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THE MYSTICAL AND THE ETHICAL

A Dissertation
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the meaning and relationship of mystical and ethical experiences of the Divine. To accomplish this purpose, the work first investigates the different ways that certain previous philosophers have viewed these experiences and points out the contributions that they have made toward understanding these concepts. Then these contributions, as well as various ideas from other writers, are used to formulate an answer to the question of the nature and relationship of the mystical and the ethical. This position claims that the mystical and the ethical are two kinds of experiences through which man acquires divine love. In a mystical experience God is known through a direct communication with him in which there is an immediate awareness of self-giving love by the individual. On the other hand, a person's ethical experiences represent his encounter with God through his relationships in the universe, and these relationships include both those in which he receives love and those in which he extends it. Furthermore, two ways of viewing the relationship between the mystical and the ethical are in terms of the possibility of each of these experiences serving as a basis for the other and also in terms of the similarity between extrovertive mysticism and the ethical.

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INTRODUCTION

In examining man's encounter with the Divine, two basic kinds of experiences are recognized. One is an intuitive and often emotional type of experience which is usually referred to as "mystical," and the other, which is sometimes called "ethical," involves man's relationships with others. But these descriptions are highly general in character. What can be said more specifically about these categories? What is the precise nature of the mystical and the ethical and in what way do they interact with each other?

The purpose of this work is to set forth and explicate the meaning and relationship of these two types of experiences of the Divine. To accomplish this purpose, the work first investigates the various ways that certain previous philosophers have viewed these experiences. This investigation is conducted in the first five chapters with each chapter consisting of an exposition and evaluation of the views of a particular philosopher. In each of these chapters an effort is made to demonstrate the contributions that the individual philosopher makes toward understanding the nature of the mystical and the ethical and other closely related notions such as God, man, and the universe.

Chapter I points out that Immanuel Kant emphasized the importance of the moral law within man and that he defined

religion as a life lived in accordance with that law. Kant aids in understanding man and his relationship with God through his affirmation of man's selfish tendencies, his principles of the categorical imperative and the dignity of man, his demonstration of the moral side of religion, and his view that God demands that man perform his moral duties. In Chapter II it is demonstrated that Friedrich Schleiermacher claims that religion is essentially a feeling of absolute dependence on God and that it is this feeling which distinguishes religion from other areas such as knowledge and morality. His contributions include his recognizing that man can experience God through his interaction with the rest of nature, that man has a definite need for the Divine, and that an experience of God involves an affirmation of morality. Chapter III indicates that Soren Kierkegaard considers faith to be essentially an inward existence which involves risk and that he criticizes mysticism primarily because of the aversion that the mystic has toward the temporal. He assists in comprehending the nature of the mystical and the ethical through his emphasis on the inward life, his notion of love as self-renunciation and impartiality, and by pointing to the dangers in mysticism of a person's having an unhealthy attitude toward the world and of neglecting his ethical responsibilities. In Chapter IV it is established that Friedrich Nietzsche is opposed to

Christianity because of its denial of the will to power and that he proclaims that the decline of Christianity and its view of God in nineteenth century Europe would make possible the existence of the overmen. Nietzsche's contributions are his ideas of man's need for a tolerant attitude, the egoistic nature of love, and the possibility of unhealthy notions of the Divine. Chapter V sets forth Henri Bergson's position that the vital impetus is the force within life which has guided it through its various developments and that the highest form of expression of this impetus is human intuition which itself has evolved in the stages of static and dynamic religion. The helpful elements in his philosophy for dealing with the issue of the mystical and the ethical are the notions of complete mysticism and an open morality and also his claim that God is involved with man and man needs to accept God's love.

In the last chapter of the work the contributions of these philosophers, along with certain ideas of other writers, are used to formulate an answer to the question of the nature and relationship of the mystical and the ethical. This position claims that the mystical and the ethical are two kinds of experiences through which man acquires divine love. In a mystical experience God is known through a direct communication with him in which there is an immediate awareness of self-giving love by the individual. This

experience includes both the presence of divine empathy and the appropriate human response, but God is involved even in the human aspect of the encounter in that he encourages man toward the attitude and circumstances that are conducive for the experience. On the other hand, a person's ethical experiences represent his encounter with God through his relationships in the universe, and these relationships include both those in which he receives love and those in which he extends it. An individual has ethical responsibilities toward both others and himself. His duties to others consist of his obligations to other human beings, to nonhuman life, and to nonliving matter. His responsibilities to himself overlap with these duties to others in the sense that one is exercising self-giving toward oneself by being responsible in one's relationships with others. But one's duties to oneself not only demand that one be responsible toward others but also that one carry out certain immediate obligations toward himself. There are also two ways of viewing the relationship between the mystical and the ethical. One way concerns the possibility of each of these experiences serving as a foundation for the existence of the other. The divine love received through a mystical experience can lead to the expression of this love to others, and also the activity of divine love in ethical experience gives the person the perspective that is necessary for a

mystical experience. Another way of viewing this relationship is in terms of the similarity between extrovertive mysticism and the ethical. This similarity indicates that there is not a rigid demarcation between mystical and ethical experiences of God, but rather there is a continuum of experiences by which man encounters the Divine.

CHAPTER I

IMMANUEL KANT

Immanuel Kant insists upon the significance of the moral life for man and claims that this moral life is the goal of true religion, since it is moral service which God requires of man. Kant's discussion makes numerous contributions to an understanding of man, God, and the nature of the moral life. One of these is the recognition of selfish inclinations as being a part of man's being. Another is the use of the categorical imperative as a general standard of morality, and still another is his emphasis upon each person's being treated as having absolute value. Additional contributions of Kant's discussion are his demonstration of the moral aspect of religion and his position that God demands that moral duties be performed by man.

The Moral Life

Kant claims that the only thing in life that is good without qualification is a good will. Certain traits such as intelligence, self-control, and courage are definitely good in many ways, and it is also the case that holdings such as wealth, power, and honor may be utilized for worthwhile purposes. Nevertheless, these qualities and all others, with the exception of a good will, cannot be said

to have absolute worth. That is, in the case of each of these other qualities, circumstances can be conceived in which the quality is misused. However, a good will is different in that it is good in all circumstances. It even remains good when there are no fruitful consequences produced. That is, it is possible that an individual with a good will may be unable to implement his intentions or that the actions which he does carry out are useless. In either of these situations the will must still be considered good as long as there is a good intention.¹

A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition—that is, it is good in itself,²

But what is the nature of a will that is good? In order to be good, it must be governed by reason and not the senses. Certainly man has needs as a sensuous being that his reason should help him to meet, but his goal in life should not simply be the pleasure that comes from the senses. When an individual only uses his reason as an instrument for the attainment of physical pleasure, the end toward which his activity is aimed is then the same as that of the lower

¹Immanuel Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1949), pp. 11-12.

²Ibid., p. 12.

animals; consequently, this individual has not ascended above their level of existence. Even though his rational ability is functioning in such a case, it is not being used to carry out the higher purpose of which it is capable. This higher purpose is only fulfilled when the individual aims ultimately at virtue and not enjoyment. When this is done, the individual experiences an inner feeling of personal worth and contentment that is lacking in those who merely pursue sensual pleasure.³

When the will is good and is guided by reason, this indicates that it is acting for the sake of duty. Kant distinguishes between acting in accordance with duty and acting for the sake of duty. Acts which are merely in accordance with duty are the same in external circumstances as acts that are done for the sake of duty, but they are not performed from the motive of duty as is the case with acts done for the sake of duty. Instead, they are founded in some sort of inclination that the person has toward the act. For instance, the fact that a grocer does not overcharge his inexperienced customers does not necessarily imply that he is acting for the sake of duty. Certainly he is acting in conformity with duty in that he is treating his customers honestly, at least in this particular aspect of his business.

³Ibid., pp. 12-14; Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1958), pp. 63-64, 90-92.

But he may be acting in this manner simply on the basis of an inclination that grows out of his own self-interest. That is, he may avoid overcharging because he thinks that over a long period of time this kind of relationship to his customers will be most profitable for his business. If this act were done for the sake of duty, then the individual would avoid overcharging not out of his own self-interest but rather in order to carry out his duty to mankind. He would view the act as a part of his duty to his fellowman.⁴

Some individuals, says Kant, have a highly sympathetic attitude toward others and receive a great deal of inner satisfaction from performing deeds that bring happiness to others. What can be said about the nature of the duty involved in these acts? According to Kant, these acts may be grounded in self-interest, and, consequently, their performance would not be for the sake of duty. These persons may be motivated by the desire to receive the inner pleasure that accompanies these acts. However, Kant is not excluding the possibility that these individuals are acting for the sake of duty. An individual might receive satisfaction for his deeds and at the same time not be motivated

⁴Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, pp. 14-15.

by this satisfaction. His actions might be founded in his general regard for others.⁵

Thus, Kant insists that self-interested inclinations can prevent an individual from being able to act for the sake of duty. Furthermore, he states that there is a propensity within man to follow these inclinations. As a result of man's sensuous nature, he tends to let his selfish desires be in control of his actions. How then is an individual ever able to transcend this propensity and act for the sake of duty? According to Kant, this can only be accomplished through a reverence for the moral law which serves as a guardian against this propensity. When a respect for the law is present, the individual allows it to be the determiner of his actions instead of depending upon his subjective inclinations as a guide; consequently, the individual is able to overcome selfishness. At the same time that an individual is able to overcome this self-love, he is also able to escape the self-conceit that accompanies it. With an acknowledgment of the existence of the law, an individual is able to place himself over against the law in comparison. This gives the individual a sense of humility

⁵Ibid., pp. 15-16.

since he recognizes the large degree to which the law exceeds what he has accomplished.⁶

The moral law, which alone is truly, i.e. in every respect, objective, completely excludes the influence of self-love from the highest practical principle and forever checks self-conceit, which decrees the subjective conditions of self-love as laws. If anything checks our self-conceit in our own judgment, it humiliates. Therefore, the moral law inevitably humbles every man when he compares the sensuous propensity of his nature with the law.⁷

The ideal for man's moral existence is for the will to completely conform to the moral law, and, if each individual's will were determined only by his reason, this ideal would indeed be the actual state of human existence. However, the will is exposed to subjective inclination as well as to reason, and the consequence is that the individual does not necessarily carry out the dictates of reason. This means therefore that the will is able to exist in opposition to the moral law, but at the same time it needs to be in agreement with the moral law in order to reach its highest expression. This results in the moral law's putting pressure upon the individual to accept it by presenting itself to the will in the form of an imperative. It commands the will to obey the moral law, and thus the individual experiences a sense of

⁶Ibid., pp. 18-19; Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, pp. 74-85.

⁷Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, p. 77.

obligation toward it. In the case of the divine will, there is no imperative present since this will is always in exact agreement with the law. But because of the imperfection of the human will, the moral law as it relates to man takes the form of an imperative.⁸

The imperative of the moral law is categorical by nature and not merely hypothetical. A hypothetical imperative declares that a particular action is necessary in order to reach some goal that the will has accepted; therefore, it is an imperative which is conditioned by a purpose of some type. Hypothetical imperatives may either be problematic or assertoric depending on whether the purpose involved is possible or actual. In the case of a problematic hypothetical imperative, the goal that is set forth is merely possible in that it is not one which everyone must have because of his nature. It is an imperative that carries with it an end which has to be chosen by an individual if the imperative is to be applicable. On the other hand, an assertoric hypothetical imperative includes a purpose that is actual within all rational beings by natural necessity. An example of such a purpose is happiness, since it is certain because of human nature that happiness is a goal of each individual's conduct. Therefore, a hypothetical imperative with happiness as its end does not depend upon the individual's choice of

⁸ Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, pp. 30-31.

happiness as a goal, but instead it includes with it the assertion that the individual does in fact have that goal.⁹

However, the imperative of the moral law is not hypothetical but categorical. A categorical imperative claims that a certain action is ". . . necessary of itself without reference to another end" ¹⁰ This means that it unconditionally commands the individual to follow the action which it proposes. That is, it does not acknowledge an acceptable opening for an individual to act in opposition to it. But what is the action that is set forth by this categorical imperative of the moral law? This action is determined by the nature of law itself. Since any law is essentially universal in character, the categorical imperative demands that we act according to this quality. It is an unconditional command that our moral conduct conform to that which can be universalized.¹¹ Kant states it in the following manner: "Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature."¹²

Kant gives several illustrations of how this principle works in particular situations. One of these concerns an individual who is seeking to borrow money. He knows that

⁹Ibid., pp. 31-34.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 19-21, 31-38.

¹²Ibid., p. 31.

the only way that he will get the loan is to promise to pay the money back later, but at the same time he realizes that he will not be able to repay the money. If the individual utilizes the categorical imperative in considering whether to make the promise, he will have to decide if he can will that his maxim be a universal law. The maxim in this instance would be that an individual, in order to get money that he needs, should be able to make a promise to repay a loan even though he knows that he will be unable to keep his promise. Kant insists that it would not be acceptable to make this a universal law to be obeyed by everyone because of the inconsistency that is present. It involves the inconsistency of an individual's promising to perform an act and at the same time being aware that he will be unable to perform it.¹³

Another illustration given by Kant concerns the prosperous individual who does not wish to give any assistance to anyone else. He is thinking in terms of letting others deal with their own problems without any help from him. Kant says that this maxim is not supported by the categorical imperative. One cannot will that this maxim be made a universal law. If a law were made that each person must provide solely for himself, this would mean that no one would be able to receive the contributions of others, not even the individual who was considering the adoption of the

¹³Ibid., pp. 39-40.

principle. Hence, the acceptance of this maxim as a universal law would cause a conflict in the life of the individual contemplating the maxim, since occasions might arise when he needed aid himself.¹⁴

In addition to the categorical imperative, Kant claims that there is another principle that serves as a guide for the will in its moral decisions. He argues that whatever is at the foundation of the will's capacity to act in conformity to the moral law must be an end for conduct. Since this end would also be the ground of the categorical imperative and not hypothetical imperatives, it would not be an end that is relative to human desires. Instead, it would be an absolute end and therefore would have value in itself. But what is this absolute end? According to Kant, it is the rational nature itself, which means that each rational being must always be treated as having absolute value. Kant states this principle in the following manner: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only."¹⁵

An example of a violation of this principle is the previously considered case in which an individual promises

¹⁴Ibid. pp. 39-40.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 46.

to repay a loan while he knows that he will be unable to do so. In this case the person who is making the loan does not share in the benefits of the end produced. The circumstances of his existence are not being respected, but instead he serves simply as a means to the accomplishment of the selfish end of the individual receiving the loan. However, this does not mean that a transaction such as a loan necessarily involves a violation of this principle of humanity as an end. There are occasions in life, such as in business relationships, in which a human being may serve as a means for an individual to reach some particular goal. But even in these situations any human being who is serving as a means to an end should also be thought of as having value in himself. That is, his circumstances must be given a respectful consideration. This is what Kant is contending when he states that no one should ever be treated simply as a means.¹⁶

Furthermore, Kant states this principle so that it not only has reference to the manner in which an individual treats others but also to the way in which he treats himself. A person must also think of himself as having value in himself. The person who commits suicide in order to escape

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 44-46.

painful circumstances treats himself as merely a means to an end. He is using himself as merely a means toward a tolerable state of existence up to the end of his life.¹⁷

In summary, Kant claims that the moral life consists of a good will, a proper sense of duty, and a reverence for the moral law. A good will is governed by reason and is able to act for the sake of duty. But, in order to act for the sake of duty, an individual must have a respect for the moral law. This moral law takes the form of a categorical imperative which demands that an individual act in accordance with that which can be universalized. That which is at the foundation of the will and its ability to act according to the categorical imperative must be an absolute end. According to Kant, this absolute end is man's rational nature, which means that each individual must always treat both himself and others as having absolute value.

In response to Kant's treatment of the moral life, it should first be acknowledged that he makes several contributions to a fuller understanding of man and the moral life. One of these is his recognition of the propensity within man to follow his own self-interests. Man does tend to let his own selfish desires control his actions. Along with this recognition, Kant's principle of the categorical imperative is valuable as a general standard of morality

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 45-47.

to counteract these self-interested inclinations. As T. C. Williams emphasizes, the categorical imperative is a statement of the moral disposition itself. It is an expression of the nature of moral action. By commanding that an act be considered from the standpoint of universality, it calls for an individual to view his moral questions from a much broader perspective than what is dictated simply by his own personal circumstances. When this principle is understood, the person is free to transcend his own selfish interests and to make his moral judgments in an impartial manner. The person is able to adopt an attitude that is more sensitive to the moral demands of the various situations that are encountered.¹⁸ Furthermore, Kant's moral theory makes the contribution of emphasizing that man should be treated as having absolute value. Each person should be looked upon as having value as an end in himself and not simply as a means to an end. However, should this principle be limited in its extension to only rational beings? Perhaps there is a sense in which all beings and not just man should be thought of as having value as an end in themselves. In addition, Kant contributes to our moral understanding by affirming that morality is applicable to the treatment of ourselves.

¹⁸T. C. Williams, The Concept of the Categorical Imperative (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 126-131.

