadequate in the context of any discussion concerning mystical experience. The rules governing language about mystical experience simply cannot be similar to those governing language about ordinary experience, since mystical experience is so dissimilar to ordinary experience. We shall consider the implications of this observation for Otto's psychology of religion and philosophy of language later. In the meantime, two examples of very different Indian philosophies of language will suffice to illustrate the great differences between the position of van Buren and that of Indian schools of mysticism, the first being the school of Advaita Vedanta and the second being the Madhyamika school of Mahayana Buddhism.

Advaita Vedanta, like Madhyamika, looks for a mystical reality beyond language itself, but unlike Madhyamika, although this reality is beyond language, nevertheless, language participates in it. There is no absolute discontinuity between language and ultimate reality. Now if this is the case, and if direct intuition of mystical reality independent of language is central to Advaita tradition, then the question arises: what is the function of language for Advaita philosophers and, in particular, what is the function of scriptural language of Śruti (the mahavakaya as the sacred texts are called)? The function of language in Advaita tradition is twofold, positive and negative. The negative function is the via negativa already discussed, which empties the mind and so prepares it for direct intuition, but the positive function (which is more interesting in the context of the present discussion) is the symbolic one of pointing beyond itself, especially through key terms like cit

(consciousness), saksin (witness) and Jnana (knowledge). But how is this possible, since mystical experience is that from which words turn back? The answer is that a distinction must be made between ordinary factual language and indirect indication, the former in Sanskrit being vacyartha, the latter lakshyartha. Indirect indication does not postulate fixed objects, and the mahavakya are not to be interpreted as doctrinal statements of literal fact (the parallel between this position and Otto's insistence on a non-literal understanding of much theological dogma being obvious). The mahavakya and other forms of indirect indication rather have a deeper suggestive function, since words like cit (consciousness) and jnana (knowledge) represent not so much facts which are fixed, realized and unambiguous, as demands on the individual to seek for and so discover what is the nature of cit and jnana. It is in this way that such religious language indirectly indicates the route to ultimate self-realization. For further details, see e.g. D. Sinha, 'Reflections on Some Key Terms in Advaita Vedanta', 'Language' in Indian Philosophy and Religion ed. H. G. Coward, (Waterloo, Ontario, 1978), pp.33-42.

By contrast, the Madhyamika position is far more sceptical about any positive value for language, for here language cannot even point indirectly to ultimate reality beyond itself because it is afflicted or diseased (kleśa). Language has no revelatory power, but is simply a conventional creation of man in his ego tainted bondage. Although they may have a certain practical utility, words are cognitively worthless, which means that they cannot reach ultimate reality. Yet even the Madhyamika philosopher uses language. Why does he do so? How can words help anyone reach enlightenment? The answer to this question is that right language can produce a catharsis in thinking and perceiving by reconditioning our expectations about the world.

Ordinary language (conventional or public language) usually increases attachment to things of the world and to our own identities, creating the illusion of permanence and with it generating the fear of losing what is really impermanent. The Madhyamika, on the other hand, recognizing the conventionality of ordinary language and its power to conceal from man the nature of reality as 'emptiness' (sunya), uses another form of language to effect spiritual change, thus helping the adept to see through the conditioning of customary language and so facilitating his release from the world which language habitually constructs. For the Madhyamika philosopher, what is wrong is not the world, for the world is already empty (and emptiness is not something set apart from the world or opposed to it, but a feature of it), but our language and thinking about the world, which first transforms it into something it is not and then produces attachment to this false construction which leads to dukkha. It is for this reason that the Madhyamika philosophy of language must be opposed to any theory of public language, such as that of van Buren, which insists that the parameters of experience extend only as far as the parameters of language, and there is no advantage for van Buren or others in arguing that the Madhyamika philosophers replace one form of language with another, since the purpose of Madhyamika dialectics is eventually to eliminate all language. This is the meaning of 'emptiness' for the Madhyamika philosophers, which is an experience of the world uncontaminated by any language. For further details, see M. Sprung, 'Non-cognitive Language in Madhyamika Buddhism'. 'Language' in Indian Philosophy and Religion ed. H. G. Coward pp.43-54, F. J. Streng, 'Language and Mystical Awareness', Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis ed. S. T. Katz pp.141-169, and

- Hsueh-Li Cheng, 'Nagarjuna, Kant and Wittgenstein: The San-Lun Madhyamika Exposition of Emptiness', Religious Studies, Vol17 (1981), pp.67-85.
119. W. T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy pp.194-306.
120. T. Hawkes, Metaphor (London, 1972), pp.1-2.
121. Ibid., pp.8-10.
122. I.A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (Oxford, 1936).
123. O. Barfield, 'Poetic Diction and Legal Fiction'. Essays Presented to Charles Williams (London, 1947).
124. S. TeSelle, Speaking in Parables (London, 1975) p.43.
125. Ibid., citing M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (London, 1953), pp.31-32.
126. Ibid., pp.44-45.
127. Ibid., p.49. Incidentally, this theory of metaphor is fundamentally opposed to the proposition suggested by W. T. Stace in Mysticism and Philosophy. In this work, he says:

....metaphorical language is only meaningful and justifiable if it is at least theoretically translatable into literal language; or if, at any rate, the thing or the experience for which the metaphor is supposed to be a symbol is before the mind as a presentation - whether there happens to exist a word for it or not. In other words, the user of the metaphor, or whoever is to understand it, must already know what it is meant to symbolize. The metaphor can only operate to bring before his mind what he already knows or has experienced. It cannot produce a knowledge or experience which he did not have before. If A is used as a metaphor for B, both A and B must be before the mind and also the resemblance between them which is the foundation of the metaphor. If this is not the case, we have what is usually called meaningless metaphor. p.293.

Clearly there are several confusions in this passage, such as the suggestion that there can be an experience or thing present before the mind for which there is no word. However, the main criticism of this passage (apart from its dependence on the theory of metaphor as a decoration of clear, literal language, and the assumption that descriptive language and the reality which it describes are

uncontaminated by one another) is that it can provide no explanation for the growth of knowledge and experience which depends on the effective use of metaphor, as TeSelle herself emphasizes. Stace in this passage offers no explanation as to what possible new information we might acquire through the use of metaphor, and thus what possible interest we might take in it, except as a form of decoration of that which we already fully cognize, and yet it is these comments which led him to reject Otto's metaphor theory (namely that there are resemblances between numinous and non-religious experiences) as unintelligible. Clearly Stace has not understood the creative function of metaphor which TeSelle has so much to say about and which, as I shall shortly demonstrate, is so important in the argument of The Idea of the Holy. In particular, he has not recognized the important function of analogies to numinous experience as attempts to give such undefined elusive experience greater definition and intelligibility, a function I shall soon describe.

128. Ibid., p.51.

129. Ibid., pp.52-53. For further details on the idea of 'naming through noticing', especially with the help of mythological images which function as metaphors, see E. Cassirer, Language and Myth trans. S. K. Langer, (New York, 1946).

130. Incidentally, another writer who makes some similar points about metaphor and its relation to experience is the philosopher Peter Munz in his When the Golden Bough Breaks (London, 1973), chapter 8. Munz has been interested in developing a hermeneutics of myth which sees mythological symbols, images and stories as expressions of feeling states. Feeling states, Munz argues, cannot be described literally (although they are a part or the whole of our inner life), and as such it is impossible to focus, or to concentrate, on them because

they have no definition. Although their presence is indubitable, their content can hardly be referred to, and in order to designate that content at all we have to point to an image, a symbol or a myth. Now such an image or symbol Munz identifies with what T.S. Eliot called the objective correlative. A person feels sad, but instead of saying he feels sad, he points to an image which designates his feeling such as a weeping willow. The weeping willow is the objective correlative, the image which gives definition and meaning to the feeling state. The feeling state, tenuous and unnameable as we experience it, is yet definable and a consciousness of something as soon as we relate it to an objective correlative, an object or image which might be called an 'expression' of a feeling state, although the term 'expression' is itself a metaphor (since we literally only express juice from an orange or liquid from a container).

To sum up so far, feeling states which are incapable of literal description are prevented from remaining mute, opaque, undefined and inchoate by objective correlatives. Furthermore, the more elaborate the metaphors or objective correlatives are, the more precise will be their expression (in the metaphorical sense) of feeling states, or the greater clarity or intelligibility feeling states will attain. Munz is aware that feelings, although they can be classified under a finite number of headings, are on closer inspection infinitely variable, and it is for this reason that he suggests that natural objects and events are inadequate objective correlatives for feeling states. They are equivocal, being capable of referring to several feelings at the same time (e.g. a tree in blossom), and thus produce a surfeit of emotion and are subject to what he calls the 'poverty effect'. By contrast, the more complex the metaphor or myth (which reshuffles things of the natural world into unnatural relationships)

is, the greater will be the surfeit of symbols and, consequently, the greater will be the ability of the objective correlative to procure a clearer consciousness of emotions and states of feeling. The 'abundance effect' which is created facilitates a sharpening of our awareness of emotions and feelings which would otherwise not be attainable. Finally, it is in the construction of typological series of myths, each series based on one particular feeling state, that Munz argues that objective correlatives can lead to more clarity and precision in our awareness of feeling states and so to a greater understanding of them. It is obvious that these observations have much relevance to our discussions concerning Otto's analogies to numinous experience (as we shall soon see), and it is also clear that even Munz's abundance effect can be discovered in Otto's suggestion that 'These two qualities, the daunting (tremendum) and the fascinating (fascinans), now combine in a strange harmony of contrasts....' to produce the 'dual character of numinous consciousness'. The Idea of the Holy p.31.

131. This seems to be one important conclusion to draw from the notorious passage on p.8, where Otto suggests that those who have had no religious experience should read no further. Clearly, in Otto's opinion there is an insurmountable communication problem concerning religious experience where there is no experience which the reader can share with the writer. Like other feelings, religious experience suffers in that no adequate account of it can be given in words, and consequently its quality cannot be imparted or transferred to others. For William James's similar ideas on ineffability, see The Varieties of Religious Experience (London, 1960), p.367.
132. Presumably, however, although Otto's psychology conveys no proper idea of numinous experience (by which I mean a mental picture), nevertheless, it does provide some guidance for those wishing to

learn properly to identify subsequent religious experiences but who have had no previous encounters with the numinous, although this guidance will be modest since the analogies for numinous experience are no more than that, there being a fundamental difference between all analogies and the moments of the numinous itself. It is that which separates the numinous from its analogues which prevents Otto's psychology of religion being any more than a partial guide for those without prior religious experience, who wish to know how to recognize religious experience should they subsequently encounter it. This explains Otto's scepticism about communicating with those who have had no previous religious experience.

133. Although Otto does not often use the term 'metaphor' in The Idea of the Holy, it is clear from his general argument that he treats his analogies for numinous experience as metaphors. (For an explicit identification of analogy with metaphor and figurative language, see pages 12, 34, 77 and 107-108.) Incidentally, I disagree with Janet Martin Soskice's judgement (Metaphor and Religious Language (Oxford, 1985), pp.64-66.) that metaphor and analogy should be clearly distinguished on the grounds that metaphor is a form of figurative language and analogy is not, and that analogy does not demand the kind of imaginative strain or create the kind of surprise or shock which is created by metaphorical language. Analogy is often just as concerned with creating new perspectives and expanding descriptive powers as other forms of metaphor.
134. For example, the idea of anger can only be properly understood as an analogy or metaphor for the tremendum moment of numinous experience once one has had some direct acquaintance with such experience. Only then can one with TeSelle assert that such a metaphor 'fits or seems right'.

135. Otto defines ideograms as symbolic statements, which refer to a unique content of (religious) feeling....to understand which, a man must already have had the experience himself, The Idea of the Holy, p.60.

and he observes, for example, on page 107 that 'wrath', 'fire' and 'fury' are excellent ideograms for the non-rational element of awefulness in numinous experience, the tremendum.

136. Ibid., pp.35 and 184.

137. P. Berger. The Social Reality of Religion. (London, 1969).

138. Clearly it is here that we can see Otto's debt to the poetic 'raid on the inarticulate'. Just as poets might struggle with language in order to deepen and generally enrich our understanding of the 'aroma of coffee', by attempting through the use of metaphor to give it greater definition, so Otto similarly speaks at 'the edges of language' in order to enrich our understanding of numinous experience. Just as the poet might be continually struggling to eliminate the present limits of our language concerning the aroma of coffee, attempting not only to clearly distinguish this aroma from other burning and cooking smells, but also to indicate more precisely what is the nature of the satisfaction or pleasure that it gives, so Otto also is struggling to extend the limits of what we can say about the experience of the numinous, by distinguishing it from other elusive feelings and yet attempting to find as many metaphors for it as possible. There are many ways to numinous experience, as there are many ways to other elusive feelings, as is demonstrated by Munz's concept of the 'abundance effect' described in note 130. It is the 'abundance effect' which gives greater definition to shapeless feelings, an example of which can be found in Otto's assertion that the tremendum and the fascinans 'combine in a strange harmony of contrasts...(to produce the) dual character of numinous conscious-

ness'. The Idea of the Holy p.31. This 'dual character' of numinous experience is a fine example of Otto's struggling to extend what we are able to say about the numinous.

139. Notice, however, that in this last remark Otto appears to suggest that the process of association of analogous feelings, which is responsible for stimulating numinous experience, will not operate in the reader of The Idea of the Holy who has no previous direct acquaintance with religious experience. Incidentally, that Otto's emphasis on remembering numinous experiences may be influenced by Plato's doctrine of recollection is suggested by several references to resemblances to numinous experience functioning to remind a person of what the numinous is like. That Otto's ideas on analogies to numinous experience are intimately related to the notion of recollection of the numinous, anamnesis, is confirmed by several passages in The Idea of the Holy. See for example, pp.65 and 143-144.
140. Ibid., p.77.
141. Ibid., p.26.
142. Ibid., pp.107-108.
143. Aquinas's theory of analogy is developed in part I, question 13, of his Summa Theologica. For further introductory discussion concerning the Thomistic doctrine of analogy, see B. Davies, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford, 1982), chap. 2; C. Stephen Evans, Philosophy of Religion (Leicester, 1985), pp.154-156.
144. For discussion concerning the extensive literature around the kind of theistic argument which attempts to explore analogies between man and God, and in particular between the being of man and the being of God, see F.B. Dilley, 'Is Myth Indispensable?' Monist, No.50 (1966),

pp.579-592. For further discussion concerning the Thomist Analogia Entis, see E.L. Mascall, Existence and Analogy (London, 1949) and D. Emmet, The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking (London, 1945).

145. Of course many critics have attacked this claim as meaningless, and therefore valueless. See, for example, W. Blackstone, The Problem of Religious Knowledge (New York, 1963), pp.121-122; P. Hayner, 'Analogical Predication', The Journal of Philosophy 55 (25 September 1958), pp.855-62. However, it is reasonable to respond to such critics by pointing out that although Aquinas's analogy theory implies that we lack a clear and precise understanding of God and His characteristics, there is nothing incoherent from a religious point of view in claiming that God is in some ways mysterious. The critical question is whether this Thomistic claim adds to God's mystery or detracts from it, and opinions among theologians are divided concerning this issue.

146. However, one important qualification needs to be made to this judgement, which arises out of Otto's discussion concerning the schematization of the mysterium moment of numinous experience. (See The Idea of the Holy, pp.140-141). Otto observes that whereas human love, knowledge and goodness etc. are all relative, similar qualities applied to God are absolute, and that it is such absolute 'rational' attributes to God which schematize the mysterium moment of numinous experience. Moreover, he claims concerning these absolute 'rational' attributes of God that:

Our understanding can only compass the relative. That which is in contrast absolute, though it may in a sense be thought, cannot be thought home, thought out; it is within the reach of our conceiving, but it is beyond the grasp of our comprehension. p.141.

Clearly this language (reflecting the profound influence of the Friesian concept of Glaube) must remind us of features of the Thomistic doctrine of analogy which Otto elsewhere fails to discuss;

and it might even be thought that it should invite the criticism from Otto cited above of excessive rationalization of religion, which tends to conceal the mysterium moment of numinous experience.

Nevertheless, Otto's language about the absoluteness of rational attributes of God schematizing numinous experience should not lead us to identify his position with the Thomistic doctrine of analogy for the following reason. That is that Otto's interest in the absoluteness of the rational attributes of God has an eminently practical religious purpose for which there is no place in the more metaphysically oriented Thomistic account of religious language. That is to evoke the mysterium moment of numinous experience according to the law of association of analogous feelings, with which, as we have previously shown, schematization should be identified. Indeed, it is because of the similarity between the absoluteness of the rational attributes of God and the mysterium moment of numinous experience ('The absolute exceeds our power to comprehend; the mysterious wholly eludes it.') that the believer is able to move from the experience of the former to the experience of the latter. Thus we can conclude that Otto's interest in the absoluteness of the rational attributes of the deity should not be confused with the more metaphysical preoccupations of the Thomists.

147. For further discussion concerning this issue, see the very old, but still very fine, study of J.A. Stewart, The Myths of Plato (London, 1905).

148. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp.94-95.

149. Moreover, because Otto uncritically follows Plato in assuming that the religious interpretation of reality should be sharply distinguished from the scientific, he does not consider whether theological and scientific language might have anything in common. In particular, he does not consider the possibility that scientific

language might be just as metaphorical as he conceives theological language to be. For some consideration of the recent literature comparing the use of metaphor in theological and scientific language, see S. McFague, Metaphorical Theology (London, 1983); I. Barbour, Myths, Models and Paradigms (London, 1974); I.T. Ramsey, Models and Mystery (London, 1974); J.M. Soskice, Metaphor and Religious Language (Oxford, 1985).

150. I.T. Ramsey, Religious Language (London, 1957), chap.2.
151. I.T. Ramsey, Christian Empiricism (London, 1974) p.74.
152. I.T. Ramsey, Religious Language, p.69.
153. That is to declare (with Otto) that every concrete claim about God's nature must be qualified in some way.
154. Incidentally, it is interesting to compare this account of 'models' and 'qualifiers' with Paul Tillich's claim that all theological statements, apart from the proposition that God is Being-itself, are symbolic. Tillich's symbolic interpretation of theological language is, in fact, remarkably similar to Ramsey's understanding of religious language, as the following reflection concerning theological language demonstrates:

There can be no doubt that any concrete assertion about God must be symbolic, for a concrete assertion is one which uses a segment of finite experience in order to say something about Him. It transcends the content of this segment, although it also includes it. The segment of finite reality which becomes the vehicle of a concrete assertion about God is affirmed and negated at the same time. It becomes a symbol, for a symbolic expression is one whose proper meaning is negated by that to which it points. And yet it also is affirmed by it, and this affirmation gives the symbolic expression an adequate basis for pointing beyond itself.

Systematic Theology, Vol.I (Chicago, 1951), p.239.

155. I.T. Ramsey, Christian Empiricism, pp.70-71.
156. See pp.88-98.
157. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.26.

158. Ibid., P.28. Incidentally, although this passage, as well as the previous one (note 157), specifically refer to a numinous object rather than numinous experience, it is clear from several other references to numinous experience being 'wholly other' (e.g. The Idea of the Holy, pp.27, 29, 30, 59, 63) that Otto intends these observations to apply to numinous experience as well. For further discussion about the connection between the ineffability claims concerning the numinous object and those concerning numinous experience, see my notes 7, 21, 22, 23 and 25 above.
159. Ibid., pp.25 and 29-30.
160. Incidentally, it is instructive to recognize the similarities between this mystical theory of language and the theories of language of many Indian schools of mysticism referred to in note 118. There are obvious parallels between Otto's language about the mysterium and Advaita Vedanta and Madhyamika language about the highest states of consciousness.
161. Clearly this distinction between the tremendum and the fascinans moments of numinous experience, on the one hand, and the mysterium, on the other, might appear to support a familiar distinction between mystical and devotional forms of religious experience. However, I shall argue in the next chapter that although Otto recognized that numinous experience could take many forms, he explicitly rejected the idea that mystical and devotional forms of religion should be contrasted with one another, and insisted on a continuity between all forms or moments of religious or numinous experience.
162. R. Bambrough, 'Intuition and the Inexpressible', S.T. Katz, Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis pp.200-201. & 206-213.
163. W.J. Wainwright, Mysticism.

164. We must remember that mystical experience is composed not only of the mysterium moment of numinous experience but of other numinous moments as well. Although the mysterium moment of numinous experience is likely to be the most important constituent of mystical experience, the fascinans and even the tremendum moments may contribute to such experience.

Notes - Chapter IV

1. This theory of the irreducibility of religious life and experience is treated fully in chapter V of this essay but it is worth noting now that it has recently been defended by several philosophers of religion who have attempted to respond to Wittgenstein's ideas on language games. What has come to be known as the 'autonomist position' with respect to religious discourse is especially associated with D.Z. Phillips, who argues that religious beliefs must be evaluated in strictly religious terms because they have a different logical status to non-religious beliefs. If, then, one wishes to ask about the validity or appropriateness of a particular religious belief, the criteria for assessment must be religious, that is referring to the particular beliefs of a particular religious tradition, and it would be incoherent to question the validity of religious beliefs in general, since to do so would be to seek to invoke standards of judgement external to all religion. Indeed, to ask for a justification of religion in general is like asking for a justification of science in general. Rather, the criteria of intelligibility of religious discourse are provided by individual concrete religious communities which define the appropriate public standards for judging the truth and adequacy of religious doctrines and activities. Religion ultimately is a separate form of life and religious discourse a separate language game. For further details, see D.Z. Phillips, 'Religion and Epistemology', Australasian Journal of Philosophy, vol.XLIV, No.3, p.316; D.Z. Phillips, Faith and Philosophical Enquiry (London, 1970), p.4. J.A. Barrie, 'The

Autonomy of Religious Discourse', Sophia, vol.19, No.2 (July, 1980), pp.34-41 and P. Sherry, Religion, Truth and Language-games (London, 1977), chapter 2.

2. Incidentally, this provides those philosophers such as Phillips some grounds for claiming that words may not possess the same meaning when used in a religious context as when they are used in an ordinary factual context.

3. On p.35 Otto says:

Everywhere salvation is something whose meaning is often very little apparent, is even wholly obscure, to the 'natural' man; on the contrary, so far as he understands it, he tends to find it highly tedious and uninteresting, sometimes downright distasteful and repugnant to his nature, as he would, for instance, find the beatific vision of God in our own doctrine of salvation, or the henosis of 'God all in all' among the mystics. 'So far as he understands', be it noted; but then he does not understand it in the least. Because he lacks the inward teaching of the Spirit, he must needs confound what is offered to him as an expression for the experience of salvation - a mere ideogram of what is felt, whose import it hints at by analogy - with 'natural' concepts, as though it were itself just such an one. And so he wanders every farther from the goal.

4. Although there is evidence for this rational apriorism, as I have demonstrated in note 93 of chapter II. There I drew attention to Anthony Flew's criticism of religious believers, who will acknowledge no event or experience as evidence either of the absence of the love of God, or of the non-existence of God. Of course, not all religious believers behave in this way (in refusing to allow empirical experience to challenge their religious experience and belief), but it is clear that those who do regard their religious beliefs as unfalsifiable (and there are still many of them today) provide the kind of evidence we are seeking for Otto's rational apriorism. For further discussion concerning this issue, see also note 114 of chapter II.

5. Among the variety of factors which have led phenomenologists of religion to ignore the important intellectual currents of idealism in much religious life are several philosophical movements which have influenced phenomenology of religion to a greater or lesser degree. These include positivism, pragmatism, and most important of all the philosophical phenomenology of Husserl which insists on 'bracketing out' all theoretical presuppositions which contaminate or obscure pure or 'raw' experiences. Regardless of the difficulty of locating any completely uninterpreted experience, Husserl's quest for such experience completely free of any intellectual context is anyway perhaps the most important factor which has led later phenomenologists of religion to overlook the apriorism in Otto's work.
6. Incidentally, this issue is quite separate from another issue to be discussed later in this chapter, namely, Otto's proposal that the progressive schematization of the numinous in the evolutionary history of religions provides the criterion by which we should evaluate different religions, and by which we shall inevitably come to the conclusion that in Christianity religion has for the first time found the perfect expression of holiness.
7. To see the value of 'divination of the objective teleology of history' as a phenomenological concept, we must recognize that, as has already been implied, divination is not a religious activity which should be confined to Christianity. Not only can it be found in the other western monotheistic religious traditions, but it can also be found in Indian religions as well.
8. G. van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation trans. J.E. Turner, (Mass, 1967), pp.671-689. See also E. Sharpe, Comparative Religion (London, 1975), pp.229-235; J.G. Arapura, Religion as Anxiety and Tranquillity (The Hague, 1972), pp.47-51.

9. For a useful essay in English on the theology of van der Leeuw and its relation to his phenomenology, see J. Waardenburg, Reflections on the Study of Religion (The Hague, 1978).

Incidentally, of course strictly speaking Otto himself cannot be called a phenomenologist of religion, because he did not speak of himself as one. Indeed, towards the end of his life he even criticised the phenomenological standpoint, arguing that it interprets religious materials from a non-religious perspective. (See R. Otto 'In the Sphere of the Holy', The Hibbert Journal, 31, (1932-33), p.416). Nevertheless, in spite of this, his methodological observations concerning the study of religions - and especially his impassioned opposition to reductionism in the study of religion - have been so influential on subsequent phenomenology of religion, that I consider that it is justifiable to regard Otto as a phenomenologist of religion in all but name. Indeed, it is significant that although Otto did not acknowledge the work of the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, Husserl himself regarded Otto's The Idea of the Holy as a masterly application of the phenomenological method to religion. (See J. Macquarrie, Twentieth Century Religious Thought (London, 1971, p.211).

10. One example of such a distortion appears in Otto's insensitive treatment of Islam. See The Idea of the Holy, p.75.

However, we should be clear in Otto's case why it is that a scholar's religious sensitivity, which has been shaped by his cultural tradition, may distort the religious phenomena he studies and what precisely are the real limitations of Otto's religious epistemology. When we observe that a scholar's religious tradition may prevent him using his own previous experience of the numinous to help him to identify numinous experience in other religious traditions which he studies, we mean that expressions of numinous

experience will vary from culture to culture and the scholar's expectations about appropriate (correct, adequate) expressions of the numinous (defined by his religious tradition) are therefore bound to affect his ability to recognize the appearance of the numinous in other cultures. The scholar, confused by his own religious tradition because of his cultural distance from many of the religious traditions he studies, is likely to misinterpret many of the legitimate expressions of the numinous in other religious traditions as expressions of non-religious experiences (e.g. aesthetic experiences) and may even misinterpret expressions of non-religious experiences as signals of numinous experience. (Much of this is due of course to the scholar's lack of familiarity with the main principles defining aesthetic experience in the religious traditions he studies.)

However, from all this we should not conclude that numinous experience in other cultures is therefore never accessible to the scholar's religious sensitivity (albeit indirectly through its means of expression), but rather only that the scholar's attempts to locate the numinous in other religious traditions are often vulnerable to error. This is a much more qualified criticism of Otto's religious epistemology than most of his critics would advocate. Contrary to those phenomenologists of religion who argue against the use of any religious subjectivity at all in the study of religion (such as those I shall shortly discuss), I propose that the difficulties raised by the scholar's religious tradition for his use of religious subjectivity in the study of religions should not lead us to reject Otto's claims for numinous sensibility completely. Numinous sensibility has a place (albeit a qualified one) in the study of other religious traditions, but it needs to be recognized (as Otto

generally did not) that it must be prepared to co-operate with, even be corrected by, the unfamiliar, often difficult to recognize, religious testimony of those it studies.