It is the case, as Kant claims, that each person has moral responsibilities to himself.¹⁹

Although there are these contributions made by Kant's discussion of the moral life, it also should be noted that the categorical imperative is limited in its ability to serve as a guide in specific cases. According to Kant, in order for a maxim to be accepted as moral, one must be able to will that it be a universal law. The test that is to be used to determine if a maxim can be so willed is the principle of noncontradiction. If the willing of the maxim leads to a contradiction, then the maxim cannot be considered moral. In discussing this criterion, Kant speaks of two types of contradictions. On the one hand, he says that "Some actions are of such a character that their maxim cannot without contradiction be even conceived as a universal law of nature," ²⁰ This is a contradiction that arises just in formulating the maxim as a universal law, such as in the example that Kant gives of the man's contemplating whether he should borrow some money even though he knows that he will be unable to repay it. The particular contradiction

¹⁹These issues concerning man's selfish desires and his need to transcend them, man's relationship to others and his need for a basic respect for all beings, and also his moral obligations to himself are discussed in Chapter VI of this work.

²⁰Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, p. 41.

involved in this case is that the maxim requires that the individual promise to perform an act that he knows he will be unable to perform. On the other hand, Kant says that in regard to certain other actions ". . . this intrinsic impossibility is not found, but still it is impossible to will that their maxim should be raised to the universality of a law of nature, since such a will would contradict itself."²¹ Here Kant seems to have reference to a contradiction in the sense of a conflict within the individual that is produced by a maxim's being universalized. This kind of contradiction is being pointed to in Kant's example of the prosperous individual who does not want to give any assistance to anyone else. This maxim's being universalized would cause inward antagonism since the individual is aware of possible situations in which he would need help from others.²²

However, Kant's treatment of these two types of contradictions does not succeed in fully clarifying when one is and is not able to will that maxims be universalized. The problem seems to center upon the second kind of contradiction that Kant discusses. In many cases it is difficult to determine whether antagonism within the will

²¹Ibid.

²²Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1960), VI, Part II, pp. 117-118.

would be produced by universalizing the maxim. For example, suppose there is an individual who is considering whether he should travel a long distance to give aid to a friend who is seriously ill. He is aware that his friend needs his assistance, and he feels an obligation to provide it. Yet at the same time he realizes that, if he does this, he will have to neglect certain important responsibilities that he has toward his family and himself. In such a case as this, where there are two approximately equal values working contrary to each other, Kant's categorical imperative is not helpful in resolving the question. One is not able to determine which of these two alternative actions would produce inner conflict and which one would avoid it. Perhaps the exercising of either of these alternatives would cause antagonism within oneself, since this would mean that a seemingly worthy act would have to be neglected. Then again perhaps no antagonism would result from either choice, since, regardless of which alternative is selected, the individual would still be implementing a worthwhile act. But the point is that the categorical imperative does not aid one in deciding which alternative ought to be exercised at the exclusion of the other, because one is not able to determine what can be willed to be a universal law.

True Religion

Thus, Kant emphasizes the importance of the moral law for human existence. However, he further contends that an understanding of this moral law as God's requirement of man is what constitutes religion. Religion, he says, is ". . . the recognition of all duties as divine commands."²³ God does wish to be honored by man, but the kind of honor which he demands is moral service. The direct way for a person to please God is through the performance of his moral duties. Kant says that men

. . . are yet not easily convinced that steadfast diligence in morally good life-conduct is all that God requires of men, to be subjects in his kingdom and well-pleasing to Him. . . . It does not enter their heads that when they fulfill their duties to men (themselves and others) they are, by these very acts, performing God's commands and are therefore in all their actions and abstentions, as far as these concern morality, perpetually in the service of God, and that it is absolutely impossible to serve God more directly in any other way²⁴

Of the various kinds of service to God that are sometimes mentioned, only moral service has intrinsic value. To believe that other types of service have value in themselves is to be caught up in religious illusion. Other forms of service are not necessarily worthless, but any value which

²³ Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 142.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

they might have results from their contribution to the moral life. They must be beneficial in some way to the moral life in order to be considered valuable.²⁵

Man must also be on his guard against speculations that transcend experience. He must avoid becoming preoccupied with questions about the future world, clairvoyant powers, and whether spirits can exist and act apart from the body. These issues are not open to the knowledge of reason. Instead of becoming highly involved in these issues, man must give his attention to his relationships in the world. After all, it is probably the case that man's future state depends a great deal upon how he conducts himself in this world.²⁶

Therefore, for Kant obedience to the moral law is the goal of true religion. This religion is invisible by nature in the sense that its source is a moral disposition which is hidden within the individual. This moral disposition is the inner sense of respect for the moral law which makes possible the moral life. Those persons who have this disposition are members of an ethical commonwealth which is the true church. The visible church, on the other hand,

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 94-96, 158-159, 164-168, 179-180.

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, Traume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Traume der Metaphysik (Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1867), pp. 376-381.

is an effort to give external expression to this commonwealth. It provides outward organization and leadership for the inner reality. This visible church consists of the various ecclesiastical faiths of man, such as the Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan, with each of these faiths making its own particular claims about God's revelation to man.²⁷

In order for true religion to be maintained in an ecclesiastical faith, the moral law must be the highest interpreter. Revelation within the particular faith must be understood in a manner that emphasizes the moral life. For instance, Scripture must be viewed as having as its ultimate purpose the moral improvement of man; therefore, its content should be examined with the intention of discovering these moral insights. Furthermore, the rites that are practiced in the ecclesiastical faiths should be seen from a moral perspective. For example, prayer should not be understood as a means of directly serving God but rather as a possible means of support for good conduct. The only contribution that it can make to the religious life is to quicken the inner disposition to be loyal to our moral duties.²⁸

What is the nature of salvation as it is found in true religion? A saving faith involves the acceptance of both

²⁷ Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, pp. 87-100.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 98-105, 182-186.

a divine and human contribution. There is the element of what God does for the individual through atonement, and there is also the element of what man does through his moral life. But which of these elements takes priority in the salvation experience? The various ecclesiastical faiths view the work of God as the primary aspect of salvation and as that which must come first before the moral life is possible. The contention is that an individual alone cannot bring himself into proper relationship to God. There must be atonement by God to release man from his past transgressions and to provide a basis for a new life. Salvation therefore is a matter of the individual's accepting the work of God, which results in his being able to perform good works.²⁹

Kant insists that it is impossible for a reasonable person to believe that this is the nature of salvation. It is impossible for a thoughtful person to accept that all he has to do is affirm the historical truth of the atonement and that as a result he can regard his guilt as annihilated. Furthermore, it is difficult to believe that good conduct inevitably grows out of this acceptance. Instead of accepting these unreasonable implications, true religion

²⁹Ibid., pp. 106-112.

rejects this ecclesiastical position and claims that salvation begins with the efforts of the individual toward good conduct. True religion views the question of salvation from the practical perspective of the contribution that the individual himself can make. It gives attention to the individual's own moral endeavors and emphasizes that it is these efforts which render the individual worthy of the reception of God's atonement.³⁰

We can certainly hope to partake in the appropriation of another's atoning merit, and so of salvation, only by qualifying for it through our own efforts to fulfill every human duty—and this obedience must be the effect of our own action and not, once again, of a foreign influence in the presence of which we are passive. For since the command to do our duty is unconditioned, it is also necessary that man shall make it, as maxim, the basis of his belief, that is to say that he shall begin with the improvement of his life as the supreme condition under which alone a saving faith can exist.³¹

In addition to stressing the importance of human striving toward the moral life, true religion recognizes that God has provided assistance for these efforts by man through the historical figure of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it insists that the individual profess faith in this God-man. However, in true religion this faith is not simply an empirical faith. It is not merely the affirmation that the God-man was a historical figure and that he participated in certain events. It is rather a rational faith in the sense

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 108-109.

that the God-man is regarded as the archetype of that practical reason that results in a moral life. The God-man is a perfect expression of good conduct, and as a result he serves as the model for true religion. His example provides an incentive as well as a guideline for those persons seeking to practice the moral life.³²

But is there some type of supernatural assistance in regard to a person's particular attempts to conform to this archetype and carry out the moral law? Kant does affirm that the individual who devotes himself to the moral law has a basis for expecting that God will supplement his efforts in some manner.

. . . reason does not leave us wholly without consolation with respect to our lack of righteousness valid before God. It says that whoever, with a disposition genuinely devoted to duty, does as much as lies in his power to satisfy his obligation (at least in a continual approximation to complete harmony with the law), may hope that what is not in his power will be supplied by the supreme Wisdom in some way or other³³

However, there is a mystery surrounding this divine assistance, since we are not able to know its specific content or the exact way in which it is given. There is also no way in which an individual can affect this assistance through external acts such as attending church, saying religious formulas, and going on pilgrimages. Acts of this

³²Ibid., pp. 109-111.

³³Ibid., p. 159.

type cannot in any way cause God to increase his aid for the moral endeavors of the individual.³⁴

Hence, a true religious faith, according to Kant, is one that is dedicated to living the moral life. The individual recognizes that God has provided an example of this moral life in the God-man and also that God assists him in his own efforts toward good conduct. But at the same time he understands that his personal responsibility in the salvation process is to seek to live according to the moral law. Therefore, he concentrates his attention upon obeying the moral law and is constantly engaged in this endeavor.

It should be noted that there are certain contributions that are made by Kant's discussion of religion. One of these is his demonstration of the moral side of religion. There is a need for the recognition of the moral meaning which is included in traditional religious notions such as revelation, Scripture, prayer, and the person of Jesus Christ, and this meaning should be more readily grasped by many as a result of Kant's treatment. Another contribution made by Kant's explication of religion is his claim that God demands that man honor him through the performance of moral duties. Certainly it is the case that God does demand moral service

³⁴Ibid., pp. 108-111, 158-168.

from man and moreover that alienation is present in man's being when these moral duties are not carried out.³⁵

However, there does seem to be a weakness in Kant's definition of religion. His discussion of ecclesiastical religion indicates that he was aware that his own understanding of religion was not in agreement with the conventional meaning of the term. He definitely knew that in major world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam the predominant concept of religion is that there are other duties to God besides one's moral duties. That is, in these traditional religions a demand is made for particular acts of love, praise, and devotion toward God which are not viewed as primarily moral in character. Since Kant did seem to recognize this usual way in which religion is understood, why then did he set forth a contrary definition? Kant's definition of religion must be treated as a persuasive definition. He was suggesting that morality be considered the primary element in religion and that all other aspects of traditional religion be interpreted in terms of their assistance to the moral life. But why does he so strongly emphasize the moral element? One obvious

³⁵The nature of God's will for man and the alienation that results when man does not follow it are discussed in Chapter VI of this work.

reason is that he viewed morality as having more significance for the human situation than ecclesiastical religion had usually given to it; therefore, he was seeking to give morality its proper place within religion. Another reason is that Kant wanted to allow for objective determinations of truth and validity within religion, and, in order for these determinations to be possible, religion had to be reduced to that which could be justified through the use of reason. Morality fulfilled this criterion in that it is capable of a rational formulation. In contrast to those inner feelings that are often associated with such acts as prayer and worship, morality can be outwardly defined and communicated.³⁶

Kant has been severely criticized for this definition of religion because he omitted the importance of a mystical encounter with the Divine. A typical criticism of Kant at this point is one that is set forth by Theodore Greene. He insists that this omission in Kant's definition is the most fundamental weakness of his philosophy of religion. Greene describes this weakness as being Kant's

³⁶Rem B. Edwards, Reason and Religion: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 45-52; Allen W. Wood, Kant's Moral Religion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 201-204.

. . . indifference, or blindness, to what has been judged, by its chief spokesmen, to be religion's distinctive characteristic. This may be designated in a variety of ways—as a sense of communion with God, as an immediate, intuitive knowledge of Him, or as the worship of Him in private prayer and through the agency of public ceremony. Kant's absolute insistence upon the reduction of true religion to morality, arising from his distrust of mysticism and a stiff-necked refusal to bow down even before God Himself, rendered him incapable of appreciating true religious devotion.³⁷

On the other hand, Allen Wood argues that this type of criticism is an unjust estimation of Kant's philosophy of religion. He claims that Kant's purpose in defining religion was simply to show that religion could be given a rational formulation. It is misleading to say that Kant overlooked or neglected the irrational aspect of religion. Kant was aware of this element within ecclesiastical faith, and he was not denying its presence. That is, according to Wood, Kant was not rejecting the possibility of a mystical experience for man through divine revelation. Instead, he was contending that this kind of experience cannot have a rational justification.³⁸

In response to Wood's argument, it should be noted that he is correct in contending that Kant knew of the

³⁷Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, p. lxxvi.

³⁸Wood, Kant's Moral Religion, pp. 201-204.

irrational element in traditional religion and that he was not denying the possible existence of this kind of experience. He is also correct in emphasizing that Kant's definition of religion must be seen as an effort to ground religion in an expression that is subject to rational investigation. However, Wood implies that all that Kant wants to accomplish with his definition is the presentation of a way of conceiving of religion in rational terms. Certainly this was not Kant's full intention. He was not merely demonstrating that religion could be defined in such a manner that it would be subject to rational evaluation, but he was also suggesting that this definition be accepted within the world religions and by the masses of people. He understood his own concept of religion as being the account which would be most beneficial to mankind; therefore, he wanted others to adopt it. Furthermore, since this purpose must be included within Kant's discussion, his definition of religion must be viewed as seeking to reduce the significance of the mystical element in traditional religion. He definitely thought that this irrational element should be considered as highly secondary, and his treatment of religion is an effort to convince others of this.

But what in conclusion can be said about the question of the weakness of Kant's definition? There is a weakness

in his account of religion, but it does not lie merely in his emphasis upon the moral side of religion. In fact, as already indicated, Kant seems to have made a contribution in this area in that he has pointed to the moral nature of religious beliefs. The weakness also is not found in the mere fact that he chooses to disregard the importance of a mystical encounter with the Divine. His definition cannot be said to be weak simply because it does not conform to the conventional understanding. Kant should at least be given the right to disagree with the traditional view of religion, whether one accepts his view or not. Rather, the weakness of his discussion is his lack of justification for his definition. He does demonstrate the need for religion to be viewed from a moral perspective, but he does not demonstrate his contention that it should only be perceived this way. That is, he does not give adequate justification for his rejection of the significance of a mystical type of experience. This rejection marks a radical departure from the lexical definition of religion and is therefore in need of more attention than that which he gives to it. Perhaps Kant thought that the irrational nature of mystical experience was sufficient grounds in itself for his approach. But this assumption in itself is not satisfactory. The reduction of religion to morality is a practical convenience in the sense that it allows an individual to more clearly

and coherently express and communicate his religion, and indeed it can be admitted that this increased cogency is desirable. But why is it so desirable that it warrants the exclusion from religion of the importance of mystical experience? This is the question which Kant does not sufficiently answer.

Thus, Kant views religion as essentially morality and ascribes a subordinate role to the mystical type of experiences that are usually strongly emphasized within the world religions. This position is reflected in his account of salvation in that he gives priority to man's own endeavors as that which makes possible a right relationship with God. Before man can receive that which God has to offer him, he must first be seeking to carry out his moral duty. But the obvious question that arises at this point concerns man's ability to seek the moral life. How does man overcome a life which is predominantly self-centered and acquire a desire to perform his moral duty? Kant does not deal with this question. He does refer to Jesus Christ as providing a model for the moral life, but he does not appeal to Jesus Christ as an explanation for why man initially wants to be moral. That is, he in no sense speaks of Jesus Christ as a Spirit which in some mystical manner gives man a new motivation. Instead, he presents Jesus Christ as one who provides a moral model for someone who has already recognized the significance of that model. The question that still can

be asked concerns how the individual comes to accept the value of that model. Of course, the supernatural aid that Kant refers to also is not able to answer this question. This assistance is interpreted by Kant as in some way helping the individual to do his duty in particular situations after he has already devoted himself to the moral law.

Perhaps Kant thought that there was no special need to give attention to this question except to say, as he does, that some individuals do acquire the disposition of following the moral law. However, it is definitely necessary that he give a much more thorough explanation at this point, since he insists that human effort is the primary element in the salvation process. As it stands, he leaves himself open to the criticism that he simply omits the divine contribution at the beginning of salvation. Why cannot the Divine be viewed as that which enables a person to overcome his self-centeredness and recognize the value of the moral law? In other words, why cannot the Divine be interpreted as working with and enlightening human efforts? If this kind of interpretation were accepted, the human element would no longer be thought of as having priority in the salvation experience or as being the initiator of it. The divine element would have to be given at least an equal emphasis.

In summary, Kant emphasizes the significance of the moral life and claims that true religion has as its goal the

implementation of the moral life. Although there are weaknesses in Kant's treatment, there are also numerous contributions that are made to an understanding of man, God, and the nature of the moral life. These include his affirmation of man's selfish tendencies, his principles of the categorical imperative and man as having absolute value, his demonstration of the moral side of religion, and his view that God demands that man perform his moral duties.

CHAPTER II

FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER

Friedrich Schleiermacher views religion as essentially a feeling of absolute dependence on God and contends that it is this feeling which distinguishes religion from other areas such as knowledge and morality. Although there are weaknesses present within Schleiermacher's discussion, several of his emphases are important as a means of comprehending the nature of the universe and man's relationship to the Divine. One of these is his recognition that man exists in interaction with the rest of nature and that it is possible for man to experience God through these encounters with the material universe. Another is his insistence that man needs the Divine not only as a provider of his existence but also as a means to his personal fulfillment. Still a further contribution in this regard is his acknowledgment that an experience of God in its fullest expression includes an affirmation of morality.

Religion as Feeling

According to Schleiermacher, the universe is constantly revealing itself and constantly affecting each individual, and, as the universe acts upon the individual, a series of sensations are produced which form the content of religion.

Religion or piety refers to those beginning sensations that occur when the individual confronts the universe prior to the formation of ideas. It is the immediate feeling that results from the individual's experience of the universe. This feeling also consists of the acknowledgment that the universe is a unity. It is the recognition that everything finite is interrelated and a part of a large orderly whole. At the same time religion is the feeling that God is responsible for the organized character of the whole and that he is present in it. It is the experience of the infinite as it is involved in the finite. It is to encounter God as he reveals himself in his universe.¹

The contemplation of the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the infinite and of all temporal things in and through the Eternal. . . . Where this is found religion is satisfied, where it hides itself there is for her unrest and anguish, extremity and death. Wherefore it is a life in the infinite nature of the Whole, in the One and in the All, in God, having and possessing all things in God, and God in all.²

In addition, the pious life includes the feeling of becoming one with the universe. The religious individual has experiences of being united with everything that exists.

¹Friedrich Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 36, 45-51, 54, 101.

²Ibid., p. 36.

He feels that he is a part of all that is. Since God is present in the finite, these experiences are also a feeling of being joined with the Divine. It is the feeling that God is present in oneself and that one's own self is present in God. However, this union with the universe is not a constant event for the religious individual. Instead, there are numerous individual experiences of union of extremely short duration which come and go during the life of the individual. Each one vanishes as soon as it reaches consciousness, and then all that remains is one's recollection of the feeling.³ Schleiermacher describes this type of experience in the following manner:

. . . it is fleeting and transparent as the vapour which the dew breathes on blossom and fruit, it is bashful and tender as a maiden's kiss, it is holy and fruitful as a bridal embrace. Nor is it merely like, it is all this. It is the first contact of the universal life with an individual. It fills no time and fashions nothing palpable. It is the holy wedlock of the Universe with the incarnated Reason for a creative, productive embrace.⁴

A significant aspect of the religious individual's feeling of oneness with the universe is his feeling of special affinity with the rest of humanity. The religious individual realizes that others have many of the same experiences as himself as well as many of the same thoughts

³Ibid., pp. 42-44, 71.

⁴Ibid., p. 43.

and sentiments. Consequently, he feels that all humanity is present in his own life, and this enables him to develop a sympathetic attitude toward all other persons. Even though there may be major differences between himself and other persons, such as distinctions of sex and cultural background, he is still able to act with sympathy toward them.

Furthermore, the closeness which the religious individual feels toward the rest of mankind enables him to have a pure self-love. His understanding of himself is extended to apply to all persons, and as a result he is able to avoid narrow self-centeredness and attain a love of self which includes a love of others.⁵

It should be noted at this point, as Rem B. Edwards indicates, that Schleiermacher's understanding of religion as feeling is a particular type of definition of religion. It is not a lexical or reportive definition, since it does not set forth our ordinary view of religion. Our everyday concept of religion gives just as much emphasis to other elements, such as the acceptance of doctrines and the inclusion of morality, as it does to the presence of emotions. Instead, this is a persuasive definition of religion which Schleiermacher sets forth. He is contending that true religion is essentially a matter of feeling and is making

⁵Ibid., pp. 72, 78-79.

the suggestion to others that they alter their concept of religion accordingly.⁶

But does Schleiermacher offer a convincing case for accepting this definition of religion? In examining his treatment, it becomes apparent that he gives very little support for his claim that religion only consists of feeling, but rather he is primarily making this view true by definition. That is, for the most part he is forcing religion into the form that he would like for it to be in without providing reasons for adopting his view instead of some other definition. It is true that in places he seeks to give evidence for his definition by comparing it with that of doctrinalism and with a concept of religion that stresses morality, but even this largely amounts to only a denial of these other definitions. It might be argued that Schleiermacher's contention that religion must be a distinctive sphere from other spheres of existence is his basic reason for accepting his definition. However, to affirm that religion is not identical to another area such as knowledge or morality and that it is not even a combination of these other areas does not necessarily demand that Schleiermacher's definition be accepted. Religion can be viewed as having distinctive characteristics from other spheres of existence without saying that it is merely a

⁶Edwards, pp. 55-61.

matter of feeling. Thus, Schleiermacher does not offer enough support for his definition of religion to warrant its adoption. He does not justify his central claim that feeling is all there is to religion.

Additionally, it should be recognized that Schleiermacher does not give serious enough attention to the issue of the interaction of feelings and thoughts. He defines religion as feelings that result from one's immediate experience of the universe prior to the formation of ideas. For example, he says

All is immediately true in religion, for except immediately how could anything arise? But that only is immediate which has not yet passed through the stage of idea, but has grown up purely in the feeling.⁷

The question that arises is whether in a particular situation one's feelings are to be considered religious if they come after or are simultaneous with the ideas that are formed. By Schleiermacher's definition these feelings would be excluded, but it is not clear that he would really want to exclude them. It may be the case that he is assuming that there is a chronological order for the occurrence of feelings and thoughts. That is, he may be assuming that one's immediate contact with the universe always produces feelings

⁷Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, p. 54.

before the formulation of ideas. But certainly this assumption is false, if indeed he is making it, for in a given situation ideas may precede or occur at the same time as one's feelings. However, even if he is not making this assumption, he is certainly claiming that at least in some contexts feelings come before ideas. This claim itself is not obviously true. In fact, although affections may sometimes be predominant over ideas, it does seem that in any situation in which feelings were present ideas to some extent would always be intertwined with them.

Nevertheless, in setting forth the view that religion is feeling, Schleiermacher makes several significant contributions to a fundamental knowledge of the universe and man's relationship to the Divine. One of these is his emphasis upon the unity of the universe. He recognizes that the universe is an orderly whole with interrelated parts and that man must be viewed as a member of this system in interaction with other members. Along with this, he points out that the universe is an avenue through which God can be experienced. God reveals himself through the finite, and this makes it possible for an individual to encounter the Divine through particular entities in the universe. Furthermore, Schleiermacher realizes that there is a need for man to maintain a sense of closeness to the rest of the universe. Although he especially emphasizes the importance

of an individual's identification with the rest of mankind, he also accepts the need for a person to identify with other parts of the universe as well.⁸

Religion as the Feeling of Absolute Dependence

Thus, Schleiermacher views religion as the immediate feeling that occurs within an individual as he encounters the infinite within the finite. However, he makes the additional claim in his writings that this feeling has absolute dependence as its central attribute. The self-consciousness of the religious individual is one of absolute dependence upon God. Schleiermacher explains the nature of this religious self-consciousness by showing how it is related to what he calls the sensible self-consciousness. The sensible self-consciousness is characterized by the antithesis of the activity and receptivity of the ego. The ego of this sensible self-consciousness is aware that it is constantly undergoing changes, but it also realizes that it is not entirely responsible for these variations. Besides the influence upon the ego that is self-caused, there is also the non-self-caused influence of the objects outside of the self which

⁸These notions of the universe as a unity, as an avenue of God's activity, and as an object of need by man are also discussed in Chapter VI of this work.

are referred to as the Other. This means that on this level of self-consciousness the content of the acts is determined not just by activity but also by receptivity. There is both the activity of the subject for itself which is directed toward the Other and the reception by the subject of the object's effect. Furthermore, this activity produces a feeling of freedom in the subject, whereas a feeling of dependence is produced by the receptivity. As a result of the operation of the ego upon the Other, there is the feeling of freedom, and, as a consequence of the ego's need for the Other, there is the feeling of dependence.⁹

The common element in all those determinations of self-consciousness which predominately express a receptivity affected from some outside quarter is the "feeling of Dependence." On the other hand, the common element in all those determinations and activity is the "feeling of freedom." The former is the case not only because it is by an influence from some other quarter that we have come to such a state, but particularly because we "could" not so become except by means of an Other. The latter is the case because in these instances an Other is determined by us, and without our spontaneous activity could not be so determined.¹⁰

Therefore, the sensible self-consciousness includes both activity and receptivity. But, considered as a whole, its state is one of reciprocity between the subject and

⁹Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1928), pp. 12-14, 18-23.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 13-14.

the Other. The sensible self-consciousness is the awareness of the interaction of the ego and the Other as the ego both acts upon the Other and receives from it. Because reciprocity is the nature of this self-consciousness when viewed in its totality, feelings of both freedom and dependence are always present.

. . . neither an absolute feeling of dependence, i.e. without any feeling of freedom in relation to the co-determinant, nor an absolute feeling of freedom, i.e. without any feeling of dependence in relation to the co-determinant, is to be found in this whole realm.¹¹

In many of the relationships of a subject with its object, there is an approximate balance of these feelings. But indeed there are instances in which one or the other of these elements predominates. In these cases one of the feelings may become imperceptible, but it never is completely absent. Children are highly dependent upon their parents, but they also exercise some degree of freedom. Also, although an absolute autocrat may act with authority in his political decision, he, nevertheless, experiences at least a minute feeling of dependence upon his country.¹²

This sensible self-consciousness is not abolished when the higher self-consciousness of absolute dependence is accepted. Rather, these are two levels of self-consciousness which are able to co-exist together. In the

¹¹Ibid., p. 15.

¹²Ibid., pp. 14-15.

religious individual the sensible self-consciousness is conjoined with the self-consciousness of absolute dependence. But how is it possible for these two to exist together? How is a person able to experience a feeling of absolute dependence if a feeling of freedom always accompanies that person's individual acts of consciousness? According to Schleiermacher, this is possible because the ego is able to acquire a particular perspective upon itself. That is, the ego is able to interpret itself and its relationship to the world as being at all times absolutely dependent upon a source outside itself. This does not mean that the ego no longer experiences a feeling of freedom in its acts of consciousness. This feeling of freedom is still present in the ego in all of its relationships with objects in the world, but with the acquisition of the religious self-consciousness the individual then has dependence as the prevailing feeling in all of his moments of consciousness. The feeling of absolute dependence pervades the total being of the ego and takes priority over all other feelings. Both the active and receptive capacities of the ego are considered to be dependent upon a superior source for their existence.¹³

God is the source toward which the self-consciousness of absolute dependence is directed. God provides the means

¹³Ibid., pp. 15-23.

by which the temporal world and all of its parts are able to exist, but in all of temporal existence it is only man who is able to be aware of the presence of the infinite in the finite. Man is able to acknowledge God's existence in the world and is capable of entering into union with the Divine. The way in which an individual responds to God's revelation and joins into relationship with him is through absolute dependence. The individual feels utterly dependent upon God to provide for his continuing existence.¹⁴

. . . to feel oneself absolutely dependent and to be conscious of being in relation with God are one and the same thing; and the reason is that absolute dependence is the fundamental relation which must include all others in itself. This last expression includes the God-consciousness in the self-consciousness in such a way that, quite in accordance with the above analysis, the two cannot be separated from each other. . . . if we speak of an original revelation of God to man or in man, the meaning will always be just this, that, along with the absolute dependence which characterizes not only man but all temporal existence, there is given to man also the immediate consciousness of it, which becomes a consciousness of God.¹⁵

However, the degree of piety within the religious individual is subject to variation. The strength of the feeling of dependence upon the infinite may be affected by the nature of the relationship within the sensible self-consciousness. The various formations within the sensible

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 17-18.

self-consciousness are different in the extent to which they encourage or discourage the higher self-consciousness. In fact, there may be moments in the religious life in which the feeling of dependence may seem to be absent altogether. But in the religious life these moments are followed by other moments in which the religious feeling strongly asserts itself, a fact which indicates that in the earlier moments the feeling had not completely vanished but was simply weak and unrecognized.¹⁶

In reflecting on Schleiermacher's notion of absolute dependence, it becomes evident that his treatment has some weaknesses. On the one hand, there are some questions concerning this notion to which he does not give attention, and this results in vagueness at several places in his discussion. For example, one question that needs to be dealt with has to do with the difference between the dependence of the sensible self-consciousness and the dependence of the religious self-consciousness. A significant distinction between these two types of dependence, according to Schleiermacher, is that the religious dependence relates to the infinite and the sensible dependence relates to the finite. He also states that the religious dependence is absolute in character, whereas the sensible dependence is

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 22-25.

not since the latter always includes to some degree an exercise of freedom. But is there any further difference between these two kinds of dependence? Is there a distinction in terms of the quality of the feeling within the subject, and, if so, what is this difference? It seems to be implied in Schleiermacher's discussion that there is this further distinction as a consequence of the two basic differences that are set forth, but there is not an effort to determine and contrast the nature of these sensations as they exist within the individual.

Schleiermacher's discussion of the interrelationship of the sensible self-consciousness and the religious self-consciousness is also incomplete. He holds that one still has feelings of freedom and dependence on the sensible level, even after one attains the feeling of absolute dependence. However, the question arises as to whether there is an alteration in the nature of these feelings on the sensible level as a result of the influence of the religious attitude. Since Schleiermacher emphasizes the widespread effect of piety upon the being of the individual, it seems that he would want to say that there is an influence at this point. But, because he does not examine this question, it is not clear what kind of an alteration he would want to accept.

In addition to this vagueness, there is also the problem of an inconsistency when this presentation of absolute

dependence from The Christian Faith is compared to his general account of the feeling of religion from On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers. This inconsistency is no doubt partially a consequence of the imprecision of his treatment, for it is possible for it to be reconciled through explanation without sacrificing his fundamental understanding of religion. But in the manner in which his discussion stands it does exist and needs to be recognized. This inconsistency concerns the duration of the religious experience. In On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, Schleiermacher describes religion as a beginning sensation that a person has as the Divine is encountered in the universe. He also says that there is not a continuous experience, but rather there are many of these experiences with short durations that come and go throughout the religious life. However, in The Christian Faith Schleiermacher seems to want to say that the religious self-consciousness is of constant duration. He views the feeling of absolute dependence as that which pervades all of the experiences of the sensible self-consciousness.

This inconsistency may perhaps be accounted for by an alteration in Schleiermacher's view between the writing of these two works. But it seems quite possible that he intended to retain both of these claims simultaneously and simply failed to demonstrate the way in which they are

compatible. It is the case that these two notions are reconcilable if they are thought of as two different aspects of religious feeling. The immediate and short-term experiences of union with the infinite in the finite can be understood as forming the foundation for the feeling of absolute dependence. That is, when the person has the individual experiences of unity, this enables him to acknowledge his absolute dependence upon the Divine. The immediate experiences give rise to the religious self-consciousness, which does persist throughout all of the experiences of the self.

Even though there are these weaknesses in Schleiermacher's explanation of absolute dependence, he should be given credit for pointing to a valuable concept for understanding the relationship between the Divine and the human. Man is dependent upon God not only in the sense that he provides the possibility of existence itself but also in that he serves as a means of accurately comprehending the nature of existence. It is also the case that an individual must affirm his need for God before the Divine can have a strong positive influence upon him. However, there is an absence in Schleiermacher's writings of a thorough analysis of man's relationship to the universe and to God. It is in this regard that the categories of the mystical and the ethical are useful, for they serve as a

means of implementing this analysis and gaining thereby a more precise understanding of man's interaction with the universe and with the Divine.¹⁷

Religion, Knowledge, and Morality

Hence, Schleiermacher defines religion as feeling and claims that the main characteristic of this feeling is absolute dependence. In addition, he seeks to further explicate the meaning of religion by distinguishing it from the experience of knowing and from the activity of the moral life. In his discussion of knowledge, he refers to both scientific knowledge and theological knowledge. Science is concerned with gaining facts about objects in the universe and with comprehending the relationship between these objects. It seeks to know how each thing differs from all else and to determine what part each thing plays in the whole. Briefly stated, it is an effort to know finite things as they really are, which is certainly a worthy undertaking, but it should not be confused with religion. In order for piety to exist in an individual's life, it is not also necessary for extensive scientific knowledge to be present.

¹⁷ An explanation of man's relationship to the universe and to God in terms of the categories of the mystical and the ethical is given in Chapter VI of this work.

Piety can gloriously display itself, both with originality and individuality, in those to whom this kind of knowledge is not original. They may only know it as everybody does, as isolated results known in connection with other things.¹⁸

However, there is a certain type of wisdom that always accompanies the religious life. The religious individual may not be scientifically knowledgeable, but he does have an understanding of the nature of the universe. He knows that the Divine has given the universe its organization and is currently operating within it. That is, he is conscious of the presence of the infinite within the finite.¹⁹

Piety is also not to be identified with knowledge in theology. There is an overlapping of dogmatics and piety in that piety serves as the object of this study; that is, dogmatics is seeking to learn the nature of piety. But this does not mean that there is a direct correlation between the amount of knowledge that one gains in dogmatics and the depth of one's piety. ". . . the same degree of perfection in that knowledge may be accompanied by very different degrees of piety, and the same degree of piety by very different degrees of knowledge."²⁰ However, when some

¹⁸Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, p. 35.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 35-36.