Moreover, it must be emphasized that Otto is mistaken in thinking that numinous sensibility allows the scholar to understand the religious experience of another tradition as though he were a member of that tradition. What is immediately accessible to the scholar is not the actual numinous experience itself but only its means of expression. Thus, whatever the status of the scholar's understanding of religious experiences outside his own tradition, it is clear that there is a vast distance between him and those experiences which no numinous sensibility can eliminate. In the language of the main text, Otto's understanding of religious phenomena, in spite of the assistance of numinous sensibility, remains that of a religious outsider rather than a religious insider, albeit an outsider who is much closer to the religious traditions he studies than the scholar who insists on approaching them with complete detachment. For further discussion of this topic see note 11 below.

11. This is a position which was adopted by (among others) one of van der Leeuw's most important teachers, the Norwegian phenomenologist of religion, W.B. Kristensen in The Meaning of Religion trans. J.B. Carman, (The Hague, 1960).

However, once again, we need to make clear the real meaning of this conclusion and its limitations with regard to the search for understanding of religious experience in other cultures. What the phenomenologist of religion obtains through ordinary empirical research may be the undistorted reports of religious experience of religious insiders, but this, we must emphasize, does not mean that he acquires the understanding of inner religious life of a religious

insider. This is impossible, since the actual religious experience of another tradition is never immediately accessible to anyone outside that tradition. Only the reports of religious experience are directly accessible to the scholar and these may do as much to conceal as to reveal the nature of that experience. Indeed, the scholar who fails to recognize that reports of religious experience are not the same as those religious experiences themselves pays a high price for his ignorance. Not only does he fail to recognize that his understanding must be that of a religious outsider; he also, as a consequence of this failure to identify the distance between himself and the religious materials he studies, fails to recognize the need for interpreting the reports of religious experience which are the result of his empirical research. He assumes that the reports of religious experience reveal as much as the scholar can understand or as much as he needs to understand. The reports are accepted as the texts beyond which the scholar has no need to go and with which he can be fully satisfied.

Yet it is such a position which leads the scholar to reject the need for religious sensitivity in the study of religion. It is for this reason, for instance, that Otto's use of religious sensitivity in the study of religion is rejected. It is assumed that religious sensitivity adds something false to the true accounts which are the product of empirical research, whereas I would argue that the reports of religious experience which are the result of empirical research are incomplete and therefore invite interpretation by the scholar's religious sensitivity in order to complete them. Of course, this is a hazardous road, but if the scholar refuses to take it, then he may unwittingly incorporate into his scholarship a methodological reductionism which obscures the depths, and indeed the complexities and subtleties of religious experience, which is what we shall later

find, for instance, in Jacques Waardenburg's decision to confine the phenomenological study of religion to the scientific study of religious intentions without the intervention of any scholarly religious sensitivity. (Incidentally, it must be emphasized that in surrendering the scholar's neutrality in the study of religious experience, it is not intended that the argument here should contradict that in the main text, namely that phenomenology of religion should be concerned with precise and impartial scientific recording of empirical data. Rather, it is being suggested that this scientific scholarship represents only the first step towards the phenomenological understanding of religious experience, and that for the next step, the use of religious sensitivity, the scholar needs among other qualities a certain courage and a preparedness to experiment with the religious materials presented to him, in the hope of developing a more sophisticated and sensitive understanding of them as a religious outsider.)

In the light of our general observations about the nature of phenomenology of religion above, we are now able to offer an account of how Otto's claims for numinous sensibility in the study of religion should be understood and to suggest what such an account can offer to the phenomenology of religion which is of value. As we have already pointed out in note 10 above, Otto is mistaken in thinking that through his numinous sensibility he has direct access to numinous experiences in other religious traditions. It is clear from Otto's religious epistemology itself that what is immediately accessible to the scholar outside a religious tradition is not the actual numinous experiences of religious believers but only their means of expression and accounts of religious experience which are composed of analogies and ideograms for numinous experiences; and because of this we can conclude that Otto's understanding of

religious experiences in other religious traditions must be, as is the case with all phenomenologists of religion, that of a religious outsider. However, such a conclusion, as we observed previously, does not mean that there is no place for numinous sensibility in the study of other religious traditions. The purpose of Otto's numinous sensibility is twofold: firstly, to help the scholar, through an awareness of means of expression of the numinous in his own religious tradition, to recognise means of expression of the numinous in other traditions; and secondly, to help him to recognize the numinous in the reports of religious experience, which, after all, are only capable of referring to it indirectly. When we declare that through the scholar's own numinous experience he can approach the empirical materials of other traditions he studies more sensitively, that is with greater understanding, we mean that because of his own numinous experience he knows how to look at, or what to look for, in the concrete records of religious experience under scrutiny. It is in this way that on the one hand he can develop the skill of recognizing means of expression of the numinous in the religious traditions he studies, and on the other he can reach past the reports of religious experience (consisting of analogies and ideograms for numinous experience) to discover experiences of the numinous which lie behind them.

However, we must emphasize that the route taken here to numinous experience is one of inference (based on the premise that similar causes produce similar effects) from what is visible, the reports and means of expressions of numinous experience, to what is invisible in other religious traditions, although visible in the scholar's own, the numinous experience itself. And of course, this means that the search for numinous experience is a hazardous enterprise, not only for the reasons discussed in note 10 above, (the mistaken

identification of means of expression of the numinous in other cultures), but also because the scholar may fail to correctly identify evidence for numinous experience in reports of religious experience as a result of the lack of common language between him and the religious traditions he studies. The difficulties of understanding reports of religious experience which are created by the scholar's failure to translate the languages of other cultures into his own without distortion must be acknowledged. It must be recognized that the scholar may well mistakenly impose his own completely inappropriate interpretations on the reports of religious experience he studies, simply because he has failed to appreciate the distance between his own religious language and the religious language of the other cultures under scrutiny. This is a hermeneutical problem (not just a philological problem) which is not easy to resolve; and it is a problem which is not confined to Otto's work, nor to other studies of other religions which insist on using the scholar's religious sensitivity. This hermeneutical problem is at the heart of all studies of other cultures. Yet we should not be unduly discouraged by this observation. Much progress has been made, and continues to be made, in the understanding of other cultures and their religious traditions. We should simply recognize that the understanding of other cultures is a slow, tentative, even painful affair, in which the scholar at every step of the way acknowledges that his enterprise is vulnerable to error. It is only such general observations as these that, I am arguing, should govern our attitude to the scholar's use of his religious sensitivity in the study of reports of religious experience of other cultures.

So far as Otto is concerned, we must recognise that numinous sensibility must be used with caution and that understanding of the numinous in other cultures is bound to be a slow, piecemeal process.

Yet there will be, with sufficient study of concrete reports of religious experience as well as religious introspection, progressive recognition of the numinous in other cultures. Varieties of evidence for numinous experience, or the absence of it, including analogies and ideograms for numinous experience, references to what is uncanny, and means of expression of the numinous will be collected and sorted, in order that conflicting forms of evidence can be assessed and the scholar's intuition of the numinous in particular cases can be confirmed or disconfirmed. (For example, a scholar may fail to recognize a means of expression of the numinous, until he discovers elsewhere, perhaps by accident, a reference to what is uncanny, or an ideogram for the tremendum element of the numinous. In this case, he is forced to change his assessment of the evidence in the light of later conflicting evidence.) It is the quantity of evidence from the history of religions which, in spite of all the cases of mistaken interpretation of reports of religious experience and means of expression of the numinous, seems to manifest, or at least can be interpreted as demonstrating, many, if not always all, the qualities of the numinous which suggests to the scholar that his intuition of the numinous generally has some foundation in fact. His intuition may sometimes be faulty, but the gradual accumulation of evidence for the numinous gives him a growing confidence that the concept of numinous experience is genuinely descriptive of a distinctive form of experience which is irreducible to any other. For further comments concerning the coherence of the concept of numinous experience, see my discussion later in this chapter concerning the difficulty of distinguishing between numinous and sublime experience and my enquiry in the next chapter into the explanatory power of the concept of the numinous.

12. Incidentally, for further discusison concerning the study of religion from the inside and the outside and the status of religious insiders and outsiders, see W.L. King, Introduction to Religion (New York, 1954), pp.1-6.
13. G. van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, pp.23-51.
14. For further details, see M. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York, 1957), trans. W.R. Trask; The Myth of the Eternal Return (New York, 1954), trans. W.R. Trask; Patterns in Comparative Religion (London, 1958), trans. R. Sheed; Myth and Reality (London, 1964).
15. For further details, see M. Eliade, The Quest (Chicago, 1969), pp.1-11. Notice, by the way, that in this collection of essays on p.23, Eliade suggests that Otto illustrates in what sense the history of religions can play a role in the renewal of contemporary Western culture. For Otto's views on this issue, see Religious Essays, A Supplement to The Idea of the Holy chapter XIV which discusses questions concerning an inter-religious league in 1931. For some discussion concerning those who are critical of scholars who insist that the academic study of religions should produce some non-academic 'spiritual' or political benefits, see the comments of E.J. Sharpe in Comparative Religion chapters 11 & 12.
16. The most lucid discussion of this difficult dimension of Eliade's hermeneutical offering is to be found in his 'Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism', The History of Religions, edited by M. Eliade and J.M. Kitagawa, (Chicago, 1959), pp.86-107. See also 'Symbolism and History', M. Eliade, Images and Symbols trans. P. Mairet, (New York, 1969), pp.151-178.
17. Representative of criticisms of Eliade's methodological position are J.A. Saliba, 'Homo Religiosus' in Mircea Eliade (The Hague, 1977); J.A. Saliba, 'Eliade's View of Primitive Man - Some Anthropological Reflections', Religion, Vol.6, Part 2, Autumn 1976; I. Strenski,

'Mircea Eliade, Some Theoretical Problems', The Theory of Myth edited by A. Cunningham, (London, 1973), pp.40-78; D. Allen, Structure and Creativity in Religion (The Hague, 1978); U. Bianchi, The History of Religions (The Hague, 1975), pp.184-190.

18. M. Eliade, The Quest, p.23.
19. J. Waardenburg, Reflections on the Study of Religion (The Hague, 1978), part 1. Incidentally Waardenburg's interest in religious intentions is obviously influenced by the thinking of Brentano who claims that all human behaviour is intentional.
20. In the light of our comments in note 11 above, we can now see that Waardenburg's decision to confine the phenomenological study of religion to the scientific study of religious intentions without the intervention of any scholarly religious sensitivity is bound to create the methodological difficulties described here. Waardenburg believes that his attempt to study the religious intentions of other traditions with complete impartiality is the way to bring these traditions into focus and to spotlight what is most important in them. But he forgets that no scholar is free from selective interests, which are bound to screen out some aspects of religious phenomena under scrutiny which are important. It is for this reason that he fails to recognize that his own methodological position can be seen to be just as arbitrary, just as capable of falsifying religious materials, as the views of scholars who insist on using religious sensitivity in the study of other traditions.
21. N. Smart, The Phenomenon of Religion (London, 1973), chapter 1.
22. It is such a reduction of phenomenology of religion to social scientific or theological study which I take Paul Heelas to be advocating in his criticism of Smart's concept of man as meaning maker and his interpretation of phenomenology of religion in 'Some Problems with Religious Studies', Religion, Vol.8, Spring 1978,

pp.1-14. However, as will be apparent from my previous discussion concerning numinous sensibility in the study of religion in note 11 above, I reject Heelas's criticism of Smart's interpretation of phenomenology of religion, because I regard Smart's position as close to, although not identical with, my own. I share with Smart the belief that the phenomenological contemplation of religion is an independent activity of an outsider to a religious tradition, but an outsider who is much closer to the religious materials he studies than either the detached and often remote agnostic or the passionate, but inevitably biased, Christian. Where I differ from Smart is in the use of numinous sensibility, for which there seems to be no place in his approach to the phenomenological study of religions.

23. In Smart's major work, Reasons and Faiths (London, 1958), there is already evidence of this, particularly in his desire to identify the numinous, mystical and incarnational strands of religion in different religious traditions.
24. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.7, 50, 51-52, 80, 113.
25. See The Idea of the Holy chapter VIII and Religious Essays, A Supplement to 'The Idea of the Holy', Part 1.
26. See, for example, India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted (London, 1930), pp.14, 122; The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man (London, 1938), pp.50, 128, and Mysticism, East and West (London, 1932), pp.34-36, 207-210, where Otto finds the augustum in the mysticism of both Eckhart and Sankara. Notice also that in later editions of Das Heilige (that is the 1963 edition (p.67) and the 1947 edition (p.63) but not the 1922 edition and not the English translation) Otto claims that the augustum is the non-rational ground and source of all possible objective values. See J.P. Reeder Jr., 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy', Religion and Morality ed. by G. Outka and J.P. Reeder Jr.

(New York, 1973), p.282. This is a theme that Otto was particularly concerned with during the final years of his working life, and in 1931-1932 he wrote some articles which explored the relations between religious value and other types of value which are as follows:-

'Wert, Würde und Recht', Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Vol.12

(1931), pp.1-67; 'Wertgesetz und Autonomie' ZTK Vol.12 2 (1931)

pp.85-110; 'Das Gefühl der Verantwortlichkeit', Zeitschrift für

Religionspsychologie, Vol.14 (1931), pp.49-57 & 109-36; 'Das

Schuldgefühl und seine Implikationen,' ZRP, Vol.14 (1931), pp.1-19;

'Pflicht und Neigung', Kant-Studien, Vol.37 (1932), pp.49-90;

Freiheit und Notwendigkeit, (Tubingen, 1940). A translation of

these articles into English is presently being prepared by Jack

Boozer of Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

27. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy chapter XVII. For reservations concerning the progressive schematization of the numinous, see H.W. Turner, Commentary on a Shortened Version of 'The Idea of the Holy', A Guide for Students (Aberdeen, 1974), p.45.
28. Ibid., chapter XIII.
29. Ibid., p.110.
30. Ibid., pp.75, 110, 111, 136, 137, 139-140, 141-142.
31. Eg. A. Race, Christians and Religious Pluralism (London, 1983); J. Hick and B. Hebblethwaite, Christianity and Other Religions (London, 1980); J. Hick, God Has Many Names (London, 1980); E.J. Sharpe, Faith Meets Faith (London, 1977); O.C. Thomas, Attitudes Toward Other Religions (London, 1969); G. Parrinder, Comparative Religion (London, 1976).
32. J.M. Farquhar, The Crown of Hinduism (London, 1913); E.J. Sharpe, Not to Destroy but to Fulfil (Lund, 1965); E.J. Sharpe, Faith Meets Faith (London, 1977).