²⁰Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, p. 9.

say that piety is a matter of knowing, they are not claiming that the content of theological knowledge is that which determines the presence of piety but rather that the certainty that goes along with this knowledge makes this determination. Piety, according to this view, is measured by the strength of the conviction with which one affirms his religious beliefs. According to Schleiermacher, it is correct to say that piety and conviction are correlates if the reference is to the fervor with which one depends upon the infinite. But frequently those who hold this view that conviction is the measure of piety understand conviction in terms of knowing, such as when conviction is measured by the clearness and completeness of the thinking involved. In such cases the error of identifying piety with knowing is again being committed.²¹

Moreover, piety and morality are two different functions of an individual's life. Morality is concerned with action. It refers to the individual's use of his freedom to act upon his environment. Piety, on the other hand, is fundamentally passive in nature in that it is a feeling produced in the individual as the infinite within the universe acts upon him. But is there an effect which religion has upon morality? Does one's piety influence one's moral behavior? Schleiermacher claims that since

²¹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

morality is a different sphere of human life than religion it is not determined by religion.

. . . religion by itself does not urge men to activity at all. If you could imagine it implanted in man quite alone, it would produce neither these nor any other deeds. The man, according to what we have said, would not act, he would only feel.²²

Activity is a consequence of the entire human condition and not simply of the religious sphere. However, when piety is genuinely present, it pervades all of the human condition so that in an important sense activity becomes a reaction to religious feeling. In such cases piety does encourage the individual toward a higher morality. Yet there have been numerous instances of so-called religious individuals who have not given sufficient attention to their moral life. There have been many who have separated themselves from the world in order to live a life of religious contemplation. In this isolated life style these individuals are not able to implement the various activities of the moral life and even sometimes have performed deeds that are recognizably immoral.²³

²²Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, p. 57.

²³Ibid., pp. 36-37, 57-60; Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, pp. 10-11.

Therefore, knowledge, religion, and morality are different departments of human experience since each refers to a distinctive type of relationship to the universe. But, even though this is true, these functions form a unity within the individual in the sense that one of these cannot exist without the other. If a person is religious, then he will neither be immoral nor caught up in ignorance. His moral life will be inspired by his religion, and he will have the basic understanding that the infinite is present in the finite. Even though he may not have a widespread factual knowledge of the universe or an extensive awareness of religious dogmas, he will not be one who pretends to have such knowledge. After all, ". . . the true and proper opposite of knowledge is presumption of knowledge."²⁴ In addition, one cannot gain true knowledge in science or truly practice the moral life if he is not religious. Without piety, the individual will lack both a complete vision of the universe and a deep appreciation for that which exists in the universe. Furthermore, a separation of knowing and doing occurs only in contemplation. In reality, right knowing cannot be had without right acting, and vice versa.²⁵

²⁴Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, p. 38.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 38-40, 44-46.

However, in regard to this discussion by Schleiermacher of the relationship of religion to knowledge and morality, it should be pointed out that there is an inconsistency involved. He wants to hold that religion, knowledge, and morality form a unity within the individual and at the same time claim that religion is a separate sphere of human experience. He contends that these three areas interrelate and that any one in its true form cannot exist without the others. He emphasizes that religion influences knowing by providing a particular perspective toward nature. The universe is understood as containing the infinite, and all knowledge of existence is viewed as being knowledge of the work of the Divine. He also stresses that morality is influenced by religion in that piety creates a basic attitude of sympathy toward others. Morality is never simply a product of one's religion because other factors in the human condition also affect one's actions, but, when present, religion does make a major contribution toward determining one's actions.

Certainly this position of the unity of religion, knowledge, and morality is consistent with the claim that these areas represent three different human functions. There is compatibility between the notion that there is an interrelationship of these three areas and the contention that religion, as essentially feeling, differs from knowing and

doing. However, in several places in On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, Schleiermacher goes further than simply saying that these three areas have different functions and asserts that religion is a sphere entirely distinct from the spheres of knowledge and morality. At one point, in speaking of religion, he says that

Only by keeping quite outside the range both of science and of practice can it maintain its proper sphere and character. Only when piety takes its place alongside of science and practice, as a necessary, an indispensable third, as their natural counterpart, not less in worth and splendour than either, will the common field be altogether occupied and human nature on this side complete.²⁶

At another point he discusses religion and knowledge and says that

. . . though you allege that nature cannot be comprehended without God, I would still maintain that religion has nothing to do with this knowledge, and that, quite apart from it, its nature can be known.²⁷

Finally, in speaking of religion and morality he states that

. . . in a healthy state, man cannot be represented as acting from religion or being driven to action by religion, but piety and morality form each a series by itself and are two different functions of one and the same life.²⁸

Thus, in several statements in On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, Schleiermacher exaggerates in his treatment of how religion differs from knowledge and

²⁶Ibid., pp. 37-38.

²⁷Ibid., p. 35.

²⁸Ibid., p. 59.

morality, and this results in an inconsistency in his thought. But why does he exaggerate at this point? Why does he tend toward the claim that religion is a separate sphere altogether from knowledge and morality? This tendency should probably be viewed as a part of his effort within this work to give religion a greater respectability among the intellectual community of his time. This book consists of a series of speeches addressed especially to an intellectual group that had rejected religion, a group which Schleiermacher referred to as the "cultured despisers of religion." As Rem B. Edwards points out, he was seeking to show these "cultured despisers" that they had not really rejected religion at all, but instead they had rejected certain false conceptions of it. He wanted them to discover that in actuality they were the ones who were truly religious.²⁹

Doctrinalism, which held that religion entails the acceptance of certain beliefs, was one of the misconceptions that Schleiermacher was seeking to overcome. Some of the beliefs that were still associated with Christianity in Schleiermacher's time had already been discarded by the intellectual community, such as the view that the earth was literally created in six days and that it is the center of the universe. But, according to doctrinalism, this meant

²⁹Edwards, pp. 54-55.

a denial of religion, since these beliefs were identified with religion. Furthermore, Schleiermacher was seeking to overcome the misconception that there is a close alignment of morality and religion. Many of the "cultured despisers" were opposed to certain acts that had been propagated in the name of religion, and others simply disagreed with the principles of morality that Christianity supported. But this meant that these "cultured despisers" were rejecting religion. When religion is identified with a type of morality, the rejection of the behavior advocated by this morality or the principles undergirding it signifies a rejection of religion.³⁰

It seems therefore that the inconsistency in Schleiermacher's work of saying that religion is a separate sphere but is at the same time interrelated with other spheres is accounted for by his effort to overcome these preceding misconceptions. He had an intense desire that religion be accepted as a distinctive type of experience that is just as important to the human condition as knowledge and morality, and this desire led him at various points in his writing to exaggerate the manner in which religion is different from knowledge and morality. This means that he actually did hold the view that there is

³⁰Ibid., pp. 56-59.

interaction between religion and these other spheres. He was aware that even when religion is defined as essentially feeling there is still an overlapping of this feeling into other types of experiences.

Moreover, it is especially relevant to this work to note what he claims about the interaction between piety and morality. He is correct in his claim that there are many persons that have had emotional experiences of a religious nature who are not really concerned with the moral life. Some of these would even have to be considered immoral in many ways. Furthermore, Schleiermacher is also correct in his claim that this piety in its genuine form will result in a high level of morality. That is, if an individual actually encounters the Divine and this encounter is interpreted accurately, then the individual will value moral action and be involved in carrying it out. In other words, it is necessary for a moral emphasis to be present before piety is able to reach its fullest form.

In summary, Schleiermacher defines religion as essentially a feeling of absolute dependence upon the infinite, and he claims that it is distinctive in nature from knowledge and morality even though in its genuine form it significantly interacts with these other areas. There are numerous weaknesses in his treatment of religion, but, nevertheless, he does contribute in several ways to a basic

understanding of the universe and man's experience of the Divine. First of all, he is aware that man exists in an orderly and unified universe with relationships to other beings and that man is able to experience the Divine through his contact with these other members of the universe. He also points out that man is dependent upon God's assistance both for existence itself and for a proper understanding of himself and his place in the universe. Along with these contributions, Schleiermacher makes the additional recognition that morality has a part to play in man's relationship to God. The experience of the Divine in its fullest expression includes an acknowledgment of the importance of morality.

CHAPTER III

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

In his discussion of religion and belief in God, Soren Kierkegaard sets forth his concept of faith and also gives a critique of mysticism. He defines faith as essentially an inward existence which involves risk, and he criticizes mysticism primarily because of the aversion that the mystic has toward the temporal. This discussion by Kierkegaard has weaknesses that need to be noted, but at the same time it includes several valuable contributions to a fuller understanding of man's relationship to God. One of these contributions is the importance that he attaches to the inward life, combined with his emphasis on the suffering that accompanies those who give it serious attention. Another contribution that Kierkegaard makes is through the notion of love that he sets forth in treating the risk that exists in the Christian faith. He points out that genuine love comes from God and includes self-renunciation and impartiality. Furthermore, Kierkegaard contributes to a better understanding of man's relation to God by pointing to the danger in mysticism of the individual's having an unhealthy attitude toward this world and not carrying out his ethical responsibilities.

Faith as Inwardness

According to Kierkegaard, the religious individual has a deep appreciation of his inner self. He recognizes that the location of his relationship to the eternal is his inwardness, and he is led thereby to the acceptance of the fundamental element of religious faith, the notion of the subjectivity of truth. This notion affirms that all knowledge of objects in the world must be considered approximate in nature. Objective certainty is not attainable. But, even if it were attainable, this by itself would not be truth. Truth is essentially inwardness. Man exists with an inward self by which he appropriates objects, and it is the way these objects are appropriated which determines whether truth is present. When existing in truth, the individual appropriates the object with inward passion. The individual gives himself with infinite feeling to that which he decides is worthy.¹ "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth."²

¹Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 175-188; Soren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), pp. 5-16, 50-53.

²Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 182.

This inwardness in existing is faith. Faith is the act of passionately believing in an object in the presence of objective uncertainty. This faith always includes suffering. The religious individual may think of some forms of suffering as being a result of unfortunate external events and as only being present at certain times in one's life, but the suffering which has primary significance for him is that which is internal and never ceases to be present. This latter type of suffering is the consequence of the individual's giving earnest attention to his inward self. It results from both the recognition of one's finitude and the recognition of the objective uncertainty of one's basic religious beliefs. The individual takes note of the way he differs from the Divine and knows that it is his own sin that interferes in his relationship with God. He also experiences the anxiety that comes from the risk of faith. He is aware that the all important ideas by which he organizes and understands his existence are not objectively provable.³

But the religious discourse as one hears it nowadays is seldom correct in its categories. The much revered orator forgets that religiosity is inwardness, that inwardness is the relationship of the individual to himself before God, his reflection into himself, and that it is precisely from this that the suffering derives,

³Ibid., pp. 386-407; Soren Kierkegaard, Stages on Life's Way (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1967), pp. 411-420.

this being also the ground of its essential pertinence to the religious life, so that the absence of it signifies the absence of religiosity.⁴

The religious individual does not emphasize to himself that the suffering of certain other persons is more intense than his own or that the possibility is high that his suffering will lessen in the future. Such efforts to soften or remove one's own suffering reveal that the individual has regressed to the pursuit of that which is pleasant. On the contrary, the religious individual views suffering as an essential aspect of his faith and an indication of its continued presence in his life. Consequently, he values suffering intrinsically and wills to remain in it. It is not something he seeks to avoid but something he seeks to maintain.⁵

In addition, this faith also includes the paradoxical affirmation that the particular individual is higher than the universal. "Faith is precisely this paradox, that the individual as the particular is higher than the universal, is justified over against it, is not subordinate but superior—"⁶ The life of faith accepts duty toward God as the absolute and not duty toward the universal. This

⁴Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript. p. 391.

⁵Ibid., pp. 390-407.

⁶Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 66.

means that in making value decisions priority is not given to ethical laws but to the individual's inward nature as it exists in relationship to God. The focus of concern for the individual as he chooses is to be in agreement with God's will for the specific situation. This priority of inwardness is actively proclaimed on those occasions in which duty to God is in conflict with that which is prescribed by ethical guidelines. In these instances that which is declared by the inward self is obeyed instead of the conditions set forth by universal laws. There is a teleological suspension of the ethical in that the individual abandons the ethical in order to implement duty toward God. It is also in these acts of the suspension of the ethical that the paradox involved in this religious attitude is most clearly revealed, for it is in these cases that the individual explicitly declares that the universal does not always hold. The universal is not truly universal because at times God requires that it be rejected.⁷

There is an example of a teleological suspension of the ethical in the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. In the story God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Abraham obeyed God and took his son up the mountain and prepared him for sacrifice. When Abraham was about to take the life of Isaac, God intervened and provided a

⁷Ibid., pp. 64-91.

ram for Abraham to sacrifice instead. Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac, and, if God had not intervened, he would have carried out the act. According to ethical guidelines, this would have been an act of murder, which is strictly forbidden, but Abraham was planning to perform the act anyway. His absolute duty was toward God, and God was commanding him to sacrifice Isaac. Thus, Abraham suspends the ethical law against murder in his intention to kill Isaac. This indicates his acceptance of the absurdity that the particular is higher than the universal. That is, he raises his own inward relationship to God above the demands of the ethical.⁸

Abraham is a knight of faith and is therefore quite different from a tragic ethical hero. The latter violates an ethical law in order to realize a higher one, such as in the case of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia for the good of the state. Consequently, a tragic hero ultimately remains within the ethical, which means that his actions are capable of being understood by others and also that he acquires the security that is provided by supporting the universal. On the other hand, the knight of faith such as Abraham is willing to oppose the ethical entirely in order to fulfill a goal outside of it. He renounces the ethical in order to be true to his inward self and the will of God. In such an action, a knight of faith loses

⁸Ibid.

the security of the universal and feels the pain of not being able to make himself intelligible to others. He has only his inward understanding to rely on.⁹

Thus, Kierkegaard claims that in the making of moral and religious decisions the inwardness of faith must be given priority over ethical guidelines. This priority not only has reference to cases in which the person of faith must oppose society's concept of good when he is convinced that it is in error, but also it includes cases in which the good, as accepted both by society and the individual himself, is in opposition to that which God demands of the individual. It is in regard to these latter cases that Kierkegaard emphasizes the need for the knight of faith to be willing to suspend the ethical in order to be loyal to God.

But what should be said in regard to an evaluation of Kierkegaard's discussion of faith as inwardness? Certainly he should be given credit for his recognition of the importance of inwardness to human life. It is the case, as Kierkegaard indicates, that it is the inner self that decides what is valuable in life and how the individual will approach existence. He is also correct in pointing out that for those who give serious consideration to their inwardness these decisions are accompanied by a realization of objective

⁹Ibid., pp. 69-70, 86-91.

uncertainty and a corresponding inner suffering. However, a weakness in his discussion is the secondary role that he gives to the ethical. According to Kierkegaard, even if in making a decision the individual does grasp the true meaning of the ethical, he still must remember that it may not be the divine will. He must give priority to what might be called his religious intuition or his inner feeling about God's will. But to accept this as always being the ultimate authority is to open the way to all kinds of heinous and contradictory actions, for under these circumstances it is possible for just about any imaginable deed to be said to be sanctioned by the Divine. Brand Blanshard makes this point in a piercing manner by revealing what some in the past have considered to be the divine will.

There were Jewish leaders who claimed a divine imperative to destroy the Amalekites, man, woman, and child. There were Christians—St. Louis described himself as one—who thought the proper Christian reply to an argumentative Jew was to bury one's sword in him to the hilt. John Woolman felt a divine interdict against his preparing papers as a magistrate for the sale of a slave. John Newton, the hymn-writer, reported that some of his sweetest hours of communion with the divine were spent while he was the captain of a slaveship, separated by a few planks from a weltering mass of human misery. Joseph Smith claimed to know that the divine will approved of plural wives; Mohammed a like claim, but limited the divine approval to four; the Christian fathers limited it still

further to one; and St. Paul construed it as favoring those who did not marry at all.¹⁰

References such as these indicate that each individual needs to appeal to ethical principles to help make sure that what he thinks is the voice of God is not merely the voice of his own prejudices and egocentric desires.

This is not to say that inner intuition should be excluded or even considered secondary in the making of these decisions, for it is no doubt the case that ethical principles can also be construed in a highly subjective and narrow fashion. Many horrible events have been justified not only on the basis of inward intuition but also through the use of ethical criteria. It seems that, instead of raising one of these sources above the other, both should be fully utilized in making value decisions. If this is done, then each can serve as a check upon the other. Each source can help the individual to recognize errors that might occur through the other source. Any approach, including Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical, which always considers one of these sources to be primary is not allowing the other source to make its contribution. The other source's activity as a controlling agent is canceled, and disastrous consequences can ensue.

¹⁰ Brand Blanshard, "Kierkegaard on Faith," The Personalist, XLIX (Winter, 1968), p. 10.