33. Incidentally, in his The Philosophy of Religion (London, 1931), trans. E.B. Dicker, Otto makes one tantalizing reference to evaluating non-Christian religions through religious feeling, that is through the Ahndung of Fries and De Wette, which would offer another form of theology of world religions. On p.204 he says:

The principle of Christianity, the uniqueness of the 'spirit of Christ' and of the 'being in Christ' is just as incapable as the principle of other religions of being pinned down with a hasty catchword; it is to be understood in the history of its origin and morphological development, by 'feeling' like all else that is individual. To grasp this principle and to reproduce it, as well as can be done - this is Christian Theology....

While this idea has not been explicitly developed in The Idea of the Holy, it is reasonable to suppose that it could be, by extending what is already a rich and complex concept of divination to the appreciation and evaluation of non-Christian religions.

34. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp.65 ff.
35. Ibid., chapter VII.
36. Ibid., pp.40-42.
37. This was Davidson's problem. See Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion (Princeton, New Jersey, 1947), pp.189-192.
38. It is difficulties such as these which lead Otto's critics to conclude that his theory of the numinous does not depend upon some concrete, unique, universally recognizable, religious experience, and that it is, therefore, not a concept which should be used in scientific studies of religion. It is some such difficulty that E. Evans-Pritchard claimed to find in all theories of religious awe such as Marett's and he would surely object to Otto's theory of the numinous for the same reason. See Theories of Primitive Religion (London, 1965) p.44. For further discussion concerning this issue of the explanatory power of the concept of the numinous, see Chp.V of this essay.

39. However, it is worth remarking that it appears to be easier for the scholar outside a religious tradition to identify the numinous expressed by art, where its means of expression is what Otto calls the magical, rather than the sublime. Otto speaks of the magical as a suppressed and crude form of the numinous which great art purifies. Like the sublime, it excites, as well as expresses, the numinous, but must not be confused with it. Yet Otto speaks of the spell created by the magical in art, which surely reminds us of the uncanny nature of the numinous. The magical appears to be qualitatively much more similar to the numinous than the sublime, and it is for this reason that I suggest that it may provide a more reliable indication of numinous experience than the sublime. This impression is created in particular by Otto's discussion of Chinese Buddhist art of the Lung-Men Caves of the T'ang Dynasty on p.65. There he says:

This numinous-magical character is specially noticeable in the strangely impressive figures of the Buddha in early Chinese art; and here too it affects the observer independently of 'ideas', i.e. without his knowing anything about the speculative doctrines of Buddhism.

Notice here, in particular, the references to the 'numinous-magical' and the 'strangely impressive,' surely indications that Otto does not regard early Chinese figures of the Buddha as expressive of the sublime. For further discussion concerning the magical in art, see pp.66-68.

40. For some discussion of this distinction and of what Otto means by the a priori, see chapter I of this essay.
41. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp.177-178.
42. I disagree with the attempt of the philosopher of religion, Donald Crosby, to demonstrate that there is in fact no inconsistency between this difficult passage and the argument in the remainder of the text of The Idea of the Holy (See Interpretive Theories of Religion (The Hague, 1981), pp.152-153). He argues that the purpose of the

passage is to distinguish between the spiritually most valuable religious experiences brought into being by the religiously innovative creators of new religious systems and radical new departures in existing systems (what Otto called prophets) and the less valuable religious experiences discussed in the previous chapters of the text in which the innate religious predispositions of religious people are not brought into full play. He proposes that whereas the religious a priori capacities of men may

be stimulated by appropriate outward circumstances, such as the rustling of the wind in the trees in a deserted place on a dark night, or the encounter with something uncommonly strange and bewildering, these capacities must...await arousal by the presence and teachings of the religious geniuses of history, if they are to be developed to their fullest.

However, the problem with this interpretation of the difficult passage in question is that Crosby provides no evidence for it. That is to say, he provides no evidence (apart from the passage in question itself) that Otto did indeed regard the religious experiences he discussed throughout The Idea of the Holy as failing to bring the innate religious predispositions of people into full play, because they were not precipitated by prophets and other more highly endowed spiritual individuals. In the absence of such evidence, I regard my own treatment of the difficult passage in question as more plausible than Crosby's. Incidentally, for some discussion concerning Otto's position on the question whether Christians believe in God because they have personally encountered Him rather than because they rely on prophets who have met Him, see D. Bastow, 'Otto and Numinous Experience', Religious Studies, Vol.12 (1976) p.166. However, Bastow seems only to have an incomplete understanding of Otto's position. Although he rightly points out that Otto, in focusing his attention on the numinous sense of presence, ignores the experience of many, if not most, Christians,

for whom belief in God does not rest on any kind of direct meeting with Him, but instead involves thinking of many experiences such as going to church and taking part in the sacraments as a form of divine encounter, he argues wrongly, and I think paradoxically, that Otto believes that Christians rely on the authority of the prophets who did meet God for their belief in Him, a position which, while suggested in the ambiguous passage of the last chapter of The Idea of the Holy just quoted, clearly cannot be reconciled with the general argument in the remainder of the text.

43. F. Heiler, Prayer (New York, 1932), trans. S. McComb, chapter VI and later chapters.
44. Within recent phenomenological studies of religion can be found countless statements of what is now a proverbial distinction between devotional (often identified with numinous experience) and mystical experience. Typical is Peter Berger's collection of essays, The Other Side of God (New York, 1981), which explores a polarity between world religions based upon a distinction between two types of religious experience, that which he calls 'confrontation' and that which he refers to as 'interiority'. Another writer who assumes an irreducible distinction between devotional and mystical forms of experience is W.J. Wainwright in Mysticism (Brighton, 1981) pp.6 & 42. His list of differences between mystical and devotional religious experiences reflects Heiler's original taxonomy of religious experience, as well as the consensus among more recent scholars about the need to distinguish between what they see as two phenomenologically distinct forms of experience. Wainwright's arguments for distinguishing devotional from mystical experiences are as follows:-

- (I) There is an experience of unity at the heart of mystical experience, which is to be contrasted with a sense of absolute otherness, distance or difference between man and the deity which is fundamental in devotional religious experience.
- (II) There are well established and familiar techniques for obtaining certain types of mystical experience, whereas devotional experiences tend to occur spontaneously. Experiences of confrontation with the deity are not generally deliberately sought, but are obtained without conscious preparation.
- (III) Mystics tend to describe the object of their experience in impersonal language (light, fire, darkness, the One, the Opposite Shore, Being itself, Emptiness, Nothingness etc.), whereas those who have had devotional experiences tend to describe the deity in personal terms. They regard it as a will confronting their will and address it as a 'thou'. Incidentally, I have been using the term devotional religious experience in the context of this discussion of Wainwright's distinction between two general types of religious experience, but Wainwright actually identifies devotional religious experience with numinous experience while arguing that Otto's identification of mystical with numinous experience is mistaken.

45. Even so discriminating a scholar as J. Lindblom mechanically repeats the received wisdom about distinctions between prophetic and mystical literature. The Prophets do not seek mystical or visionary experiences which, when they occur, are purely incidental. Rather, their primary concern is for history as the stage of divine and human action. See Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford, 1962), pp.299-311. This position is particularly surprising, seeing how much Lindblom

himself has contributed to undermining the distinction between mystical and prophetic religion, by comparing the visions of many Old Testament prophets with those of mediaeval Christian mystics and noting the similarities between them.

46. Typical of the way Heiler's distinction between two types of religious experience is reflected in contemporary theology of world religions is the following comment of John A.T. Robinson:

I am interested...in exploring the polarity, the tension between two centres which are to be found in different degree within all our spiritual traditions and indeed within each one of us. This is in part a dialogue between West and East...Martin Buber's I and Thou... gave definitive expression to one of the poles in the dialogues...In the beginning is relationship..of I-Thou...which can never be transcended or absorbed - even in God. There is the closest possible mystical unity between I and Thou, but always it is mysticism of love, which insists upon and respects the non-identity of the other...The other centre - is that which insists on non-duality, advaita..The emphasis is on union rather than communion or the overcoming of separation and individuation.

See Truth is Two-Eyed (Philadelphia, 1980), p.8.

47. N. Smart first introduced his distinction between the numinous and the mystical in his Reasons and Faiths (London, 1958), chapter 111 and has reiterated his confidence in this distinction in virtually every one of his many later publications, including Beyond Ideology (London, 1981), p.53.
48. I know of only three writers who have recognized that Otto identifies mystical with numinous experience. They are: R.B. Edwards in his Reason and Religion (New York, 1972), p.328; P.C. Almond in his Mystical Experience and Religious Doctrine (Berlin, 1982), chapter 5; and W.J. Wainwright in Mysticism cited above in note 44. But notice again that Wainwright, having noted the correct meaning of the term numinous, immediately proceeds to dismiss it as incoherent.

49. For example, J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience (New York, 1938), p.91; D. Bastow, 'Otto and Numinous Experience', Religious Studies, Vol.12, 1976.
50. N. Smart, Philosophers and Religious Truth (London, 1964), pp.112-113.
51. See, for example, R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion, pp.134, 156-157, 189-192; D. Bastow, 'Otto and Numinous Experience', Religious Studies, Vol.12, 1976, p.170.
52. See, for example, the work of Davidson, Bastow, Wainwright and, of course, Smart.
53. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp.25, 36-37.
54. Ibid., p.21.
55. Ibid., p.22.
56. R. Otto, Mysticism, East and West (New York, 1932), trans. by B.L. Bracey and R.C. Payne. For some discussion concerning self-depreciation, see chapters 7 and 8. It is also significant that Otto suggests that such self-depreciation should not be understood to exclude the experience of 'exaltedness of self' in mysticism, as paradoxical as that may appear. In chapter 9 he discusses the experience of exaltedness of self, and leaves the reader with the impression that the mystic's experience of his self is of a conjunction of opposites, thereby indirectly contributing to the argument for a general similarity, rather than a contrast, between mystical and devotional forms of religious experience. And this argument for the similarity between mystical and devotional forms of religion is also indirectly strengthened by revealing comments on p.164, where Otto suggests that devotional forms of religion of simple Christian theism are incomplete if they stress the virtues of humility and overlook what is equally important, the sense

of exaltation of the soul. In fact, the passage is so revealing for our argument for the similarities between mystical and devotional forms of religion that it is worth quoting. Otto says:

The mystic is often reproached for differing from 'real' religion, and for his lack of humility, the fundamental religious feeling. His ideal, it is said, is, like that of the old serpent, 'to be as Gods' or, still worse, to be God Himself. And in truth, mysticism is characterized by peculiar numinous and lofty feelings, which do indeed prove that religion is not exhaustively defined as 'the sense of absolute dependence'. But this definition is indeed obviously too narrow, for there is a sense of exaltation in every religion. It is true even of simple Christian piety that to define it as the feeling of 'complete dependence' is to present only one factor in Christian experience, which gives a false impression if not immediately supplemented by the admission that this complete dependence upon God results at once in the strongest sense of freedom and victory over the world, sin, evil and death. 'Our faith is the victory which overcomes the world'. A sense of exaltation is the complement of Christian humility, without which the latter is cant. 'The Christian is a free lord over all things.' That sense of genuine lordship which Luther describes in his Freedom of the Christian Man is a very real experience of exaltation, and it is doubtful if any mystic has felt the antinomy of that experience more profoundly than Luther. There are here the beginnings of mysticism also, in so far as such feelings of exaltation proper to all true religion and having strong numinous characteristics rise further and further into the sphere of the non-rational and the inexpressible.

Clearly, all this is a continuation of an argument begun in The Idea of the Holy. However, we should recognize that although Otto believes that some mystics can unite a sense of exaltation with humility, he thinks that others cannot. On p.200 he tells us that it is the failure of Śankara to unite these two poles of experience which distinguishes him from Eckhart. Even though, like Eckhart, Śankara emphasizes the unreality of the self and that only the divine principle is real, he experiences no feelings of humility comparable to those of Christian piety. Incidentally, Otto seems to have been unaware of the significance of the Sufi concepts of Fana and Baqa (annihilation and subsistence) for his ideas about what he

- understands as 'self-depreciation'. For further information about these concepts, see in particular R.C. Zaehner's useful discussion in Hindu and Muslim Mysticism (New York, 1969).
57. The difficulties of such a claim concerning the philosophy of Sankara have recently been discussed by Frits Staal in Exploring Mysticism (Middlesex, 1975), pp.96-100. He argues that Otto can only support his thesis, by concentrating on Sankara's commentary on the Bhagavad Gita to the exclusion of other of his writings and by misinterpreting Sankara's concept of Maya.
 58. R. Otto, Mysticism, East and West, chapter 2.
 59. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.24.
 60. Ibid., p.105.
 61. Ibid., pp.105, 106 & 186-188. Incidentally, Otto also has found this numinous energy in the divine will, not only of Luther, but of Boehme as well. See p.107.
 62. N. Smart, Reasons and Faiths, p.147.
 63. Perhaps the finest examples of numinous experience in Jewish mysticism are to be found in Merkabah mysticism. See G.G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York, 1946), chapter 2 and G.G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition (New York, 1960). For a lucid recent survey of Sufism, see A. Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam (North Carolina, 1975).
 64. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.22.
 65. Ibid., p.194.
 66. This conception of the relationship of numinous to mystical experience is still at the heart of Otto's theory of religious experience in his Mysticism, East and West. See p.159.
 67. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp.29-30. Incidentally, in appendix V Otto discusses whether the submergence of divine personality into divine nothingness discloses an unreligious attitude. He argues

that, while this may be the case, the reason for seeking supra-personal terms for the numinous may alternatively be found in concrete mystical experience, where the rational is overshadowed by the non-rational numinous. In other words, the discovery of personality in God may be an expression of rationalism rather than of the numinous, in which case we would have to conclude that simple Christian theism is more rational than mysticism. Certainly, in support of this argument, Otto claims that Christian liturgy, because of its stress on the personality of God and insistence on direct I - Thou acquaintance (to use Buber's phrase), is often more rational than it should be, and thereby tends to obscure, rather than facilitate, numinous experience. Otto suggests that Christian liturgy could increase the incidence of numinous experience, by punctuating references to God in the second person (Thou) which are rather familiar with third person references (He) which are less familiar, as well as even neuter references (It) which emphasize the distance between man and God, in other words, His 'wholly other' nature. For further details concerning this discussion, see pp.197-203.

68. N. Smart, Reasons and Faiths, chapter 11.

69. On p.29 of The Idea of the Holy Otto asserts:

In mysticism we have in the 'beyond'...again the strongest stressing and over-stressing of those non-rational elements which are already inherent in all religion.

70. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.202.

71. It is also significant that Otto, immediately after concluding his discussion of the supra-personal in the numinous, proceeds to elaborate on the mystical element in Luther's concept of faith in appendix VI (pp.204-207). Faith for Luther, Otto asserts:

is not merely confidence and trust, but also a 'cleaving to God' in feeling and will.

Luther calls this becoming 'kneaded into one cake with God'.

Incidentally, Otto also argues in this appendix that mysticism is not less possible for a Protestant than for a Catholic, but more possible, providing that by mysticism is meant its typical moments, that is the experiences of 'creature-feeling' and union.

72. Chapters XVIII, XIX, and XX, as well as in later works such as Mysticism, East and West, pp.265-268.
73. R.F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion, p.134.
74. Ibid., p.156.
75. Ibid., pp.189-191.
76. R. Otto, The Philosophy of Religion, pp.133-134.
77. Ibid., p.142.
78. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.41 n.
79. Ibid., pp.41-42.
80. D. Bastow, 'Otto and Numinous Experience', Religious Studies, Vol.12 (1976), p.170.
81. Ibid., p.171.
82. The criticism here is identical to that which I have already made concerning Smart's distinction between numinous and mystical experience.
83. Furthermore, if we take note of other religious feelings connected with Ahndung which Bastow does not mention, then the similarities between Ahndung and conventional devotional religious experiences become even more transparent. I am thinking of Friesian inspiration, which consists in the self-reliance of the mind on its eternal destiny with which is associated the practical Idea of worth (obviously one source for Otto's ideas about the augustum), the practical Idea of guilt associated with resignation which Bastow refers to as submission and the practical Idea of holiness associated

- with what Bastow refers to as trust or devotion. For further details about the concept of Ahndung, see L. Nelson, Progress and Regress in Philosophy (trans. H. Palmer), Vol.11, pp.282-285.
84. Ibid., p.283.
85. Ibid.,
86. In any case, the concept of Ahndung introduced in The Idea of the Holy (pp.145-147) is a religious rather than an aesthetic feeling, reflecting the influence of Theodore De Wette.
87. R. Otto, Mysticism East and West, p.268. Incidentally, Otto argues that De Wette thereby 'continues what Schleiermacher had already begun in his Addresses, but which in his later teaching he has rather suppressed than developed'.
88. Otto was in fact a pioneer in the study of Indian bhakti movements. Among the most important of his works on bhakti are Dipika des Nivasa. Eine indische Heilslehre (Tubingen, 1916); Vischnu-Narayana (Tubingen, 1923); Siddhanta des Ramanuja, Ein Text zur indischen Gottesmystik (Tubingen, 1923); India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted (London, 1930), trans. F.H. Foster; Bhagavad Gita (London, 1936), trans. J.E. Turner. For some diffuse comments on Otto's contributions to the study of bhakti and to Indian religions more generally, see M. Yamunacharya, 'Professor Rudolph Otto's Concept of the Numinous and its Relation to Indian Thought', Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Vol.21, pp.96-106; S. Jhingram, 'Religious Mysticism of Rudolph Otto: A Critical Evaluation', Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Vol.4, pp.405-412; S.P. Dubey, Rudolph Otto and Hinduism (Delhi, 1969).

89. R.C. Zaehner, in particular, has devoted much of his energy to comparing bhakti forms of mysticism with Christian and Islamic forms of theistic mysticism. See Hindu and Muslim Mysticism; Mysticism, Sacred and Profane (London, 1957); Concordant Discord (Oxford, 1970).
90. His comments, in fact, appear in a collection of essays edited by Peter Berger, which is devoted to exploring the polarity in world religions which, he understands, is based upon two major types of religious experience called 'confrontation' and 'interiority'. See J.B. Carman, 'Hindu Bhakti as a Middle Way', The Other Side of God ed. P.L. Berger. In fact, Carman's introductory comments about bhakti are revealing for our general argument. He says:

I have argued elsewhere that the general category of 'mysticism' may best be understood, not as the pole of identity or interiority, but as the spiritual effort to recognize and reconcile both poles in human religious experience. Whether or not my more general argument is convincing, it seems to me clear that Hindu bhakti is such a mediating or synthetic approach. Bhakti taken most literally means 'sharing' or 'participation', and both in concept and in practice includes some notion of the all-encompassing unity as well as a vivid awareness of a relationship between two distinct centres of consciousness, between two distinct but very unequal selves...Since the word bhakti means 'sharing', extreme emphasis on either 'confrontation' or 'interiority' would seem to be opposed to bhakti, and bhakti would be opposed to them, for in such extreme positions 'sharing' is impossible. Such, indeed, seems to be empirically the case. On the other hand, less extreme emphasis on either of our poles is easily comprehended within the theory and practice of bhakti. Bhakti may thus be viewed as between the poles or encompassing them. See pp.183 & 184.

91. W.J. Wainwright, Mysticism, pp.5-7.
92. This reflects the influence of the work of another philosopher who chose to exclude visions from his definition of mysticism, W.T. Stace. See Mysticism and Philosophy (London, 1960).
93. See, in particular, P.G. Moore, 'Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique', S.T. Katz, Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis, p.119.

Visions as a matter of fact have played rather an important role in the individual lives of many mystics, while in some mystical traditions they have been the focal phenomena and thus deliberately cultivated...Descriptions of the different types and diverse contents of visionary experience account for a large part of mystical writing, and for this reason alone such experiences surely deserve serious attention in the philosophical study of mysticism.

94. Merkabah mysticism, Pure Land Buddhism and the visions of Teresa of Avila.
95. As P.G. Moore points out in the article cited above, which is quoted by Wainwright himself, mystics tend to distinguish between several kinds of vision, corporeal (which are less valuable) and subtler kinds of vision such as 'imaginal' and 'intellectual' types. He also writes about the danger of focusing attention exclusively on supreme mystical experiences which may be contentless, and overlooking other more concrete experiences which are valued by the religious tradition because they are understood to be preparatory to supreme mystical experiences.
96. He does not mention bhakti mysticism or Sufism at all in the context of this discussion, and his only justification for excluding Merkabah mysticism from his definition of mysticism is that Scholem informs him that there was no experience of divine immanence, almost no love of God and an exaggerated consciousness of God's otherness, from which he concludes (wrongly) that Merkabah mysticism is not mysticism. The experience of intimacy and proximity to the deity is not an infallible guide for identifying mysticism even in other religious traditions. Besides, we know of meditation techniques which were used by Merkabah mystics.

97. E.g. J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford, 1962); G.G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York, 1941); E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley, 1951), chapter 111; See also some of the extensive literature on Sufism as well as the literature on shamanism below.
98. See e.g. I.M. Lewis, Ecstatic Religion (Middlesex, 1971); M. Eliade, Shamanism (Princeton, 1964) trans. W.R. Trask; W.A. Lessa and E.Z. Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion (New York, 1958), chapter 7.
99. R.S. Ellwood, Jr. Mysticism and Religion (New Jersey, 1980); Incidentally, Ellwood also examines the relationship between mysticism and worship in religious life. See particularly chapter 6.
100. N. Smart, Reasons and Faiths chapters III and V.
101. Nevertheless, notice that Smart himself insists that he can find examples of concrete numinous experiences and pure mystical experiences. Islam particularly in its earliest form offers examples of the former and Theravada Buddhism examples of the latter.
102. See, for example, the examination of this issue in the discussion of the 'church, sect and denomination' problem in R. Towler, Homo Religiosus: Sociological Problems in the Study of Religion (London, 1973); M. Hill, A Sociology of Religion (1973); B.R. Scharf, The Sociological Study of Religion (London, 1970).
103. See p.25 where Otto says:
- The elements of meaning implied in 'awefulness' and 'mysteriousness' are in themselves definitely different. The latter may so far preponderate in the religious consciousness, may stand out so vividly, that in comparison with it the former almost sinks out of sight; a case which again could be clearly exemplified from some forms of mysticism. Occasionally, on the other hand, the reverse happens and the tremendum may in turn occupy the mind without the mysterium.

104. The process is probably analogous to the 'law of the association of feelings' described on pp.42-44.
105. H.W. Turner, Rudolph Otto, 'The Idea of the Holy' - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students, p.17.

Notes - Chapter V

1. As we have previously seen above (page 17), Otto accepts Fries's inversion of Kant's critical idealism which allows him to argue, not only that numinous experience represents a special and separate form of genuine cognition quite independent of the cognition of sense experience, but also that such a priori numinous experience gives rise to a form of knowledge which is absolutely certain, indeed to a certainty which can never be found in a posteriori experience. As we shall see later, this epistemological claim runs into several difficulties. For now it is sufficient to observe on the one hand that Otto cannot claim - even with the support of Friesian idealism - that the feeling of objectivity within numinous experience guarantees the objective reference of that experience; and on the other hand that because of the Friesian strand in Otto's thinking, there is a danger that religious experience will be understood to be wholly the product of our own subjectivity rather than something which happens to us through the action of an independent agent. For further details see above pp.15-19.
2. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.10-11.
3. J.P. Reeder 'The Relation of the Moral and the Numinous in Otto's Notion of the Holy', Religion and Morality ed. G. Outka and J.P. Reeder, p.277; J.C. Flower, Psychology of Religion appendix II.
4. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy pp.10-11.
5. See Note (1) above.
6. C.B. Martin, Religious Belief (New York, 1959), pp.87-88.

7. E.G.B. Davies, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford, 1982), pp.66-67; C.S. Evans, Philosophy of Religion (Illinois, 1985), p.90; J.A. Taber, 'The Philosophical Evaluation of Religious Experience; International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 19 (1986), pp.45-47.
8. Ibid.
9. Long before Martin's essay Religious Belief, Wittgenstein was arguing that testing must at some time come to an end and that some things have to be accepted without question. In Philosophical Investigations he says:

At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded.... Justification by experience comes to an end. If it did not it would not be justification.... If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do." See Paras 485 and 217.
10. R. Swinburne, The Existence of God (Oxford, 1979), chap.13.
11. Swinburne occasionally recognizes the need for this principle where there is doubt about the veridicality of religious experience, but he does not develop this argument.
12. G. Pletcher, 'Agreement Among Mystics', Sophia 11 (1972), p.12.
13. Ibid., p.13.
14. W.J. Wainwright, 'Mysticism and Sense Perception', Religious Studies 9 (1973), p.274.
15. Ibid., p.258; W.J. Wainwright, Mysticism, p.82.
16. 'Mysticism and Sense Perception', p.258; see also Mysticism, p.85.
17. Mysticism., p.85.
18. Ibid., pp.86-87.
19. For example, C.D. Broad argues in Religion, Philosophy and Psychological Research (New York, 1953), Section II that, in spite of cross-cultural differences between mystical experiences, there are certain characteristics which are common to all of them, which enable us to

distinguish them from all other kinds of experience. Since, in this respect, there is agreement among mystical experiences similar to agreement among sense experiences, we can conclude that just as we take agreement among sense experiences to show that there is something objective which the experients are commonly perceiving (unless there is some positive reason not to do so), so agreement among mystical experiences entitles us to suppose (again, in the absence of any positive evidence to the contrary) that 'it (is) more likely than not that in religious and mystical experience men come into contact with some Reality or some aspect of Reality which they do not come into contact with in any other way.' p.173. Notice, however, that Broad does not believe that theistic mystics are capable of properly identifying this 'Reality', the object of their religious experiences.

20. Mysticism., pp.88-89.

21. Mysticism., p.89.

22. Mysticism., pp.90-95.

23. However, such an observation should not be construed to suggest, as C.S. Evans argued in Philosophy of Religion, p.95, that 'the failure of some people to reduplicate the experiences of religious believers does not count very much against the veridicality of such experiences....' As J.C.A. Gaskin has observed in The Quest for Eternity (Harmondsworth, 1984), pp.99-100, although selective divine revelation (if it occurs) has only the appearance of failing to fulfil the normal requirements for experience of an external object, this does not mean that religious experience, however intense, can be interpreted without further critical enquiry as objective rather than subjective experience, and therefore as evidence for the existence of God. As Gaskin persuasively argues:

If we have grounds other than the experiences themselves for believing that God exists, then his selective revelation of himself would account for the solitary and frequently unshared experiences which people have of him. On the other hand, if we do not have other grounds for believing in his existence, then it will remain a more simple and obvious explanation of the selective experiences if we take them to be internal....