Furthermore, the precise meaning of the story of Abraham and Isaac is extremely difficult to determine; consequently, it is not evident that this story was intended as an example of the teleological suspension of the ethical. There are other possible interpretations of the story which do not give support to Kierkegaard's approach to the ethical. Kierkegaard's interpretation relies upon the claim that God at one point at least willed that Abraham sacrifice Isaac. Without this demand by God there is no divine justification for suspending the ethical. But it is not necessarily the case that God actually willed this. In fact, it does not seem consistent with God's loving nature that he would require this act at any time, even as a test of faith. Certainly Abraham's faith was his willingness to obey God regardless of what God requested of him. But it is not necessary to say that Abraham correctly understood God, at least not at the beginning of the story. It is more plausible to view Abraham as one who was mistaken about God's will until the point when he was about to kill Isaac. At that moment the full realization came to him that God did not really want him to do this. Thus, this story not only points to the faith of Abraham but also to his growing understanding of the ethical. Abraham recognized that God does not desire human sacrifice. In addition, it is probable that the emphasis on faith and ethical understanding in the story

refers not only to Abraham but also to his clan of Hebrew people. It is sometimes accepted that the patriarchal stories in Genesis do not just pertain to the leader of the group but to the group as a whole. If this is indeed the case, then the story testifies to the strong faith of the Hebrews and to the ethical progress that they were making at that early period of their history.

Even if it is accepted, as Kierkegaard claims, that at the beginning of the story God did actually command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, this does not appear to be sufficient grounds for the notion of the teleological suspension of the ethical. It might be held in such an interpretation that God either never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac but only commanded it at first as a test of faith, or that God at some point changed his will for Abraham. In either case it must be admitted that God in the end did not require the sacrifice but rather rejected it. Therefore, even assuming this type of interpretation, the story's final position is a denial of a suspension of the ethical. That is, God does not demand that an individual actually commit such an unethical act even though for some reason he might temporarily command it.

Faith as Risk

In addition to defining faith as essentially inwardness, Kierkegaard also emphasizes that there is a risk which

accompanies faith. Faith necessarily involves the risk of believing in that which is objectively uncertain, and, as this risk increases, the possibility of inwardness increases. That is, when a greater degree of objective insecurity is present, a greater intensity in inward feeling is required to believe. The greater the risk, the greater the possible profundity of the faith.¹¹

Religiousness B involves a greater risk than religiousness A. Religiousness A refers to all forms of religious belief except the Christian faith. One characteristic of this religiousness is guilt-consciousness. The individual with this faith does acknowledge human sin and to a certain degree the way that it limits man, but he does not recognize that it is a basic state of man's existence, that it is present in all human activity. Instead, he thinks of sin in terms of the guilt that results from these acts. He is aware of his guilt, and he wants to overcome it by avoiding those acts that cause it. Another characteristic of religiousness A is its immanence. It claims that the individual discovers the eternal strictly within himself. His relationship to the eternal is in no sense conditioned by any event which is external to his inward existence.

¹¹Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 182-188.

This position of immanence is a religious form of the subjectivity of truth, and, like all other positions that accept this notion, there is a paradox involved. The faith of religiousness A holds with inward passion to the eternal which is objectively uncertain. The uncertain is affirmed as though it were certain.¹²

The Christian faith or religiousness B includes the full recognition of the seriousness of sin, that sin pervades all human activity. But the most significant characteristic of Christianity is its affirmation of the Christ event, which transcends the inwardness of the individual. This means that, according to the Christian faith, there is a sense in which subjectivity is not truth. That is, the Christian is dependent upon an external event for his understanding of the eternal. Furthermore, because of this affirmation, the Christian faith involves an even greater risk than the faith present in religiousness A. The paradox present in the Christian faith does not simply result from the relationship of the individual to the object, but it is present in the object itself. Christianity calls for the individual to believe against his understanding by accepting the absurdity that God has become a man.

The absurd is—that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God has come into being,

¹²Ibid., pp. 180-188, 239-240, 468-477, 493-498, 505-519.

has been born, has grown up, and so forth, precisely like any other individual human being, quite indistinguishable from other individuals.¹³

This absurdity is an absolute paradox in that an absolute distinction between man and God is present. The paradox affirms not only that the Divine and human fully exist in one form, but also that man and God have extremely different natures. Man is viewed as an existing individual with all of the limitations implied by this existence, whereas God is said to be infinite in nature.¹⁴

Because this paradox is absolute in this sense, it cannot be explained by seeking to resolve its contradictory character, as speculative philosophy attempts to do. Speculative philosophy seeks to show that the paradox is not really a paradox or that it is only a paradox to a certain degree. But this is an abrogation of the paradox and not an explanation of it. To explain the paradox is to show that it is indeed a paradox. It is to demonstrate that there is a mystery present and to let this mystery reveal itself.¹⁵

Thus, the Christian religion requires the acceptance of the absurdity that God has entered into history in the

¹³Ibid., p. 188.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 180-209, 468-477, 493-498, 503-519.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 194-209.

form of a man. Since the object itself is absurd in this religion, its repellent factor is higher than that of any object that is posited in religiousness A. That is, there is a greater tendency for an individual to reject the absolute paradox than to reject any other object in religiousness. This means that the acceptance of the Christian faith demands the most profound inwardness possible. It requires the deepest inward passion of all.¹⁶

This Christian faith is also characterized by the type of love which is practiced. This love is grounded in God. The Christian receives it from God and appropriates it into his inner self. Since it exists within the inward depths of the individual and cannot be perceived, its nature can never be completely comprehended. But at the same time it is the source of all of the individual's works of love.¹⁷

As the quiet lake is fed deep down by the flow of hidden springs, which no eye sees, so a human being's love is grounded, still more deeply, in God's love. If there were no spring at the bottom, if God were not love, then there would be neither a little lake nor a man's love. As the still waters begin obscurely in the deep spring, so a man's love mysteriously begins in God's love.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 185-188; Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, pp. 40-41.

¹⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, Works of Love (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), pp. 26-28, 45-52, 87, 123-124, 129-130.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

When the individual receives this love from God, he is transformed so that he gains the will and capacity to express this love himself. He loves God in a genuine manner because he appreciates what God is and what God has done for him. However, he also becomes an instrument for God in the world. He feels a duty to love other persons because he recognizes the need for this love in human relationships. In the performance of his duty the Christian maintains security. He has the support of the eternal and is therefore stable in his love and not threatened by changing circumstances. He continues to love even though he may be hated in return, and he is not despairing even when confronted by unfortunate circumstances. The Christian also is genuinely free in the performance of his duty. He is dependent upon the eternal as the source of his love, but it is this dependence which allows him to be independent. It enables him not to be adversely affected by the changes in other people so that he remains free to love people in whatever way they might exist.¹⁹

In contrast to this Christian duty to love others, there exists that form of love which is simply instinctive and inclinational. This spontaneous love that is found in romantic relationships can be changed to something else; consequently, individuals who are involved in this type of

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 44-57, 70, 113-114, 173-174.

relationship experience anxiety over the possibility of change. They are afraid that the other person will cease to love them. These individuals also exist in despair since they give themselves with infinite passion to a particular individual instead of to the eternal. This despair may be hidden during favorable circumstances, but it is revealed during misfortune. Furthermore, those individuals who have spontaneous love are not actually free. They are not free to love other persons when the existence of those individuals is altered.²⁰

The essential characteristic of Christian love is self-renunciation. It is the will of an individual to give up that which is desired in order to benefit others. The Christian does not expect reward or approval in exchange for his actions but is willing to love even though he is hated in return. This type of self-renunciation differs from the purely human conception of self-renunciation. In the latter, an individual is willing to deny his interests so that he can be appreciated and honored by others as a good and wise man. But this self-renunciation which is supported in the world is not Christian in nature. Christian self-renunciation is the willingness to deny oneself in situations in which there is no possibility of receiving

²⁰Ibid.

praise or honor from others. In such cases Christian love is an offense against the practical sagacity of society and is subject to scorn and ridicule. It is regarded as stupidity and insanity. Therefore, Christian love involves a double danger. There is first the danger that results from being willing to act on behalf of the other without regard for oneself. There is also the danger of the mockery of the world that comes when one's self-renunciation is disinterested or in other words when there is no recognizable benefit in return.²¹

Hence, one who has Christian love is able to love God and others in the true sense. But to do this is at the same time to love oneself properly. It is to treat oneself in the manner that is most inwardly meaningful and rewarding. That which often is a hindrance to a genuine love of oneself is the attitude of partiality. To have preferences toward the people that one loves is to have a false love of oneself. For example, to love one of a higher social status than oneself can easily be a preference and therefore an act for personal gain. The Christian does not show partiality in his relationships but instead practices equality in his love of others. He does not remove distinctions from life, such as those of birth, education, and social position. These

²¹Ibid., pp. 133-134, 188-190, 336-343.

differences remain in earthly existence and tempt individuals toward a life of partiality. But the Christian is not drawn into this type of life which utilizes these differences in forming relationships. The Christian has been transformed by God, and this enables him to love impartially.²²

In poetic descriptions, both erotic love and friendship are preferential in character; consequently, they are instances of false self-love. In each case the individual and the object of love come together to become one self. The more securely these two selves are joined together the more exclusive their attitude toward others becomes. Therefore, these types of relationships must be viewed as selfish acts. It is one's other self that is being loved and not the self of another person. This does not mean that one should condemn or seek to avoid romantic involvement or friendships. That which should be excluded is the element of preference in these relationships. The Christian is able to continue loving his neighbor at the same time that he expresses erotic love and friendship.²³

In evaluation of Kierkegaard's treatment of the risk of faith and his distinction between religiousness A and religiousness B, it should first be acknowledged that in

²²Ibid., pp. 66-73, 81, 113-114, 331-335.

²³Ibid., pp. 65-74.

several ways he contributes to a better understanding of the nature of love. Genuine love, as he says, does find its source in God, since it is something that is shared with man by God. It is also the case that this love requires self-renunciation in that the individual who practices it must be willing to deny his own immediate desires in order to assist others. Furthermore, as Kierkegaard indicates, genuine love demands that an individual be impartial and that he be willing to love those who do not love him in return.²⁴

Although Kierkegaard's discussion of the risk of faith includes the positive element of his definition of love, it also has the weakness of claiming that the Christian faith requires greater inwardness than any other kind of faith. It should be recognized that there have been other objects of religious belief in human history that are paradoxical in nature. It is the case that a greater degree of inwardness is required to believe the absurdity that God has become man than to affirm a religious object that does not involve such a paradox. But how does the inwardness of the Christian faith compare with the inwardness of other religious faiths that accept paradoxical objects?

²⁴The notion of love is also discussed in Chapter VI of this work.

Animism, for example, was practiced by Stone Age man and is practiced in certain primitive cultures today. It is paradoxical in the sense that a nonliving object such as a rock is said to have life within it. But upon examination it is clear that the inwardness of this belief is significantly different from that of the Christian faith. Even if it is accepted that the organic and inorganic have substantially different natures, it is not correct to say that the adherent of animism thinks of the object in terms of a paradox. He does not think of the object as being both living and nonliving but instead as simply being alive. Consequently, he does not believe against his understanding, which means that his belief does not require the degree of inward intensity that is present in the Christian faith.

Another religious belief involving a paradox concerns the gods worshipped by the ancient Egyptians. Some of their deities were thought of as being partly human and partly animal. They were represented as having the head of an animal and the body of a human or vice versa. One of these was Knummu, who had a ram's head and a man's body, and another was Sekhmet, who had the head of a lioness and the body of a woman. These deities that were affirmed by the Egyptians are paradoxical in two ways. There is the paradox of the animal and the human existing in one being as well as the paradox of the Divine existing in the finite.

Both of these differ significantly from the Christian paradox however. Although these deities are conceived of as having both animal and human characteristics, it was not claimed that they are either completely human or completely divine. A part of them was thought to be human and another part animal. This means that the paradoxical element of these deities is weaker than the Christian paradox, which claims that both the Divine and human fully exist in one being. Furthermore, they did not consider the god to have another nature in addition to its animal-human form. Included in the Christian concept of God are such characteristics as pure spirit and omnipresence which cannot be ascribed to God's incarnate expression. But for the ancient Egyptians the god only had those characteristics which were present in its animal-human form. As a result, their belief in these deities was not an act which in any sense opposed their understanding of the Divine. Thus, these paradoxes in the ancient Egyptian religion are not as rigorous in nature as the paradox in the Christian faith; consequently, they do not demand as great a degree of inwardness to accept them as is required in the Christian affirmation.

However, Kierkegaard's argument becomes unconvincing when certain other paradoxes are considered. There are

other religious beliefs with reference to a god incarnate which are similar to the Christian formulation. A more well-known example is the contemporary Hindu acceptance of the god Vishnu. This god is viewed by the Hindu as the preserver of goodness. He watches from the sky, and, when he perceives that goodness is threatened on earth, he exerts his influence in favor of the good. There are numerous stories in Hindu literature about how Vishnu has come to earth as an animal or a man to work for the good. Krishna, the charioteer for the warrior Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gita, is a famous hero in Hindu literature who is said to be Vishnu incarnate.

Certainly there are differences between the incarnations of Vishnu and the incarnation in Christianity, but the question of relevance at this point concerns whether these differences result in the inwardness of the Christian faith being superior to the inwardness in this Hindu faith. It does not seem that they do, at least not necessarily. The important qualities set forth by Kierkegaard that lead to the high degree of passion in the Christian faith can also be present in the belief of the Hindu. These include the absurdity that the Divine and human both fully exist in one form, the absolute distinction between the Divine and the human, and the conscious belief against one's understanding. This means that Kierkegaard has not demonstrated

that Christianity is the highest form of religiousness in terms of the depth of inwardness required for faith. There are other religious positions that call for the same degree of inwardness.

But perhaps Kierkegaard was not really seeking to objectively prove that Christianity requires the highest degree of inwardness of any religion. Henry Allison's view is that in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript Kierkegaard is utilizing a particular method of presenting his notion of Christianity. He claims that the Concluding Unscientific Postscript must be considered an ironical jest seeking to demonstrate the subjective nature of Christianity. Kierkegaard did employ rational arguments in the work to explain and justify Christianity, but he was not attempting to prove the objective superiority of Christianity. Instead, his intention was to lead the reader to the recognition that all efforts of this kind are ultimately ineffective and misleading. At the same time he was saying that any objective treatment of Christianity is to some extent laughable, especially when it is taken in absolute seriousness, for the true meaning of Christianity simply cannot be conveyed in this manner.²⁵ Therefore, according

²⁵Henry E. Allison, "Christianity and Nonsense," The Review of Metaphysics, XX (March, 1967), pp. 453-460.

to this interpretation of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard is to be viewed as wanting the reader to reflect on the objective weakness of the work, along with his statements about the importance of inwardness in Christianity. Further, he hoped that on the basis of this reflection the reader would move to the understanding that Christianity in its genuine expression is existential and not conceptual. However, his goal for the reader even went beyond his gaining this understanding. He was seeking existential participation on the part of the individual. He wanted the reader to fully experience Christianity in his own existence.

This interpretation of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript is given support by the fact that there is evidence that Kierkegaard was aware of the possible effectiveness of this method in dealing with religious questions. He directly discusses the concepts of irony and humor in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript and at one point indicates that humor can be useful in recognizing the inwardness of the religious life.²⁶ It appears therefore that throughout the Concluding Unscientific Postscript Kierkegaard is using this method to demonstrate

²⁶Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 447-452.

the discrepancy between outward theorizing and inward appropriation and at the same time to emphasize the centrality of the latter in the Christian faith. Furthermore, in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript the humorist is described as one who exists outside the religious realm. He has an objective knowledge of the nature of Christianity, but he has not appropriated it into his inward self. He remains in the realm of jest and provides objective insights concerning the meaning of Christianity.²⁷ This understanding of Kierkegaard's concept of a humorist must be related to the fact that Johannes Climacus, the pseudonymous author of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, describes himself as not being a Christian but as having some understanding of its nature.²⁸ From this it seems that it is correct to conclude that Kierkegaard is presenting Climacus as being a humorist and that is the technique being used within the Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Finally, this interpretation is given support by the recognition that, if it is not accepted, Kierkegaard must be said to be contradicting himself. To view him as seeking to prove the truth of Christianity through conceptual arguments is to make him guilty of exactly what he criticizes through his notion of the subjectivity of truth. It means that he is

²⁷Ibid., pp. 450-452.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 19-20.

ultimately considering Christianity to be an objective matter. To avoid the implication that Kierkegaard was involved in this rather naive self-contradiction, it seems that the Concluding Unscientific Postscript must be interpreted as a piece of ironical humor.

Hence, Kierkegaard did not objectively demonstrate that the Christian faith requires greater inwardness than any other religious faith. But, on the other hand, it seems that it should be acknowledged that this was not his goal not only because he did not think such a demonstration could ever be conclusive, but also, and even more significant, because he did not think that such a demonstration by itself could ever reach the essence of faith. Perhaps the incompleteness of his account of other religions was an effort to stimulate the reader to investigate various faith positions for himself and compare them to Christianity. However, whether this is correct or not, it seems that he wanted the reader to realize that, because of the subjective character of these faiths, an objective comparison would never be entirely adequate.