24. While Wainwright concedes that the proposition that mystical experiences have a similar cognitive status to sense perceptions is an issue over which reasonable people may differ, he nevertheless argues that the similarities between mystical and sense perceptions are more impressive than the differences between them. As has been indicated in the main body of the text, Wainwright regards mystical experience as like sense experience in being noetic, in providing the basis of corrigible and independently checkable claims about something other than the experience itself, and in being subject to tests for determining both the reality of the object of experience and the genuineness of apparent perceptions of that object. Moreover, although the tests for mystical experience and sense experience are different, Wainwright proposes that the differences can be explained by the differences in the nature of the objects of the two types of experience. It is on the basis of these observations that he concludes that mystical experiences have objective reference (see Mysticism, pp.100-102), although he clearly regards his subsequent argument that mystical experience is never completely nonconceptual or objectless as supporting his thesis about its cognitive status (see pp.117-122). However, as will become apparent in what follows, I regard Wainwright's proposal about the cognitive status of mystical experience as implausible. There is as much which separates mystical experience from sense perception as that which distinguishes it from subjective experiences like migraines and stomach aches. Since divine revelation can be highly selective, and since, contrary to

Wainwright, mystics often claim that their experiences are objectless, my position on the cognitive status of mystical experience is very different to his. Since the nature of the object of mystical experience is typically very different from the nature of all physical objects, I will propose that the cognitive status of mystical experience is anomalous with regard to the distinction between objective and subjective experience; that is mystical experience (and therefore numinous experience) has a distinctive cognitive status of its own.

25. This observation is opposed by J.C.A. Gaskin in The Quest for Eternity, p.98, on the grounds that other considerations argue against my proposal. These other considerations are the following:

the solitary character of so many (religious) experiences; the frequent failure of such experiences to show up as external experience when there are other people present; and the well documented causally disposing factors (social and psychological factors) which could account for such experiences without having recourse to the existence of an elusive external object.

However, notice that the first and second features of religious experience listed here (especially when understood in the light of the religious belief in selective revelation) can just as well support my interpretation of the cognitive status of mystical experience as Gaskin's - namely that mystical experience is likely to be subjective. As to the third feature, while supporting Gaskin's understanding of the cognitive status of mystical experience, it makes the unjustifiable assumption that mystical experience is substantially or wholly determined by the religious tradition to which the mystic belongs. As will be seen below in note 26, Gaskin's epistemological position - which assumes that mystical, and more generally all religious experience is likely to be the product of only cultural conditioning - suffers from the same difficulty that we previously found in Katz's treatment of mystical experience:

namely that it is possible that the contribution which a mystic's tradition makes to his religious experience may be comparatively negligible (see chapter III).

26. Another argument which is often marshalled for the claim that mystical experience must be wholly internal, that is subjective, is the observation that a cross-cultural comparison of mystical experiences reveals conflicting religious experiences and conflicting religious claims on the basis of those experiences. When this observation is connected to another - namely the common assumption that psychological, cultural and religious expectations alone are sufficient to account for the common forms which religious experiences take within each religious tradition - then it is argued that any impartial observer will concede that such religious experiences cannot refer to objects outside themselves. Gaskin in The Quest for Eternity is typical of contemporary writers who understand religious experience in this way. He says:

To put it boldly: one encounters what one has been brought up to expect to encounter. This, not the independent existence of multiple and incompatible external objects, seems to account for the similarities of what is reported as the object of religious experience within a given community, and for differences between communities with differing world views. pp.101-102.

However, it is clear that Gaskin's epistemological position does not seriously challenge my claim that mystical experiences are anomalous with regard to the distinction between subjective and objective experiences, since his argument invites the same criticism that I offered concerning Katz's understanding of mystical experience in chapter III. As I pointed out there (see p.112), Wainwright demonstrates that there is a profound difference between claiming that there is a strong correlation between a mystic's tradition and his experience and claiming that there is a necessary connection between them. It is because the connection between tradition and

experience is not necessary that Wainwright can justifiably insist that the mystical experience is not constituted by the tradition and that therefore, the tradition's contribution to the experience may be relatively minor. Accordingly we can conclude that Gaskin has not satisfactorily explained why members of different religious traditions have profoundly different religious experiences. In fact contrary to Gaskin we could even argue on the basis of Wainwright's observations that the variety of mystical and other religious experiences as revealed by cross cultural studies suggests the possibility (and it is no more than that) of the independent existence of many incompatible religious objects.

Moreover, Gaskin's argument suffers from another difficulty that we previously encountered in Katz's account of mystical experience (see p.212). This is that if the mystic only encounters what he has been brought up to expect to encounter, then Gaskin's explanation of the variety of mystical, and more generally religious, experiences must rest upon an undemonstrated and unwarranted methodological assumption - namely, that all forms of mystical and other religious experience are equally false! Incidentally, the same criticism of the methodological position of Gaskin, Katz and others who adopt a similar approach to mystical experience can be found in a useful recent article by William Forgie entitled 'Hyper-Kantianism in Recent Discussions of Mystical Experience' which appeared in Religious Studies, Vol.21 (1985), pp.205-218.

27. Incidentally, it is not necessary to argue, as Wainwright does (see Mysticism pp.122-125), that apparent objectless mystical experiences, such as those sought by Buddhists, are not really completely objectless in order to protect their cognitive status. If mystical knowledge is a special kind of noesis quite unlike ordinary knowledge, then it is quite conceivable that it could refer to the

kind of nothingness or emptiness which Buddhists are known to be interested in. In short, mystical knowledge need not be of any particular object at all and yet it may still be a form of noesis, albeit a distinctive one.

28. See p.17 of this essay.
29. Incidentally, Otto's testimony that numinous experience is free from all doubt has recently received some support from David Hay, who argues in an important study of contemporary religious experience that in most of the cases which he recorded religious experience is accompanied by a feeling of vivid reality. He points out that for many of his respondents, religious experience "felt more real than me talking to you now", although he confesses that the 'feeling that the experience was more real than everyday reality is very curious, given that it was normally brief in duration and unpredictable'.
See Exploring Inner Space (Harmondsworth, 1982), p.160.
30. See pp.13-19 of this essay.
31. J.M. Moore, Theories of Religious Experience p.103.
32. D. Bastow, 'Otto and Numinous Experience', Religious Studies, Vol.12 (1976), p.174.
33. J. Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion, p.251.
34. This approach owes much to the phenomenology of religion of Gerardus van der Leeuw and particularly of Ninian Smart, as described in chapter IV of this essay. Like the bracketing out of truth claims in the phenomenological study of religion advocated by Smart, it is proposed that we study the distinctive features of numinous experience and its value for human life while bracketing out questions about its cognitive status. For further details about Smart's phenomenology of religion, see pp.146-149 of this essay.
35. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy p.7.

36. In particular, we can continue to be interested in the fascinating issues raised by the psychological features of Otto's exaggerated apriorism, discussed in chapter II by reading his claims about the rational and the numinous a priori non-cognitively. The psychological aspects of Otto's exaggerated apriorism continue to be of significance to a non-cognitive reading of his cognitive claims.
37. Although even here, such demonstration of the spiritual benefits of numinous experience should not be conceived to be as precise as that required by the scientific model of confirmation. As the theologian Ian Ramsey has recently pointed out, the scientific model of verification is too exact, too rigid, too inflexible to accommodate the richness and ambiguity of religious experience. Rather he argues that the sort of confirmation which is appropriate to religious experience and religious language is more akin to the sort operative within inter-personal relationships, and this type of confirmation he calls 'empirical fit'. While recognizing the similarities between 'empirical fit' and the scientific model of verification, he emphasizes also that which separates them. For example, 'empirical fit' is neither deductive nor straightforwardly predictive in the way that scientific verification is. Love is an example of the kind of experience Ramsey regards as testable only in terms of 'empirical fit'. Love cannot be tested by outward behaviour alone. Motives (often contradictory) must be taken into account and love can only really be tested over a long period of time when all the paradoxical variations of behaviour (affection, hatred, dependence, jealousy, submission, autonomy etc.) are taken into account. In short, love can only be tested in terms of how appropriate a characterisation it is of a complex, multivaried pattern of behaviour which it is impossible to specify the details of in particular cases beforehand. This is an example of 'empirical fit', and it demonstrates well

Ramsey's understanding of religious confirmation. The test of 'empirical fit' in the context of religious experience is similar to that of other forms of personal experience, such as the experience of love: namely the recognition of a broadly conceived coherence in the variety of forms of experience. Of course it must be recognized that, as Ramsey himself concedes, the kind of religious knowledge which emerges from 'empirical fit' is far more personal and tentative than many theologians would admit. Nevertheless, we see in Ramsey's claims about religious confirmation an epistemological position with regard to religious experience which is similar to my own: namely that religious experience is anomalous with regard to the distinction between objective and subjective experience. For further discussion concerning Ramsey's understanding of 'empirical fit', see J.H. Gill, Ian Ramsey: To Speak Responsibly of God (London, 1976); pp. 113-123.

38. The question whether numinous experience is a distinctive irreducible experience which cannot be confused with any other non-religious experience and the related issue of Otto's handling of evidence for numinous experience will be addressed in the next section of this Chapter. This means that any conclusions concerning the cognitive status of numinous experience that we may reach at this stage of the argument are bound to be provisional and must await later confirmation.
39. M. Prozesky, Religion and Ultimate Well-Being (London, 1984), p.157.
40. C.L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language (New Haven, 1944).
41. Incidentally, a fine example of an exercise in persuasive definition can be found in Book IX of the Republic, where Plato argues that only approved pleasures count as pleasures and that pleasures deriving from disfavoured activities are not real and true pleasures at all.

42. It is also interesting, by the way, to note that Otto's insistence that numinous experience is a special form of perception independent of sense perception receives some support from a recent study of religious experience by the Swedish psychologist of religion Johan Unger. Unger observes that religious experiences are not mediated by the five senses, but often feel paradoxically as though they are nevertheless perceptions, albeit perceptions of a rather special kind. Examples of such strange experiences include seeing, but not 'through' the eyes, hearing but not 'through' the ears and so on. What Unger is drawing attention to is a form of religious experience familiar to many Western mystics and what St. Teresa of Avila called 'intellectual visions'. Now it seems plausible to argue that there is much common ground between such experiences and numinous experience (especially numinous visionary experiences), enough indeed to impress us that in Otto's claims about a special religious sense or perception there is a sound observation about inner religious life (which is, of course, non-cognitive) which can find confirmation in the materials of the history of religions. For further details concerning Unger's research on religious experience, see his On Religious Experience: A Psychological Study (Stockholm, 1976).
43. J.C.A. Gaskin, The Quest for Eternity, p. 81.
44. Ibid., p. 84.
45. Ibid., p. 85.
46. Ibid., p. 85.
47. H.D. Lewis, Our Experience of God (London, 1970), pp. 117-119.
48. Ibid., p. 118.
49. Lewis is, in fact, responding to the argument of one particular philosopher whom we shall discuss shortly as representative of the third type of claim which seeks to demonstrate that numinous experience can be interpreted non-religiously. This is the argument

of Ronald Hepburn in Christianity and Paradox who, as we shall see, claims that numinous experience is wholly subjective, although it continues to have profound value for human life comparable to that of aesthetic experience.

50. H.D. Lewis, Our Experience of God, pp. 217-218.

51. The examples Lewis cites are those of gigantic monoliths being erected in order 'to store up the numen in solid presence by magic' (p. 66), of being 'confronted with the numinous itself' (p. 67) (although here Lewis does not specify that this is discovered in great art), and the observation that 'The tower of the Cathedral of Ulm is emphatically not magical, it is numinous' (p. 68). However, by only mentioning these three examples Lewis creates the false impression that the theme of the numinous in nature as some concrete quality in things and places is not a particularly significant strand in Otto's thinking about the numinous, probably because he supposes that this understanding of the numinous is incompatible with what we have previously called the exaggerated apriorism of numinous experience which is the result of the influence of Friesian idealism on Otto's work. But it is quite clear from many other references in the text of The Idea of the Holy to numinous qualities found in the world, such as Otto's discussion of the uncanny nature of the numinous on p. 40, his enquiry into magic as a means of appropriating the force of the numen both for the natural ends of man and for its own sake (that is to experience strange and bizarre states of numinous possession as a way of salvation) on p. 33, his general discussion of the element of awefulness in the numinous on pp. 13-19 and his analysis of the magical in art and its relation to the numinous on pp. 66-68 that his interest in this concrete 'objective' dimension of the numinous found in particular places, things and even people pervades all his thinking about religious experience.

Lewis is simply mistaken in believing that Otto cannot have seriously meant to adopt this position. As we shall see, Lewis, because of his own presuppositions about religious experience, creates considerable misunderstanding concerning the nature of Otto's numinous experience.

52. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p. 42.

53. Although here the evidence does not so much establish that the experience is numinous, as suggest that it is likely to be, and it alerts the scholar to the need to look for further evidence in the form of specifically detailed reports of numinous experience in order to confirm his suspicions. However, in the absence of sufficiently intelligible reports underlining what it is that helps the scholar to identify the experience under consideration as a numinous rather than a sublime experience (the second kind of evidence cited in the main text), it must be accepted that the scholar will remain uncertain as to whether the experience under consideration is numinous or not. If the experience does refer to divine beings, although failing to satisfy the scholar that it is a numinous one, then two alternative explanations for this are available. The first is the less contentious one that the experience is simply an example of a religious experience which is not a numinous experience, and for example, we shall find contemporary records of many hundreds of these in David Hay's Exploring Inner Space and Alister Hardy's The Spiritual Nature of Man. (Oxford, 1979.) The second explanation, however, is more interesting, and one which neither Gaskin nor Lewis appears to have considered. It is that the experience is an aesthetic one, although being an experience of some divine reality. Of course, a religious believer may well object that such an experience is not an authentic religious experience, but a corruption

of one which should be rejected by the religious tradition. However, such a possibility needs to be kept in mind by the scholar when evaluating reports of religious experience.