Opposition to Mysticism

Although Kierkegaard does consider the Christian faith to be valuable for man, he at the same time is highly critical of mysticism. One of his criticisms concerns the

favoritism that the mystic thinks he receives from God in his relationship with him. To understand God in this manner, says Kierkegaard, is to degrade the Divine because it makes him into a being that shows partiality to particular persons. A further criticism that Kierkegaard has of the mystic is what he says in his softness and weakness. It is understandable that an individual would want to be assured that his own love for God is truthful and sincere. This means that at times he may pray for God to reveal to him whether his love is really genuine. But the mystic is preoccupied with the matter so that he is constantly doubting and testing his love for God. The mystic lacks the strength of character that is needed to affirm himself and the love that God has given him.²⁹

However, the primary reason for Kierkegaard's opposition to mysticism is the kind of attitude that the mystic takes toward this world and his relationships with others. The mystic does not understand that history exists as a gift of God and that he has a responsibility to become involved in it and to seek to contribute to its development. Instead, he has an aversion toward his present existence. The temporal is viewed as being merely a probation period in which, for the most part, the infinite spirit and finite

²⁹Soren Kierkegaard, Either/Or (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), II, pp. 248-249.

spirit are separated and in which the individual is being tested and tried by the Divine. The only significance that the temporal has for the mystic is that it is a time of trial and that it makes possible momentary encounters with the Divine.³⁰

According to Kierkegaard, this attitude by the mystic indicates that in actuality he has a disdain for God's love, since it is God's love that has provided this existence. Kierkegaard says,

Who will deny that a man shall love God with all his heart and with all his mind, yea, that he is not only to do this but that to do it is blessedness itself? From this, however, it by no means follows that the mystic is to disdain the reality of existence to which God has assigned him, for thereby he really disdains God's love or requires a different expression of it from that which God is willing to give.³¹

Furthermore, this attitude by the mystic leads him to isolate himself from others. He chooses the solitary life and the life of religious contemplation, and as a result he ignores his responsibilities toward others. Brief moments of isolation may be beneficial to the inwardness of an individual and therefore contribute to his earthly relationships. But, in the case of the mystic, isolation becomes

³⁰Ibid., pp. 249, 254-255.

³¹Ibid., p. 248.

a sickness because it is made to be a way of life.³²

Kierkegaard insists that

He who devotes himself one-sidedly to the mystical life becomes at last so alien to all men that every relationship, even the tenderest, the most heartfelt, becomes indifferent to him. It is not in this sense one is to love God more dearly than father and mother; God is not so self-loving as that, neither is He a poet who wishes to torment men with the most frightful collisions—and hardly could a more frightful thing be conceived than that there might be a collision between love for God and love for the persons for whom love has been planted by Him in our hearts.³³

Kierkegaard claims that the basic fault of the mystic is that he chooses himself abstractly and not concretely. He does turn to the infinite in repentance, but he does not continue in his relationship to the finite. He chooses himself out of the world and does not choose himself back into it. He thinks of himself as existing in the infinite, and this leads him to disregard human responsibilities. In contrast, the person who chooses himself concretely maintains his responsibilities to humanity. He is able to continually think of himself as existing in this world. At the same time that he chooses himself out of the world, he is also choosing himself back into it. Even though he

³²Ibid., pp. 247, 249, 251.

³³Ibid., p. 249.

turns to God in repentance for his sins, he does not seek to exclude himself from the finite.³⁴

In response to Kierkegaard's critique of mysticism, it should be acknowledged that his criticisms do point to weaknesses that need to be avoided by mystics. As he indicates, these are characteristics which are unhealthy for the mystic and which depreciate God and the meaning of divine love. However, it should also be pointed out that in Kierkegaard's discussion it is not clear to what extent he thinks his criticisms apply to mysticism. That is, it is not clear whether he thinks these are merely prominent weaknesses held by mystics or whether he regards each of them to be applicable to all mystics. But since he does not qualify any of his criticisms in regard to their application, it appears that he thinks of each of them as having reference to all mystics. If indeed this is Kierkegaard's position, that all mystics are guilty of each of these, then certainly he must be challenged. It is possible to emphasize the importance of mystical experiences and actually to be involved in them without being characterized by each of these traits.

The weakness of mysticism that Kierkegaard considers to be most serious is the attitude that is taken toward this world and relationships to others. In this regard,

³⁴Ibid., pp. 252-256.

Kierkegaard is no doubt correct in emphasizing the seriousness of this trait, for its presence has a highly important influence upon the life of the mystic and the lives of other people as well. This attitude does result in the person's being derelict in his ethical responsibilities, and it is certainly a strength of Kierkegaard's discussion that he points this out. But again this attitude should not be presented as a necessary accompaniment of mystical experience. That this kind of attitude is always a part of mysticism is also denied by Walter T. Stace. He indicates that some mystics have even stressed the need for mystical experiences to be followed by a high moral life. He says

It is sometimes asserted that mysticism is merely an escape from life and from its duties and responsibilities. . . . It is possible that there have been mystics who deserved this kind of condemnation. To treat the bliss of the mystical consciousness as an end in itself is certainly a psychological possibility. And no doubt there have been men who have succumbed to this temptation. But this attitude is not the mystic ideal, and it is severely condemned by those who are most representative of the mystics themselves. . . . The Christian mystics especially have always emphasized that mystical union with God brings with it an intense and burning love of God which must needs overflow into the world in the form of love for our fellow-men; and that this must show itself in deeds of charity, mercy, and self-sacrifice, and not merely in words.³⁴

³⁵Walter T. Stace, The Teachings of the Mystics (New York: New American Library, 1960), p. 26; The nature of mystical experience and its relation to the ethical is also discussed in Chapter VI of this work.

Hence, Kierkegaard defines faith in terms of both inwardness and risk, and he criticizes mysticism especially because of the negative attitude which it demonstrates toward this world. A strength of this presentation is his acknowledgment of the significance of the inner self and the struggles which accompany a faith position. An additional positive aspect of this discussion is Kierkegaard's explanation of genuine love as having its origin in the Divine and as carrying with it self-renunciation and impartiality. Still a further contribution of Kierkegaard's treatment is his recognition of the weakness in mysticism when it disvalues the temporal and avoids ethical responsibilities.

CHAPTER IV

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Friedrich Nietzsche is opposed to Christianity because of its denial of the will to power, which for him is the basic motive force of all organisms. According to him, Christianity had been detrimental to European culture because of its hostility to life and disagreement with the nature of existence. However, Nietzsche also proclaims that God is dead, which for him meant that in the nineteenth century in Europe Christianity had begun to wane in popularity and that the influence of the Christian concept of God was declining. He thought that it was necessary for Christianity to be discarded in order to make room for the overmen who would be superior human beings practicing the values of the will to power.

The weaknesses in Nietzsche's discussion include his overlooking the different types of Christianity in setting forth his views, the vagueness of his doctrine of the will to power, and the possibility that this doctrine does not actually describe a life of strength. But, nevertheless, there are facets of his discussion which are indeed valuable. He emphasizes the need for a tolerant attitude and also points out that genuine love must not be thought of as

completely unegoistic. In addition, he recognizes that some concepts of God are unhealthy and need to be cast aside.

Opposition to Christianity

According to Nietzsche, it is a mistake for man to believe that there is a supernatural realm which is separate from this world and that is unverifiable by man's empirical experience. Along with this, it is a mistake for man to claim that there is a superior Being that rules the universe. There is no Being that commands nature, and there is no Deity present within nature. The concept of a supernatural God and related ideas such as "beyond," "sin," and "eternal life" are the inventions of man.¹ ". . . they are mere creations of fancy, or, more strictly speaking, lies" ²

Nevertheless, the people of Europe have continued to accept these views of another world, and, in particular, they have given credence to the doctrines of Christianity. As a result of this Christian influence, the people of Europe have been led to appreciate the supernatural and to despise

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Joyful Wisdom (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1964), pp. 152-153, 184; Walter Kaufmann (ed.), The Portable Nietzsche (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), p. 125.

²Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1964), p. 52.

the natural. Christianity has turned man's attention toward existence in a heavenly world and has encouraged its believers to seek to escape from this life. At the same time, it has brought about a disparagement of life on this earth.

Christianity hates the senses and the joy resulting from the senses. The body and its desires are thought of as being evil. It also is opposed to the wisdom of this world. It considers reason to be something that is sinful; even doubt is considered a sin.³

This hostility toward life within Christianity is manifested by those who serve as its leaders. Both the theologian and the priest in this religion demonstrate an unhealthy attitude toward existence. The theologian has an arrogant, dogmatic, and distorted perspective toward all things. He looks at life from what he considers to be a superior vantage point, and he attributes what he considers right to a higher origin. He elevates his position into a morality, a virtue, and a holiness, and he concedes worth only to his own values. The theologian is prevented from having a respect for reality by his instinct to preserve his theological view. He is so concerned with defending his own perspective that he closes his eyes to reality and all other positions, and this prevents his recognizing the

³Kaufmann, pp. 142-145, 571-572, 589, 627-635.

falsehood of his perspective. The theologian is guilty of reversing the concepts of true and false.⁴

Wherever the theologian's instinct extends, value judgments have been stood on their heads and the concepts of "true" and "false" are of necessity reversed; whatever elevates it, enhances, affirms, justifies it, and makes it triumphant, is called "false."⁵

The hostility of the priest toward life is revealed in his attitude toward science. The priest sees science as his greatest danger, as the enemy of God. There is no need for priests or God when man becomes scientific since man can then be dependent upon himself. The greatest weapons of the priests against science are sin and suffering. They are used to prevent man's emancipation from the priest. The concepts of guilt, punishment, and a moral world order were invented by the priests to be used against science. Man is said to be guilty of sin if he uses his own mind and does not depend on God.

Science prospers under happy circumstances. When man has a surplus of time and is in a happy state of mind, a quest for knowledge is more likely to occur. In order to combat science, the priests attempt to make man unhappy. An emphasis is placed upon the suffering of man. Man is told to turn to God and to the priest in order to overcome his miserable existence.⁶

⁴Ibid., pp. 574-576.

⁵Ibid., p. 576.

⁶Ibid., pp. 628-631.

Christianity not only displays an unhealthy attitude toward life, but also its understanding of God disagrees with certain facts about the world. One of these disagreements concerns the humanitarian nature of the concept of God. A humanitarian God can not be demonstrated from the world that is known to man. If there were a God who is good and perfect, he would have created the best of worlds. Although it is clear that the world is not bad, it is also clear that it is not good either. From the world that man knows, quite a different God than a humanitarian one is demonstrable.⁷

In addition, the unegoistic nature of the Christian concept of God does not agree with the basic demands of personal relationships. It is impossible for there to be a nature that is only capable of purely unegoistic actions as the nature of this God is represented. In order for a person to be able to perform a deed for another, he must have an inner obligation to perform that deed. If a person has an inner obligation to perform a deed for another, he must have a personal need to perform the action. Consequently, in order for a person to be able to perform a deed for another, he must have a personal need to perform the action. This means that there is an inconsistency involved

⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will To Power (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1964), II, p. 408; Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All-Too-Human (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1964), Part I, pp. 43-44.

in the Christian concept of God. This God is said to be capable of purely unegoistic actions, yet there must be a personal motive present before a deed can be performed. If one is completely unegoistic and without a personal need, as the concept of God is represented, he is also incapable of performing an act for another.⁸

There is another inconsistency involved in the unegoistic nature of the Christian view of God. If there is a person who is unegoistic, then it is assumed that there are others who are to some extent egoistic. If anyone does things for others, then it is assumed that the others are egoistic enough to continue to accept the sacrifices. Furthermore, in order for one to be sincerely interested in others, he must wish that others act unegoistically also. If he wishes that others act unegoistically, then he must also wish that he himself be treated with love and sacrifice by others. Consequently, there is the inconsistency that one must wish something for oneself in order to wish everything for others.⁹

Thus, Nietzsche claims that Christianity is hostile toward life in this world and is in disagreement with certain facts about the world. These criticisms by Nietzsche of Christianity grow out of his emphasis upon the will to

⁸Nietzsche, Human, All-Too-Human, Part I, pp. 134-135.

⁹Ibid., pp. 135-136.

power as being the means by which reality is understood. He views life and this world as being essentially the expression of the will to power. Therefore, his fundamental contention in these criticisms is that Christianity must be rejected because it opposes the will to power.

Nietzsche defines the will to power as the basic motive force within all organisms. Every organism has a natural desire to discharge its strength and to acquire more strength. The will to power is the primitive motive force out of which all other motives are derived. Life forms are not primarily seeking to preserve themselves or to adapt to external conditions, but instead they are primarily seeking power. The inner motives of self-preservation and adaptation are explicable in terms of the will to power. Organisms seek to protect themselves and to adjust to their environment as a means of attaining strength. They are seeking to gain control over awkward or adverse circumstances.¹⁰

Man must recognize that he has the will to power as his essence, and he must allow his intentions and actions to be guided by it. He must not seek to suppress his inclinations toward power but rather to express them freely.

¹⁰Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), pp. 78-79; Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), pp. 21, 74-75, 113-114, 203; Nietzsche, The Will To Power, II, pp. 38-40, 110, 124, 161-173.

This means that man will honor such qualities as independence, self-respect, self-confidence, aggressiveness, and the domination of others. It is only by appreciating and adopting these values that a higher type of individual can be produced.¹¹ Christianity, however, has supported man's weakness and not his strength.

Christianity should not be beautified and embellished; it has waged deadly war against the higher type of man; it has placed all the basic instincts of this type under the ban; and out of these instincts it has distilled evil and the Evil One: the strong man as the typically reprehensible man, the "reprobate." Christianity has sided with all that is weak and base, with all failures; it has made an ideal of whatever contradicts the instinct of the strong life to preserve itself;¹²

Christianity has taught that all persons should maintain an altruistic attitude and has not acknowledged the need for egoism among certain superior individuals. It has ignored the fact that there is an order of rank within mankind and has instead stressed that all persons have equal value. It also has upheld the practice of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. This practice has value when it is performed by the masses in society in order to aid and sustain the superior individual. But Christianity claims that all persons should engage in self-sacrifice. This results in a waste of power, since the noble individual is

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Kaufmann, p. 571.

also expected to practice self-denial. At the same time, the acceptance of Christianity has resulted in feelings of self-depreciation and insecurity among individuals, along with a passive approach to existence. It has discouraged man's natural impulse to assert himself, to strive, to improve, and to overpower others. Furthermore, by considering pity a virtue, Christianity has protected that which ought to perish. Pity opposes the law of development by preserving that which is ready for destruction. It supports those who have been condemned by life.¹³

Hence, Nietzsche claims on the one hand that the will to power is the basic motive force of all organisms, but on the other hand he speaks of the individuals who practice Christianity as opposing the will to power in that they support weakness and not strength. How can these two aspects of Nietzsche's discussion be reconciled? Although the answer to this question is not explicitly presented in Nietzsche's writing, it seems that for him these aspects are rendered compatible by man's unique abilities. In contrast to other forms of animal life, man does not simply act on the basis of his immediate desires and feelings. Man is able to reflect upon himself and act contrary to that which is demanded by the immediate. Consequently, it is

¹³Ibid., pp. 570-574; Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, pp. 60, 74-75, 113-114, 149, 203, 215.

possible for a person to reject the accumulation and discharge of power as being the primary value in life, and this seems to be the focal point of Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity. To him Christianity encourages the adoption of a value system that goes against the fundamental instinct of power. It is not that the person who follows these Christian teachings does not have the will to power as his basic motive force, but rather it is that he suppresses this force in order to sanction weakness. The follower of Christianity replaces that which is natural and worthy with that which is unnatural and unworthy.

In evaluation of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, there are several weaknesses that need to be noted. One of these is that he does not recognize the complexity of Christianity. R. M. Thompson seems to be correct in his contention that Nietzsche identifies Christianity with only one of its forms and assumes that this form is its only expression. Nietzsche reduces Christianity to one closely knit system in that he thinks that a single theology or system of beliefs is characteristic of the whole of Christianity. But this is a serious error because there have been many different expressions of Christianity throughout the history of the Christian church, and there

are many different types of Christianity that are prevalent today.¹⁴

Nietzsche opposes a conservative form of Christianity that was influential in Europe during his life. The strongest opposition to Nietzsche's philosophy is this type of Christianity; consequently he is highly critical of Christianity as he conceives of it and the concept of God implicit in this theological orientation. However, as Thompson contends, Nietzsche identifies the whole of Christianity with the type of Christianity which opposed his philosophy in Europe in the nineteenth century. He does not acknowledge types of Christianity or Christian conceptions of God other than those he opposes. He seems to think that his criticisms of Christianity dismiss as inadequate for life not only the type of Christianity which he opposes but all other kinds as well. He does not allow for those Christian views of life that can be viable alternatives.

Nietzsche's use of the terms "Christianity" and "God" with the implication that they refer to every type of Christianity and Christian conception of God is especially noticeable in The Antichrist. In one passage in this work, Nietzsche states that Christianity has sided with all that

¹⁴R. Motson Thompson, Nietzsche and Christian Ethics (London: Epworth Press, 1951), pp. 46-48.

is weak and base. He says that it has made an ideal of that which contradicts the instincts and that it has corrupted reason by calling it sinful.¹⁵ In another passage in The Antichrist, he states that the Christian concept of God is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the Divine ever attained on earth.¹⁶ These passages indicate that Nietzsche assumes that his descriptions of Christianity and its God are characteristic of the whole of Christianity, but it is also apparent in several of his attacks upon Christianity that these criticisms only apply to a conservative form of this religion. Rather than acknowledging the limited application of these criticisms, Nietzsche implies that they refer to every type of Christianity.