54. Incidentally, as will be seen later in the course of my criticism of Lewis, I regard the second form of evidence for numinous experience as far more important than the first for identifying such experience. Indeed, as will become apparent, I regard vivid, intelligible reports of what is distinctive in numinous experience as sufficient evidence for the existence of such experience (which is religious experience) even in the absence of explicit references to identifiable divine beings. As I shall argue later, it is unnecessary to agree with Lewis's claim that any numinous experience must be of God. On the contrary, I will propose that all that Lewis's position achieves is to artificially restrict our definition of religious experience.
55. There is one reference to numinous experience on p. 118 of Our Experience of God which refers to it as an awareness of an infinite and transcendent reality. Now this might be construed to be offering a much broader, less specified definition of numinous experience which does not restrict it to a very specific experience of the God known to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. However, it is clear from Lewis's general discussion concerning numinous experience that his thinking about its nature is dominated by his own Christian theism, and, as we shall see, this creates major difficulties for his understanding of non-theistic religious traditions. The general conclusions of his argument suggest that non-theistic traditions do not know of the numinous experience which is so important to theistic traditions - a conclusion which (as we have already demonstrated in our discussion of the relationship between the numinous and the mystical in chapter IV) is challenged by Otto.

56. It is quite clear from Otto's discussion in The Idea of the Holy of the Mahayana concept of sunya (p. 30) and the Theravada concept of nirvana (p. 39) that, in spite of the absence of any belief in God, he regards Buddhist mystical experience as an unproblematic example of numinous experience.
57. For details of these in the text of The Idea of the Holy see note 51. Incidentally, Otto's references to concrete numinous qualities found in particular places, things and people in the world has recently found confirmation in Alister Hardy's influential study of contemporary religious experience, The Spiritual Nature of Man. On pp. 66-67 he cites an example (one of many he encountered in this study) of a feeling of a sense of presence which was a numinous experience, specifically mentioning Otto's study. What is particularly interesting about this reference is that it claims that numinous experience was felt strongly in old churches, in wild countryside, in some old houses, in music and in a few people. Moreover on three occasions it had intensified into a mystical experience, 'a pinkish golden light which was in everything, was love and made everything look beautiful...'
58. This is clear for instance from Otto's discussion of the great Buddha from the Chinese Lung-Men Caves on p. 67.
59. There is, of course, another reason why Lewis rejects Otto's references to a concrete numinous quality in the natural world. This is because the implication here that numinous experience is a posteriori is not reconcilable with the claim that it is a priori. This is an epistemological problem too large to consider here, and one which anyway we have already discussed in this chapter. However, there is one point which seems worth making here in response to Lewis's criticism of Otto's concept of numinous experience. It is that numinous experience might be conceived to have some objective

reference while at the same time being dependent on an individual's numinous sensibility. The numinous experience would feel as though it is located in some specific object or place in the world (and may well actually be located therein) and yet at the same time require a person's numinous sensibility for there to be any experience at all. The situation here could perhaps with profit be compared with what is known in psychoanalytic discourse as 'over-determination', i.e. the proposition that formations of the unconscious (symptoms, dreams, etc.) can be attributed to a plurality of determining factors. For further discussion of this issue, see J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-Analysis (London, 1983), pp. 292-293.

60. But to repeat, notice, that since we regard all numinous experiences, as religious experiences, there are no grounds for confusing Gaskin's position with our own.
61. Incidentally, this thesis that numinous experience can occur outside a sacred tradition has recently received some support from David Hay's study of contemporary religious experiences, Exploring Inner Space. While arguing that not all religious experiences are numinous experiences (p. 161), he reports that on the basis of his research into modern religious experience in Britain many experiences that could be interpreted as religious experiences occur outside an obviously religious context. Hay put the following question to his respondents in Nottingham, which draws attention to many of the most important features of religious experience:

Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?

The responses he got to this question are interesting. He reports that whereas only 56 per cent of church goers said that they had had this experience, 26 per cent of people who never go to church claimed to have had this experience as well. Moreover, his research

demonstrated that of those who responded to the question positively, 46 per cent of the total never had anything to do with traditional religious institutions (p. 126). Hay draws the appropriate conclusions about those who pursue the 'spiritual side of life' without being a member of a formal religious tradition, (p. 128) and even cites an example of a man who had a numinous experience, resembling the 'nature mysticism celebrated by Wordsworth', after which he was moved by it to cease attending church which now seemed, at best, second-hand (p. 138). Of course it could be argued that such evidence as this supports the position of Gaskin rather than my own, especially since Hay says of religious experience that it 'is not quite the right term for what we have been describing. It would be more correct to say that it is a type of experience which is commonly given a religious interpretation'. (p. 161) However, it is clear from Gaskin's tendency to confuse numinous with sublime experience and from the emphasis in Hay's evidence above on 'a presence or power... different from the everyday self' that Hay's position is closer to my own than to Gaskin's, since the question put to the respondents focuses their attention on what feels as though it were an objective, rather than a subjective, experience. In any case, I regard Hay's reluctance to call the experiences he is studying religious experiences as simply another example of the result of a too narrowly circumscribed definition of religion and religious experience. Indeed, the weight of evidence presented by Hay himself in Exploring Inner Space suggests just this conclusion.

62. R. Hepburn, Christianity and Paradox, pp. 205-208.

63 Earlier in the text (p. 47) Hepburn recounts an example of a numinous experience that he is personally acquainted with. It was communicated through a recurring numinous dream of a paradise

landscape, which, as I pointed out in note 31 of chapter I, he later interpreted in Freudian terms after discovering this landscape on a hill on the outskirts of Edinburgh, which he had visited as a child.

64. See note 63 above.

65. Hepburn's position here is clearly far away from that of the orthodox Freudians, for whom numinous experience is symptomatic of an infantilism which the mature individual guided by the 'reality principle' desires to free himself from. There can be no place for numinous experience in the life of the individual who has been released from all illusions (that is wish fulfilments) and neuroses. For some useful discussion concerning Freud's handling of religious experience, see H.L. Philp, Freud and Religious Belief (Westport, Connecticut, 1956); W.W. Meissner, Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience (New Haven, 1984); A.J. De Luca, Freud and Future Religious Experience (Totowa, New Jersey, 1976).

66. The word is Hepburn's, not mine.

67. R. Hepburn, Christianity and Paradox, pp. 207-208.

68. Ibid., p. 208.

69. Hepburn cannot successfully argue against me here that his forgotten childhood experience of a beautiful landscape on a hill on the outskirts of Edinburgh demonstrates that his proposed psychoanalytic account of numinous experience arises directly out of some concrete experience. To succeed in this argument, Hepburn would have to provide evidence to show that he could remember how his childhood projection of child-parent relations onto nature had distorted or transfigured his experience of the said beautiful landscape on the hill on the outskirts of Edinburgh; and this he surely cannot do. It is not sufficient for him to point to the distinction between his original, childhood, transfigured (numinous) experience and his adult, undistorted, experience of the landscape in question; for it

is just as plausible to argue that the difference between his childhood and adult experiences could have been the direct result of some numinous experience having its source in some objective divine reality as to maintain that it was the result of some unconscious projection. The problem for Hepburn is that although he can now remember the original (childhood) context of the experience which appears to provide the source for his recurring (adult) numinous dream, he cannot remember the cause of the original experience itself. In the absence of memory or any other evidence (which Hepburn fails to provide), we must conclude that his original childhood experience is just as likely to have been a theistic, numinous experience as a projection from the unconscious. As the depth psychologist Carl Jung has argued, it is impossible to establish whether numinous experiences mediated by the psyche have their source only within the psyche or beyond it in some divine being or reality since it is impossible to reach, through direct experience, beyond or behind such numinous experience. Yet this is precisely what Hepburn is attempting to do, only not through direct experience, but rather through the speculation of psychoanalytic theory. He is proposing that it is justifiable to offer retrospectively in adult life a Freudian explanation of a childhood numinous experience, which he has only come to recognize the authority of, let alone understand, at an age at which his experience is remote from the original childhood experience under consideration. In the light of this, Hepburn surely cannot maintain that his psychoanalytic interpretation of numinous experience arises directly out of some concrete experience. Incidentally, for some discussion of what Jung sees as the difficulty in locating the source of numinous

- experience mediated by the psyche, see H.L. Philp, Jung and the Problem of Evil (London, 1958) and C.G. Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven, 1938).
70. Once again, C.G. Jung's understanding of numinous experience, outlined in note 69 above, helps us to recognize that neither Hepburn's nor Otto's, interpretation of such experience is completely satisfactory, although it must be emphasized that Jung has acquired his understanding of the distinctive qualitative features of numinous experience directly from Otto himself, as is demonstrated in his Psychology and Religion previously cited. For further discussion concerning Jung's understanding of numinous experience and its origins, and more general exploration of his views, about the relationship between God and the unconscious, see A. Moreno, Jung, Gods and Modern Man (Notre Dame, 1970); J.W. Heisig, Imago Dei: A Study of C.G. Jung's Psychology of Religion (Lewisburg, 1979); V White, God and the Unconscious (London, 1952); M. Stein, Jung's Treatment of Christianity (Wilmette, Illinois, 1985); Ann and Barry Ulanov, Religion and the Unconscious (Philadelphia, 1975).
71. This claim is to be found not only in the work of Hepburn, but also in that of Gaskin and Prozesky as well.
72. Unless evidence is subsequently discovered which demonstrates conclusively that numinous experience is indeed subjective, and in the light of our previous discussion, especially C.G. Jung's warning about the difficulty of locating the source of numinous experience mediated by the psyche, this is extremely unlikely.
73. Just as its qualitative features are distinctive, and not to be confused with those of any other form of experience.
74. In the tradition of Ninian Smart on the one hand and David Hay on the other.
75. D. Hay, Exploring Inner Space, p.191.

76. It may be that some sentiment of this kind is the cause of Otto's infamous direction to the reader on page 8 of The Idea of the Holy 'to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience, as little as possible qualified by other forms of consciousness' and his assertion that 'Whoever cannot do this, whoever knows no such moments in his experience, is requested to read no further'
77. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp.7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 60.
78. Ibid., pp.44, 60, 61, 62, 63-64, 65.
79. Ibid., p.44.
80. Ibid., p.113.
81. J. Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (Oxford, 1939).
82. The phrase 'in, with and under' is in fact deliberately borrowed by Baillie from the Lutheran interpretation of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, in which the Real Presence of Christ is said to be given 'in, with and under' the bread and the wine.
83. Ibid., p.178. The nature of the consciousness of God takes the form of a powerful awareness of divine presence, and in particular an awareness of divine authority over man.
84. Another more recent theologian who adopts a position which is similar to Baillie's is Ian Ramsey. Ramsey also argues that religious experience is always mediated by other dimensions of experience, and that what he calls a 'religious disclosure' arises out of other dimensions of experience, but is not reducible to these. What he means by this is that there is firstly an experience of depth in ordinary experience which cannot be accounted for solely in terms of sensory description, and it is this experience which gives rise to the religious disclosure. And secondly, there is in religious experience a response of total commitment to that depth dimension of the religious disclosure. Ramsey, in this sense, regards religious

disclosures as arising out of perceptual, conceptual, moral and personal disclosures, and thus, he claims, it is easy to understand how religious people may perceive the experience of moral duty to be a disclosure of God's will and how they may see God disclosed by their experience of their friends. For further discussion of Ramsey's account of religious experience, see J.H. Gill, Ian Ramsey: To Speak Responsibly of God (London, 1977), chap.3 and I.T. Ramsey, Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases (London, 1957), chap.1.

85. Ibid., p.179, citing Essays and Addresses, 2nd series, p.246.
86. Ibid., citing the chapter on 'The Natural Order' in M. Nedoncelle's Baron Friedrich von Hugel.
87. J.E. Smith, Experience and God (New York, 1968), p.52. Incidentally, as many commentators have pointed out, there is nothing inconsistent in an experience being psychologically direct and yet being produced by a complicated and indirect process. To suppose that there is, is to make the mistake of conflating the description of an experience as it is experienced with the causal explanation of what makes the experience possible. Moreover, the complexity of the causal process of mediated experience does not entail that the experiencer must experience the medium at the same time as he experiences the object of his experience. He may experience the object simply and directly, and yet be completely unaware of the medium, or of experiencing the object through the medium. Clearly, these important observations apply also to mediated religious experiences. Mediated experiences of God are psychologically direct, and the experiencer may eventually become unaware either of the medium or of experiencing the object (God) through that medium. For further discussion of these important issues, see G.I. Mavrodes, Belief in God (New York, 1970), chap.III, and C.S. Evans, Philosophy of Religion (Leicester, 1985), chap.4.

88. However, there is a problem for Smith in this argument which we do not find in the accounts of religious experience of either Baillie or Ramsey. Smith claims that God is definitely present in mediated religious experience. One is not merely inferring God's existence from His creation in such an experience. But, as James Londis has recently pointed out, Smith seems unable to specify the distinctive features in any mediated religious experience which should be attributed to God. In other words, Londis is saying that when God is not present in a mediated religious experience, we should be able to experience the difference. Smith should be able to delineate what the experiential difference would be were God to be absent from a particular religious experience and this, it seems, he cannot do. For further details of this discussion, see J.J. Londis, "Mediated Immediacy" in the Thought of John E. Smith: A Critique, Religious Studies, Vol.11 (1975), pp.473-480.
89. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1968), pp.193ff.
90. Clearly, Hick's position here concerning 'experiencing as' invites comparison with those philosophers who emphasize the intentionality of all experience, such as those writers (Katz and Donovan) whom I discussed in chapter III.
91. J. Hick, 'Religious Faith as Experience - As' in Talk of God, ed. G.N.A. Vesey (London, 1969), p.23.
92. However, once again (as was the case with Smith's account of mediated religious experience), there is a problem for Hick in this argument. As Brian Davies points out, Hick's account does not demonstrate that belief in God is based on experience. Because Hick's religious experience is optional, he provides us with no reasons why a particular religious interpretation of events should be adopted. Hick fails to recognize that, in speaking of all experiencing as

'experiencing as', he does not acknowledge that on some occasions there is a correct interpretation of events and a mistaken one; that is to say, he fails to recognize that on some occasions, even though people claim to be experiencing the world as God's world, there is at least the possibility that they may be deluding themselves. Just because religious people experience the world as God's world, it does not follow that they are reasonable in adopting this conclusion. Some independent evidence apart from the fact that religious people experience it as such seems to be required. Indeed, Hick's position here suffers from a similar problem to the one that we found in Smith's account of mediated religious experience, discussed in note 88 above. Moreover, there is another difficulty for Hick's position. That is that his 'experiencing as' appears to be more like inference than real experience, and is very different from the psychologically direct and specific, though mediated, experiences we were speaking about previously. His 'experiencing as' appears to have little in common with experiencing God through the voice of a preacher, or through the words of a hymn or sacred book, or in the closeness of a friend's embrace or in the beauty of a majestic sunset. For further discussion of Hick's 'experiencing as', see B. Davies, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford, 1982), pp.74-76.