For example, his argument concerning the attitude of priests toward science applies only to a conservative form of Christianity. Some priests and some forms of Christianity are not opposed to science. Many forms of Christianity encourage rigorous inquiry, learning, and scientific investigation. Learning, including science, is considered to be an effort to understand the world that God created so that man's condition in life may be improved. Although inquiry and learning are encouraged in these forms of Christianity, man is said to be ultimately dependent on God

¹⁵Kaufmann, pp. 571-572. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 585.

to make life meaningful to him. Man is viewed as not being able to rely completely upon himself even with the presence of science, for man has certain needs that are not fully met by science.

Another weakness in this discussion concerns the vagueness surrounding the nature of the natural life which adheres to the will to power. Nietzsche does set forth certain qualities which characterize this type of life, but the difficulty is that the meaning of these qualities never receives sufficient development. What exactly is meant by such ideas as independence and aggressiveness? It is the case in Nietzsche's writings that there is an attempt to provide further content to the will to power through the use of a negative approach. Certain qualities such as pity are criticized as being alien to the principle, but again these qualities are given only a general treatment. For example, pity is said to preserve that which is ready for destruction, but there is no effort to distinguish between that which is ready to be destroyed and that which is not. Therefore, the conclusion must be that the kind of life that affirms the will to power is only vaguely presented in Nietzsche's writings. Some understanding of this life is given, but much more is definitely needed.

In addition, the question should be raised as to whether the life which follows the will to power, as described by

Nietzsche, is really a genuine expression of power. Even if strength can be designated as that which an organism needs to obtain and should be seeking, this does not necessarily mean that Nietzsche's philosophy is an accurate rendering of this concept. Qualities such as independence, exploitation, aggressiveness, and the domination of others are used by Nietzsche to give an account of the basic character of the life of strength. At the same time, he makes the claim that lower forms of life utilize these qualities in their relationships to each other in order to gain power. The conclusion that follows, according to Nietzsche, is that human beings also ought to be acting on the basis of these qualities so that the maximum degree of power by humanity can be reached.

However, the qualities that Nietzsche emphasizes are not the only ones operative in nature. Lower animals do not simply exploit, struggle with, and seek to dominate other animals with which they come in contact. They also at times practice such qualities as cooperation, sympathy, and self-denial. Many animals demonstrate these qualities as they relate to their mates and offspring. They work with their mates to provide food and care for their offspring, and they are willing to fight to defend those with whom they live. Sometimes animals even nurse and protect the abandoned young of another species. With the acknowledgment of such acts as these, Nietzsche's description of the way nature

functions becomes incomplete and therefore inaccurate. In actuality, the qualities which he emphasizes are more characteristic of the way lower animals of different species relate to each other than they are of the relationships which animals within a given species have to one another. He tends to omit qualities that are especially prevalent between animals of the same species. Furthermore, even if it can be demonstrated that certain qualities are predominant in lower forms of life, this in no way demonstrates that man should pattern his life after them. Man has psychological, social, and religious needs which are not present in lower life forms, at least not in the same sense that they exist in man. This disanalogy between man and other animals results in man's having to look closely at his own nature in order to determine those types of activities which give strength to an individual and to a society.

Even though there are these weaknesses present in Nietzsche's discussion, it is also the case that some of his ideas are especially beneficial in gaining a fuller understanding of man and his relationships. One of these concerns his criticism of the arrogance and dogmatism of theologians and his emphasis upon the need for a tolerant attitude. It is the case that a tolerant attitude is vital not only to the acquisition of knowledge of the nature of the material world but also in order for mystical experiences to take

place. An individual must have an open perspective before divine love can be appropriated. In addition, Nietzsche contributes to a better understanding of the nature of love by pointing out that it must not be thought of as completely unegoistic. That is, genuine love is always egoistic in that it arises from needs within the individual. In acts of compassion toward others, an individual is meeting his own needs as well as the needs of others. He is gaining an inner satisfaction with himself at the same time that he is caring for others and sharing himself with them. This means that personal fulfillment can legitimately be spoken of as both a motivating factor and a goal of genuine love.¹⁷

A Dead God and the Rise of the Overman

Therefore, according to Nietzsche, the acceptance of Christianity and its concept of God had been detrimental to the European culture, but he also thought that this religion was beginning to wane in popularity in the nineteenth century. Although most of the European people had not yet rejected the Christian concept of God, there were individuals within Europe who were discarding it. Certain philosophers and free spirits had realized that this concept is unworthy

¹⁷ Mystical experience and the notion of love are discussed in Chapter VI of this work.

of belief and were refusing to believe in it. This indicated to Nietzsche that God is dead, that the decline of the influence of this concept had begun which would eventually lead to its becoming inconsequential in its effect on Europe. Only a small number of nineteenth century Europeans had recognized the unworthiness of this concept, but in the future this number would increase to include the large majority of Europeans.¹⁸

The notion that God is dead, along with the predicament of the nineteenth century European society, is discussed in the parable of the madman. In the parable, the madman is the one who announces to the people that God is dead. In the market place those people who do not believe in God laugh and ridicule the madman when he tells them that he is seeking God. After he has given his speech to the people telling them that God is dead, they look at him in astonishment. The laughter, ridicule, and astonishment of the people point to the reason that the man is referred to as a madman. The people give him this title because they think he is insane. To those who do not believe in God, it is ridiculous for anyone to seek God. To those who believe in God, as well as those who do not, it is absurd to say that

¹⁸Kaufmann, pp. 370-375; Nietzsche, The Joyful Wisdom, p. 275.

a god can die. Just as the people in the parable do not understand the meaning of the announcement that God is dead, so also the masses of the people in the nineteenth century do not understand its meaning. They do not realize that the statement refers to the Christian concept of God and not to God himself. They think that it indicates that God who once lived has now died, and to them it is impossible for a god to die.¹⁹

At the beginning of the madman's speech to the people, he tells them that they are all murderers of God, including himself. After the madman has spoken to the people in the market place, he notices that they are staring at him in astonishment. The people had not heard that God is dead. Even after the madman recognizes that the people do not know of God's being dead, he still insists at the end of the parable that they have done it themselves. They are murderers of God. All of the people have not rejected this concept, but the madman does charge all of them with murder. This charge by the madman points out that the entire nineteenth century European society is responsible for God's death. It is in this society that people had begun to refuse to believe in the Christian concept of God. All of

¹⁹Nietzsche, The Joyful Wisdom, pp. 167-169.

the European people are a part of the society in which the concept is in the process of being rejected.²⁰

This rejection of the Christian concept of God will lead to a period of nihilism within the European culture. A void will be present in the lives of the people as a result of God's being dead. There will be an emptiness where the ideas and values of the Christian concept of God have been. This is pointed out by the madman in the parable. As a result of God's being dead, the madman tells the people that man is in a situation similar to the one the earth would be in if it were released from its orbit around the sun. Mankind is in an empty space. Since man has lost his reference point, which was God, there are no directions or values.²¹

But nihilism will not simply be a period in which the people have lost a standard to give them direction in their decisions. It will also be a time in which the people will feel that they are worthless and purposeless because they will realize the incorrectness of the interpretation of existence to which they have adhered. They will recognize that the process of becoming in the universe aims at nothing and has achieved nothing. They will also understand that there is no great entity that rules in and behind all

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 168.

becoming. In addition, they will accept that there is no real world which lies beyond the world of becoming, for the reality of becoming is the only reality.²²

However, the eventual triumph of nihilism is necessary in order that the old Christian interpretation of existence and its values may be overcome. Nihilism will allow for the expurgation of Christianity among the majority of Europeans. It will also provide an opportunity for the people to develop a new understanding of existence. As a result of nihilism and God's being dead, man is free to venture out into the unknown and to investigate other outlooks and value systems. This opportunity will lead to a countermovement to nihilism in Europe, and this countermovement will consist of the European people's affirmation of Nietzsche's own philosophy. A new religion which is centered in an admiration for the overman will transpire in Europe. The people will think in terms of the overman as their ideal for existence.²³

There is some ambiguity in Nietzsche's explanation of the nature of the overman. George Foster is correct in claiming that the term "overman" is used in two different

²²Nietzsche, The Will to Power, I, pp. 1, 5-7, 12-15.

²³Ibid., p. 2; Nietzsche, The Joyful Wisdom, p. 276; Kaufmann, pp. 398-399.

senses.²⁴ In the prologue to Thus Spoke Zarathustra the term is used to mean the next species above man in the evolutionary process. It is stated that man evolved from the ape and that the ape is a laughingstock and painful embarrassment to man. In the same manner the overman will evolve from man, and mankind will be a laughingstock and painful embarrassment to the overman.²⁵

In a passage in The Will To Power Nietzsche also seems to be thinking of the overman as a species above man in the evolutionary process. The claim is made that power is a higher value than freedom and that the most important consideration for both a person and a group of people is not the degree of freedom but the amount of power they should have. The question that is then raised concerns the extent to which the freedom of mankind must be sacrificed in order to cultivate a higher species than man.²⁶

The other use of the term "overman" refers to a higher representative of man than the average man in the nineteenth century. In another passage in The Will to Power, the idea is set forth that the countermovement to nihilism will result

²⁴George Burman Foster, Friedrich Nietzsche (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), p. 235.

²⁵Kaufmann, p. 124.

²⁶Nietzsche, The Will To Power, II, p. 296.

in the occurrence of a stronger and higher type of man called the overman. When mankind acquires control over the economy of the earth, mankind will be used as a machine in this economy so that the overman can be produced.²⁷ For the overman ". . . the rest of mankind is but a soil on which he can devise his higher mode of existence."²⁸

In a series of passages in The Antichrist, the overman is also presented as being a higher type of man. There is the insistence that in regard to the future the focus of concern should not be upon what will succeed mankind because man is an end in the sequence of living beings. Instead, the concern should be directed toward the question of what type of man will be willed and bred. Another indication that in these passages the term "overman" is being used to refer to a higher form of man is the claim that overmen have previously occurred in widely different places and cultures as fortunate accidents of history. The overmen are therefore being viewed not as a separate species from man but as advanced human beings that have appeared in the past.²⁹

Although the term "overman" is used in these two different ways, there is some evidence that the preferred meaning for Nietzsche is that of a higher type of man. In

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 305-306. ²⁸ Ibid., p. 306.

²⁹ Kaufmann, pp. 570-571.

Ecce Homo he indicates that he prefers this meaning, and he seeks to correct the misunderstandings that have arisen about this concept. The contention is made that some people's understanding of the overman is in contradiction to its meaning of an ideal type of man.³⁰ Nietzsche says that ". . . learned cattle have suspected me of Darwinism on account of this word" ³¹ By this statement he means that some people have construed the term "overman" to mean a being above man in evolutionary development instead of correctly understanding it as a higher form of man. Nevertheless, the ambiguity in the meaning of this concept remains in Nietzsche's writings. Even though it does seem that the preferred meaning is that of a superior type of man, this does not alter the fact that there are contrary uses of the term in his writings.

In addition, Nietzsche describes the overman as giving support to those values that are necessary for the expression of power. He embodies all of those traits which characterize the will to power, traits such as self-pride, self-assertion, courage, and independence. He is more highly gifted in intellect and will and has a greater ability to control his passions and utilize them for his own betterment. The

³⁰ Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, pp. 55-58.

³¹ Ibid., p. 58.

overman is the maximum expression of power that life can achieve, and, consequently, he is of higher value and is more worthy of life than the rest of mankind. The overman transcends man's present existence in that he exceeds by far the level of power that the vast majority of people are able to achieve. Because of this superiority, the production of the overman is the purpose and goal of the evolution of life on this planet. All of mankind must acknowledge the worth of the overman and seek to encourage his existence.³²

Zarathustra, Nietzsche's prophet, emphasizes the need for an appreciation of the overman in his words to the people.

I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? . . . The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!³³

A further aspect of the overman's nature concerns his existence in the future. The overman transcends man's present existence in that it is in the future that a society of overmen will be established. Although overmen have randomly occurred in the past, during the future counter-movement to nihilism a group of this higher type of men will

³²Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, II, pp. 305-307, 327-328, 346-349, 361-365; Kaufmann, pp. 124-127, 570-571.

³³Kaufmann, pp. 124-125.

appear simultaneously and will rule an aristocratic society. The masses of this society will exist for the service of the overman; they will fulfill their goal in life and obtain meaning only as they benefit the overman. In turn the overmen will depend upon the rest of society for their elevation. This future society will have as its purpose the establishment of a higher mode of existence. The masses will be exploited to some extent in this society, but their exploitation will be meaningful to them as well as worthwhile for society in that it will serve to produce and maintain a superior type of man. When everybody in society participates in self-sacrifice instead of just the masses, a collective loss results because a higher kind of individual is not produced. This collective loss will be avoided in the society ruled by overmen since only the masses will be involved in a sacrificial life style.³⁴

Thus, for the most part Nietzsche refers to the overman as a type of life that has not yet come into being. The overmen are a superior group of men embracing the will to power who will rule a future aristocratic society. Not only is it in the future that their society will be established, but also their accomplishments will surpass

³⁴Ibid., pp. 124-127, 570-571; Nietzsche, The Will To Power, II, pp. 305-307, 327-328.

what the large majority of men today are able to attain. These overmen point to what man has the potential to be and at the same time serve as a goal for man to strive for.

In evaluation of these doctrines, it should be noted that the previously discussed weakness of Nietzsche's polemic against Christianity is also pertinent in understanding his doctrine that God is dead. That is, he also overlooks the existence of different types of Christianity in setting forth this doctrine. Rather than limiting his assertion that God is dead to one particular Christian view of God, he holds that this doctrine applies to every Christian concept of God. However, in his statement that God is dead, Nietzsche is actually referring to a conservative Christian view of God. It is this concept of God that is unworthy of belief in Europe and that is being rejected. It is the downfall of this concept of God, along with a conservative type of Christianity, which is leading to nihilism. But in his discussion of this doctrine, Nietzsche considers the death of this concept to be the beginning of the downfall of the Christian concept of God in Europe. Since a conservative concept of God is unworthy of belief, Nietzsche thinks that the people of Europe will discard the Christian view of God altogether.

Even if this type of Christian concept of God is being rejected, this does not imply, as Nietzsche contends, the

downfall of the Christian concept of God in Europe or elsewhere. With the discarding of this conservative view of God, Nietzsche anticipates that his own philosophy will eventually be widely affirmed. He does not reckon with the possibility that other Christian views of God may become viable and replace this conservative concept. He overlooks the possibility that as the result of the decay of the conservative understanding of God, the Europeans may accept more worthy expressions of Christianity instead of accepting his own philosophy. Even the decay of Christianity in its entirety does not necessarily mean that Europeans will turn to Nietzsche's philosophy. In such a case other religious or philosophical positions different from Nietzsche's views may be accepted.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche should be credited with having realized the need for the death of some understandings of God. As Nietzsche recognized, some concepts of God are not only archaic but also even detrimental to man's development; consequently, it is necessary for them to be cast aside. However, in contrast to what Nietzsche seemed to think, it does not follow from this that atheism is the only viable alternative. It does seem that it is possible to conceive of God in a manner which is relevant to man's current

situation and which is an encouragement toward a higher level of moral responsibility.³⁵

In summary, Nietzsche is opposed to Christianity because of its denial of the will to power, and he proclaims that the decline of Christianity and its view of God in nineteenth century Europe would make possible the existence of the overmen. Although Nietzsche's presentation has certain weaknesses, it does contribute in several ways to an understanding of the nature of human relationships and man's relationship to God. He does point to man's need for tolerance, to the egoistic nature of love, and to the possibility of unhealthy notions of the Divine.

³⁵A concept of God of this nature is presented in Chapter VI of this work.

CHAPTER V

HENRI BERGSON

Henri Bergson uses the principle of the vital impetus to explain the history of the development of life. This impetus is a force within life that has served to guide it throughout its various divisions and alterations. It reaches its highest level in human intuition, which goes through a development itself in the stages of static and dynamic religion. It is in his concept of dynamic religion that Bergson contributes to a fuller knowledge of God and man's relationship to him. This is accomplished through his notions of complete mysticism and an open morality along with his position that man needs to accept the love which God extends to him.