93. See pp.128ff and p.136 of this essay.
94. In fact the law of association of analogous feelings appears to be designed specifically to exclude the kind of mediation that Katz is interested in.
95. Without such cultural conditioning of numinous experience it would be, as we observed in Chapter III, incomplete and at least partly unintelligible even to the subject of the experience himself, let alone to others in the religious tradition to whom he may desire to communicate its nature.

96. See p.135 of this essay.
97. See above pp.61-62 and note 32 of chapter II on p.300. Turner's original discussion, to which these passages refer, appears on p.30 of his Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy - Commentary on a Shortened Version - A Guide for Students.
98. Here I am in total agreement with Turner, as should be evident from my general argument.
99. See our previous criticisms of Prozesky, Gaskin, Lewis and Hepburn. Incidentally, this is one important reason (although by no means the only one) why Otto insists that the existence of numinous experience cannot be attributed to non-religious causes.
100. In fact we shall build upon our previous discussion of Otto's contribution to the phenomenology of religion in chapter IV where we evaluated the use of numinous sensibility in the study of religion, as well as raising the issue of reductionism in the study of religion through the work of Gerardus van de Leeuw, Mircea Eliade, Jacques Waardenburg and Ninian Smart. It will be remembered that all four of these scholars, in spite of considerable intellectual differences between them, reject any kind of reductionism in the study of religion. In this section we shall go beyond our previous discussion of these scholars and attempt to respond to those thinkers who are critical of the methodological position which refuses to attribute any value to such reductionism.
101. The following comment typifies the attitude of scholars who identify Otto's position with the phenomenological method in this regard:

I would recommend that the scientific study of religion return to a perspective on the phenomenon 'from within', that is, to viewing it in terms of the meanings intended by the religious consciousness. I rather doubt that it will be possible to go very far beyond the contributions of the phenomenological school. Indeed, I think that one could do worse than return to Otto's starting point in this matter.

Remarkably, this comment comes from a convert from sociological reductionism, the sociologist of religion, Peter Berger. See 'Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion', Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 13, no.2 (June 1974), p.129.

102. See, for example, D. Pals, 'Reductionism and Belief: An Appraisal of Recent Attacks on the Doctrine of Irreducible Religion', The Journal of Religion (January, 1986), Vol.66, No.1, pp.18-19; E.J. Sharpe, Understanding Religion (London, 1983), chaps 1 & 2; E.J. Sharpe, Comparative Religion: A History (London, 1975), chap 10; U. King, 'Historical and Phenomenological Approaches', Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion - Volume I: The Humanities (Berlin, 1984), pp.29-164, ed. F. Whaling; W.L. Brenneman, S.O. Yarian & A.M. Olson, The Seeing Eye (Pennsylvania, 1982), parts 1 & 2; N. Smart, The Phenomenon of Religion (London, 1973), chap.1, N. Smart, The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge (Princeton, 1973).
103. There is a considerable quantity of literature concerning this position. See for example, D.Z. Phillips, Faith and Philosophical Enquiry (London, 1970); D.Z. Phillips, Religion Without Explanation, (Oxford, 1976); N. Malcolm, 'Is it a Religious Belief that God Exists?' J. Hick (ed), Faith and the Philosophers (New York, 1964); P. Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (London, 1958); P. Winch, 'Understanding a Primitive Society', The American Philosophical Quarterly, vol.1 (October, 1965); J.A. Barrie, 'The Autonomy of Religious Discourse', Sophia, vol.19, No.2 (July, 1980), pp.34-41; K. Nielsen, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (London, 1982), chaps. 4 & 5; P. Sherry, Religion, Truth and Language-games (London, 1977) chap.2.

104. N. Malcolm, 'Anselm's Ontological Arguments', The Philosophical Review (1960), vol.LXIX. Of course these ideas are familiar to us from Otto's discussion, which we have extensively evaluated in chapters II and III.
105. P . Winch, 'Understanding a Primitive Society', The American Philosophical Quarterly vol.1 (October, 1965), pp.307-25.
106. See his The Idea of a Social Science, pp.100 ff.
107. For example, it would be illogical for a scientist working in a certain area of research to refuse to take account of the results of a properly conducted experiment, and it would also be illogical for a man who believed in God to try to pit his strength against Him.
108. D.Z. Phillips, Religion without Explanation (Oxford, 1976).
109. Ibid., p.150.
110. For further details see my discussion of Smart's interpretation of the phenomenology of religion on pages 175-178.
111. W.C. Smith, Religious Diversity (New York, 1976), Ed. W.G. Oxtoby, p.152.
112. For Ernest Nagel's definition of reduction in the sciences, see his The Structure of Science (New York, 1961), chap.11, where he speaks of reduction as the process in which a higher theory is reduced to a lower theory, providing that the concepts of the former are connectible with and derivable from the latter. A classic paradigm of reduction in the natural sciences is the attempt to reduce all biological concepts to those of physics and chemistry.
113. H. Penner and E. Yonan, 'Is a Science of Religion Possible?' Journal of Religion 52 (October 1972), pp.107-33, 130-31.
114. It should be remembered by the way, that reductionist theory in religion assumes a form drawn from the sciences, as described in note 112 above. Religious experiences and beliefs are construed as

standing in a hierarchical relationship to other experiences and forms of knowledge which are believed to be more basic. For further discussion of Freud's reductionist interpretation of religion see, in addition to the titles cited in note 65 above, P. Rieff, Freud: The Mind of the Moralist (London, 1959), chaps IV and VIII; W. Alston, 'Psychoanalytic Theory and Theistic Belief', in Faith and Philosophers, ed. J. Hick (New York, 1964), pp.63-110; H. Faber, Psychology of Religion (London, 1976), pp.9-35; and for some elucidation of Durkheim's contribution to the reductionist debate, see in particular W.S.G. Pickering, Durkheim on Religion (London, 1975); E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Theories of Primitive Religion (Oxford, 1965), pp.57-69.

115. G. Dudley, Religion on Trial: Mircea Eliade and His Critics (Philadelphia, 1977), p.144.
116. Ibid., p.132.
117. Ibid., p.128.
118. D. Pals, 'Reductionism and Belief: An Appraisal of Recent Attacks on the Doctrine of Irreducible Religion', The Journal of Religion (January, 1986), Vol.66, No.1, p.25.
119. R. Segal, 'In Defense of Reductionism', Journal of the American Academy of Religion 51, No.1 (March 1983), pp.97-124.
120. More precisely, we shall demonstrate that whereas Segal simply misconstrues Eliade's methodological position, Otto's methodological observation can be reformulated in a way which avoids the problems which Segal raises.
121. Ibid., p.101.
122. Incidentally, this observation about Eliade's refusal to endorse the truth claims of the religious traditions he studies and his adoption of the position of a religious outsider is perfectly reconcilable with my earlier observations in chapter IV, concerning his interest

in a distinctive religious consciousness which finds expression in archetypes and symbols (see pp.142-143). Eliade's restructuring of religious materials, so that the metacultural and metahistorical symbols can be rediscovered within them by the religiously sensitive 'historian of religion', suggests that he has already established some phenomenological distance from the religious truth claims he is examining, and that he is not ultimately interested in their concrete meanings, but only in what lies behind them. Thus in spite of Eliade's undeniable emphasis on the value of the scholar's own religious experience in the study of other religious traditions, he can hardly, as so many of his critics have suggested, be accused of uncritically endorsing the truth claims of the believers he studies.

123. See our discussion of this issue in chapter IV.

124. See, in particular, notes 9 and 10 of that chapter.

125. Ibid.

126. Significantly, however, as we shall soon see, it is such independence that Segal specifically wishes to challenge.

127. R. Segal, 'In Defense of Reductionism', pp.109, 110.

128. Segal says:

If Eliade is wrong to oppose reductionistic interpretations of religion on the grounds that they misinterpret religion, he is right to oppose them on the grounds that they threaten, or may threaten, it. For what underlies, if hardly justifies, his abhorrence of reductionistic interpretations is his fear they they reduce God to a delusion. Eliade insists on a non-reductionistic interpretation of religion in order to preserve the reality of God.

'In Defense of Reductionism', p.115. Obviously, however, such a charge is easily dismissed. Eliade may well oppose reductionism because he is a believer, but the success of his opposition to such reductionism will be determined by the existence of appropriate evidence, or the lack of it, in support of his claim, not by his

religious commitments. As we have demonstrated in the previous argument, Eliade provides sufficient evidence to support his opposition to reductionism.

129. It will be remembered that the 'autonomist position' of Phillips, Winch and Malcolm was shown to be supportive of the disciplinary axioms of the phenomenology of religion.
130. K. Nielsen, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (London, 1982), chaps. 4 & 5.
131. Ibid., p.91.
132. W. Proudfoot, Religious Experience (Berkeley, 1985), chap.VI.
133. Proudfoot cites as examples of explanatory reduction outside the academic study of religion the explanations offered by historians of past events by employing such concepts as 'socialization', 'ideology', 'means of production', and 'feudal economy'. As he correctly observes, these concepts can seldom be properly attributed to the people whose behaviour is the object of the historian's study.
134. Ibid., p.197.
135. Ibid.
136. W.C. Smith, Religious Diversity, p.146.
137. This problem of the failure of the scholar to distinguish his own understanding of another religious tradition from the experience of those inside that tradition is of course familiar to us from our previous discussion of reductionism in the study of religion, and especially from our criticisms of Otto's work in this regard. We shall return to consider further the issues raised by Smith's position later in this discussion.
138. W. Proudfoot, Religious Experience, pp.200-205.

139. The feeling in question is undefined, however, and Proudfoot argues that there is no guarantee that all of Otto's readers will attend to similar feelings. In fact, Proudfoot presents a powerful challenge to Otto in the following question:

When Otto asks his readers to attend to the numinous in their own experience, what guarantee does he have that they will attach the label to the same kind of experience with which it is associated in his mind?

P.91 Surely, however, there is a satisfying answer to this question in the following observation. Otto's request to his readers to attend to the numinous in their own experience appears early in the text of The Idea of the Holy, but if only Proudfoot read further he would discover sufficient detailed analysis of numinous experience in its many forms to allow the discriminating reader gradually to narrow down what Otto means by such experience. Otto believes that the discovery of numinous experience by his readers is a slow, piecemeal process demanding energy and patience. Yet his remarkably rich analysis of the distinctive features of such numinous experience has allowed an impressive variety of scholars to find confirmation of the numinous in their own independent work. In short, it is Otto's impressive range of language about numinous experience, as well as the tremendous, positive response that it has elicited, which must surely convince us that Otto can communicate with his readers effectively about the nature, and incidence, of numinous experience. We can, accordingly, conclude that Proudfoot's criticism of Otto's treatment of numinous experience above is groundless.

140. Ibid., pp.117-118.

141. Proudfoot here is profoundly influenced by the epistemological position of the philosopher, Steven Katz, whose work we have discussed extensively in chapter III.

142. It is useful to remember here that, in spite of the obvious difficulties in Otto's position, we have demonstrated in chapter III that there are serious weaknesses in Katz's argument which is so influential on Proudfoot. In particular, although Katz is justified in claiming, (contrary to Otto) that there are no unmediated experiences, we have shown that he is wrong to suppose that it is always belief which determines the nature of whatever religious experience occurs. Katz mistakenly assumes that the influence between religious belief and experience is always in one direction, whereas, as we have seen, in spite of the mediated nature of all experience, religious belief is just as likely to be 'read off' from experience as experience from belief. This is an epistemological difficulty which clearly has contributed significantly to Proudfoot's misinterpretation of Otto's concept of numinous experience.
143. Of course Otto opposes explanatory reduction for other reasons, but that is another matter.
144. D. Z. Phillips, Religion Without Explanation, p.151.
145. W. Proudfoot, Religious Experience, p.211.
146. Certainly such a definition in itself is bound to be of grave concern to any opponent of reductionism.
147. Ibid., p.210.
148. Clearly, no scholar outside a religious tradition can perceive that tradition with the eyes of a believer, and Smith is mistaken to claim that he can. However, having conceded this, we must recognize that Smith's efforts in this direction have produced much which is of value to the phenomenologists of religion. One may not be able to read the Qur'an as a Muslim would, but one can get much closer to the Muslim's position than the student of religion seeking Proudfoot's explanatory reduction.

149. Although, as we have previously argued, Otto's position can be reformulated to avoid these epistemological difficulties.
150. Ibid., p.223.
151. Ibid., p.227.
152. Of course if these passages are interpreted as referring to instances of what Proudfoot calls identifying description, then they will be of considerably more interest to phenomenologists of religion than if they are construed to refer to instances of explanatory reduction. In particular, research into why believers choose to explain their experiences, religious and non-religious, in the way they do will contribute much to the phenomenologist's understanding of what is irreducibly religious in any religious tradition.
153. As the philosopher, Steven Katz, who has been profoundly influential on Proudfoot, appears to.

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