The Vital Impetus

Bergson argues that neither mechanism nor finalism is an adequate explanation of organic evolution. Mechanism is inaccurate in its contention that environmental circumstances are the directing causes of evolution. Life does adapt to its environment in the process of its development, but this environment does not determine the general direction of evolution. This direction is provided by a force within life itself and not by something external to it. That is,

life gives itself its overall direction, and this direction determines the outward conditions with which life interacts. Furthermore, this direction should not be understood in the manner in which it is presented by finalism. Finalism claims that the direction of the evolution of life is a preconceived plan that is being realized. The problem with this position is that a plan denotes something that is given in advance; consequently, to say that evolution is the realization of a plan serves to exclude the possibility of novelty in the future. In contrast to the view of finalism, the evolutionary process constantly maintains a future that is open to unforeseen happenings. Life's process is one that creates as it goes so that newness is always possible.¹

According to Bergson, the vital impetus is that which gives direction to the development of life. It is life's inner directing force that is essentially creative by nature. This impetus is continually accumulating and then expending energy as it makes its way within the world. It is through the release of this energy that new life forms arise. However, the precise character of these forms is never determinable prior to their invention because of the numerous unknown variables involved. The particular forms produced

¹Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), pp. 106-111.

are contingent upon the obstacles encountered, the setbacks that are suffered, and the adaptations that are made. Contingency therefore has a prominent place in the evolutionary process.²

The part played by contingency in evolution is therefore great. Contingent, generally, are the forms adopted, or rather invented. Contingent, relative to the obstacles encountered in a given place and at a given moment, is the dissociation of the primordial tendency into such and such complementary tendencies which create divergent lines of evolution. Contingent the arrests and set-backs; contingent, in large measure, the adaptations. Two things only are necessary: (1) a gradual accumulation of energy; (2) an elastic canalization of this energy in variable and indeterminable directions,³

This vital impulse is a finite force, and it cannot create absolutely. It is limited, on the one hand, by the matter to which it is attached. Life is continually a creative effort, but this effort always involves a conflict with matter. The reason for this conflict is that matter has an inverse movement to that of the vital impetus. Matter is constantly decreasing through deterioration, whereas the vital impetus encourages an increase of life forms.⁴ This means that the evolution of life must be understood as ". . . a reality which is making itself in a reality which is

²Ibid., pp. 259-270.

³Ibid., pp. 268-269.

⁴Ibid., pp. 103-104, 256-265.

unmaking itself."⁵ In addition, the creativity of the vital impetus is limited by its own tendency to divide itself into divergent lines of evolution. This bifurcation results in the separate development of numerous species with many of these species eventually ceasing to exist. But even those that do survive are always somewhat weaker than they would have been if they had been supported by the full power of life's impulse.⁶

There have been two major divisions of living things during the evolution of life. The first of these was the separation of life into plants and animals. It is most probable that the earliest organisms were a combination of the qualities of plants and animals, but as time passed the qualities became dissociated and the two major kingdoms were produced. The qualities were the fixity and insensibility of plants and the mobility and consciousness of animals. As evolution continued within the animal kingdom, the second major bifurcation occurred with the emergence of arthropods and vertebrates. The arthropods reached their highest level in the hymenoptera, whereas the vertebrates culminated with the presence of man. This further evolution

⁵Ibid., p. 261.

⁶Ibid., pp. 104-107, 267-268, 280-281.

within animal life has been made possible by the capacities of instinct and intelligence. These faculties have enabled the arthropods and the vertebrates to cope with their environment and thereby to survive. The arthropods have predominantly relied upon instinct and have progressed through its development, and, in contrast, the vertebrates have primarily utilized intelligence and have advanced through its improvement.⁷

Although both instinct and intelligence provide a means by which animal life is able to relate and deal with the external world, there are several significant differences between these capacities. One of these concerns the type of instruments that are employed. The instruments of instinct are appendages of the animal's own body, are able to repair themselves, and are designed to fulfill a specialized purpose for the organism. In contrast, the intellect must make an effort to fashion its instruments from unorganized matter; consequently, these instruments may sometimes be awkward and inefficient. But at this point the intellect does have the advantage over the instinct of being able to create a variety of instruments to serve multiple purposes.⁸

⁷Ibid., pp. 111-120, 140-150.

⁸Ibid., pp. 145-150.

Furthermore, there is a difference between instinct and intelligence in regard to the nature of their knowledge. Instinct does have a full and intimate grasp of those things upon which it concentrates, but this knowledge is limited in its extension since it only is able to focus upon certain objects. Intelligence, on the other hand, has a knowledge of form that in itself is empty of material content but yet is able to furnish a structure for relationships in which numerous objects can succeed one another. The fact that the intellect is not restricted to certain objects is an immense advantage for it over instinct. It means that an intelligent being experiences diversity and therefore is constantly able to transcend his previous nature.⁹

However, there is an additional difference between these two capacities which indicates a serious weakness of intelligence. In reality, life is a process of becoming in that things in the world are constantly in flux. Intelligence is not able to capture this reality of life because of its insertion of matter into the form that it uses. This framework of intelligence divides life into a series of states which render it inert and immobile. The flow of life is lost and its most recent novelty is never expressed. Although instinct is limited in the number of objects to which it is able to give attention, it comes

⁹Ibid., pp. 155-160.

much closer to apprehending the reality of its objects than does the intellect. Reality is known by entering it through an act of feeling, and this is the means employed by instinct. It sympathetically identifies with its object and thereby participates in its becoming.¹⁰

The intellect is not made to think evolution, in the proper sense of the word—that is to say, the continuity of a change that is pure mobility Suffice it to say that the intellect represents becoming as a series of states, each of which is homogeneous with itself and consequently does not change.¹¹

The intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life.

Instinct, on the contrary, is moulded on the very form of life. While intelligence treats everything mechanically, instinct proceeds, so to speak organically. If the consciousness that slumbers in it should awake, if it were wound up into knowledge instead of being wound off into action, if we could ask and it could reply, it would give up to us the most intimate secrets of life.¹²

Thus, the evolution of life has continued within the animal kingdom with the aid of the faculties of instinct and intellect. But at the present time all of the strands of life except man have either become extinct or reached a standstill. Man is now the only means through which the

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 170-186; Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), pp. 1, 7-9, 47-53, 65-70.

¹¹ Bergson, Creative Evolution, p. 171.

¹² Ibid., p. 174.

vital impetus is able to maintain its movement; consequently, man becomes the focus for discussing the future evolution of life. According to Bergson, the element within man that will promote man's future progress is not his intellect but his intuition. Although intellect is the predominant capacity within man, there is a fringe of instinct surrounding it which is referred to as "intuition." This intuition differs from the instinct of the lower animals in that it is disinterested, self-conscious, and reflective, and this gives man the ability to grasp the whole of life. This ability is lacking in the lower animals since instinct in that case is restricted to focusing upon the particular needs of the species in which it exists. Therefore, even though instinct within the lower animals is able through sympathy to have an understanding of the true meaning of the objects with which it deals, it is not able to broaden its scope to include life in its entirety as intuition is able to do.¹³

Intuition is definitely in need of intellect in that it is intellect which allows intuition to escape the narrow specialized interests of the instinct of lower animals. However, intuition transcends intellect in its ability to

¹³Ibid., pp. 186-195, 280-286.

bring man to the true meaning of life. It can bring man into a correct relationship with the whole of life, which intellect alone is never able to achieve. This relationship that intuition makes possible is one in which an individual penetrates into the stream of life through a sympathetic communication with all living things and is thereby able to view himself as being a part of the vital impetus. In this way intuition demonstrates to the individual that life in its full reality is lost when it is placed within an intellectual framework.¹⁴

Thus, Bergson claims that the vital impetus reaches its highest level in man's faculty of intuition. However, the movement of the vital impetus does not end with the mere existence of intuition within man. The recognition and utilization of intuition by man has evolved in the past and continues to do so in the present. This development occurs in the context of the history of man's religion. This history provides the background for understanding the meaning and future value of intuition for man.

Static and Dynamic Religion

Bergson denies that the foundation of religion lies either in the acceptance of some type of impersonal force

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 186-195; Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 1, 7-9, 47-53, 65-70.

in nature or in the affirmation of the existence of certain personal entities. These beliefs did arise later in man's history, but they were not the original element. Instead, the basic element is what Bergson refers to as the sensation of an efficient presence. This is a feeling of the existence of a semi-personal force within nature that encourages man to think of things and events as having purpose. It is efficient in the sense that it provides man with the attitude that his own life is meaningful and thereby gives him a will to live.¹⁵

This feeling within man that his acts are purposive leads him to think that he can in some way influence existence in his favor. Out of this tendency there emerges the two different expressions of magic and religion. Both of these are an effort to fulfill man's desires by influencing the external world, and it is also true that they have often overlapped in man's history in that aspects of each have been found in one individual or group. Nevertheless, they represent two divergent directions in the vital impulse within man. Magic refers to a movement toward and acceptance of nature as impersonal, whereas religion is the development toward and affirmation of a personal view of existence.¹⁶

¹⁵Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), pp. 165-168, 184-187.

¹⁶Ibid.

Neither has the impersonal evolved towards the personal, nor have pure personalities been posited at the outset; but, out of some intermediate thing, intended rather to sustain the will than to inform the intelligence, there have emerged through dissociation, downwards and upwards, the forces that lie beneath the weight of magic, and the gods towards whom the voice of human prayer is raised.¹⁷

In the approach of magic the tendency within man to influence nature toward his own desires leads to the positing of something in nature that is affected by man's endeavors,, an impersonal force which has sometimes been referred to as "mana." This impersonal force can only be persuaded by those individuals who have a certain potency within them. These magicians carry out various operations, seeking to get the force within nature to abide by their wishes. As they perform their magical acts, they also obey various laws such as, for example, the law that "like is equivalent to like." This particular law is assumed to be true in the case of the person who seeks to harm his enemy by creating a model of him. It is thought that any act performed upon the model will simultaneously produce the same effect upon the enemy.¹⁸

In religion the attempt to obtain favors from existence was first directed toward various vague entities called spirits which were believed to dwell in things such as

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 167-168.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 156-164.

springs and rivers. These spirits are without personality and are unable to move away from the place in which they manifest themselves. As time passed, man gradually developed a belief in gods. These gods are persons in that they have their own names and personality traits and are able to move from one place to another. Even though belief in gods came later in man's history than belief in spirits, the former did not replace the latter. In many instances a belief in both of these has been present.¹⁹

The belief in spirits and gods, along with the religious practices that accompany this acceptance, is referred to as static religion by Bergson. Static religion is an outer religion in that it is primarily concerned with being's having an existence external to man's. However, the fundamental quality of static religion is myth-making. This is the creation of certain representations within man as a protection against possible harmful occurrences brought about by the use of intelligence. One way that this myth-making function works is by defending man against the intellect's potential threat to society. In order for human society to progress, individuals must be willing to act for the good of the whole. But this sacrifice is not automatic with man as it is with those animals primarily relying on

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 168-170, 175-177.

instincts, for man is able to reflect and decide for himself how he wants to behave. The difficulty arises from the fact that the intellect by itself lends itself more to egoism than to the common good. The individual tends to overlook the needs of society and to act in a manner that will produce pleasures for himself. However, to protect against the dangers of this egoism, human nature encourages the affirmation of the presence of supreme beings and a loyalty to their will. As it turns out, these beings oppose human egoism and demand that individuals be willing to serve the entire community.²⁰

A further way that the myth-making function works within man is by protecting him from the sentiment resulting from his recognition of death. Only man can apply the notion of death to his own individual existence. He alone is able to reflect on the death of other living things and thereby acquire the knowledge that he himself will die at some time. This recognition tends to have a depressing effect upon man, which results in a discouragement to his will to live. In order to counteract this negative feeling, nature gives man an image of a continuation of life after death. This image successfully neutralizes the feeling arising from man's knowledge of the inevitability of death.²¹

²⁰Ibid., pp. 99-100, 110-112, 184-187, 193-197.

²¹Ibid., pp. 118-121, 141-143, 193-197.

Hence, myth-making is at the basis of static religion because it is the capacity that gives rise to the central beliefs of the religion. It calls for the acceptance of the existence of supreme beings and eternal life. In addition, this static religion is accompanied by a closed morality. It is closed in that it is confined to a particular social group. Nature has ordained that people live in societies, and the force that ensures the cohesion of these societies is moral obligation. People feel obligated to follow the customs and ideas of their own group, and in this way the structure of the group can be maintained. This morality is grounded in the natural tendency of every person to love those of his own community. But this natural tendency does not apply to one's relationship to the whole of humanity. There is a major leap in moving from a love of one's family and nation to a love of all other people as well.²²

We are fond of saying that the apprenticeship to civic virtue is served in the family, and that in the same way, from holding our country dear, we learn to love mankind And what encourages the illusion is that, by a fortunate coincidence, the first part of the argument chances to fit in with the facts; domestic virtues are indeed bound up with civic virtues, for the very simple reason that family and society, originally undifferentiated, have remained closely connected. But between the society in which we live and humanity in

²²Ibid., pp. 20-25, 46-48, 255-258.

general there is, we repeat, the same contrast as between the closed and the open; the difference between the two objects is one of kind and not simply one of degree.²³

However, the religious experiences of mankind have not been limited to this static variety, for a dynamic or mystical form of religion which emphasizes action, love, and creativity has emerged within history. The historical transition from static to dynamic religion is represented by the ancient civilizations of Greece and India which contain incomplete expressions of mysticism. Among the Greeks the philosophy of Plotinus comes closest to dynamic religion because he recognized the need for a union with God. But he falls short of complete mysticism in that he did not acknowledge the need for the activity that can grow out of this contemplation of the Divine. Instead, he thought of action as a regression from contemplation. Likewise, the early Hindus, including the Buddha, did not attain complete mysticism because they overlooked the efficacy human action. Even though the Hindus accepted the need for charity as well as contemplation, they harbored a rather helpless attitude in regard to their ability to deal with the problems of nature.²⁴

²³Ibid., p. 24.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 201-216.

Complete mysticism, which is found in the Christian faith, does not stop with contemplation and the ecstasy that accompanies it. In contemplation there is a union with the Divine through the thought and feeling of the individual. There is no longer a separation between the individual's thought and the object of his thought, and there is also a feeling of the presence of God. At the same time, this union produces an experience of boundless joy within the person. But the limitation of this joining of the soul with God through contemplation is that it does not include the will. The will of the individual remains outside of this union; consequently, the ecstasy from this union is not lasting. Instead, as time passes, the joy of contemplation is replaced by a sense of disquietude within the soul. In order to overcome this inner agitation, the individual's will must be joined with God. The individual must become an instrument of the Divine through a union of his own activities with those of God. When this total absorption in God occurs, the soul experiences a high level of vitality, and as a result the individual is able to accomplish things which otherwise he would never be able to accomplish.²⁵

"Let us say that henceforth for the soul there is a superabundance of life. There is a boundless impetus. There

²⁵Ibid., pp. 216-221.

is an irresistable impulse which hurls it into vast enterprises."²⁶

Since God is essentially love, a total union of the soul with God in complete mysticism means that the individual becomes consumed by divine love. This love is universal in its scope. The one who has truly accepted it does not restrict his outreach to a certain group of people, as is the case with static religion, but rather his love is open to all mankind. Through the strength of God the individual in dynamic religion is able to transcend the usual human limitations and love all men with a divine love. In addition to being directed toward all persons, divine love is also creative. It is the vital impetus itself as it now exists within the evolutionary process. That is, the vital impetus is presently continuing its creativity through divine love within mankind, and the goal of this creativity is a divine humanity or in other words a state in which all men are united with God.²⁷

Therefore, God is seeking to transform all of mankind into his own love. His instruments in this gradual creative process are the great mystics who serve as examples of divine love to others.²⁸

²⁶Ibid., p. 221.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 222-229, 240-243, 255-257.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 216-229, 237-246.

The original impulsion therefore split into divergent lines of evolutionary progress, instead of remaining undivided to the end. Even along the line on which the essential of the impulsion travelled it ended by exhausting its effect or rather the movement which started as straight ended as circular. In that circle humanity, the terminal point, revolves In order to carry it further otherwise than by mere guesswork, we should simply have to follow the lead of the mystic.²⁹

In reality, the task of the great mystic is to effect a radical transformation of humanity by setting an example. The object could be attained only if there existed in the end what should theoretically have existed in the beginning, a divine humanity.³⁰

That which enables these mystics to be God's instruments is their own intuitive capacity. Through the use of intuition the mystics have a genuine encounter with God so that the love which God is becomes a part of them. This experience gives them the understanding that divine love is at work in the universe, and at the same time it makes them aware that they themselves have a need to be actively contributing to this creativity through their own practice of love. This results in the dedication of their will to God, a necessity for the existence of complete mysticism.³¹

Hence, there are several significant differences between static religion and dynamic religion. One of these is the

²⁹Ibid., p. 245.

³⁰Ibid., p. 228.

³¹Ibid., pp. 216-229, 237-246; Bergson, Creative Evolution, pp. 186-195.

fact that static religion is pointed outward, whereas dynamic religion is directed toward the inner self. Static religion is centered in the belief in beings that are thought of as existing externally to man and even remaining external when they are affirmed. However, when God is truly accepted in dynamic religion, the love which God is becomes a part of the inner self of the mystic so that the dichotomy of subject and object is overcome. Secondly, the individual's need for protection against certain dangers gives rise to static religion, but dynamic religion results from the individual's need to be extended into the world. Static religion results from man's ability to construct myths about the existence of supreme beings and eternal life, and these myths serve as a means of preventing the dissolution of society and the disillusionment that comes from the awareness of death. In contrast, the use of intuition in dynamic religion makes possible the understanding that divine love is at work in the universe and also the desire to be involved in this activity. That is, the individual in dynamic religion recognizes that his own fulfillment comes not by protecting himself from possible adversity but through the risk of striving to share God's love with others. Finally, static religion carries with it a closed morality as opposed to the open morality of dynamic religion. Static religion does sanction the love of others, but this love is restricted

to a particular social group. On the other hand, dynamic religion views God as seeking to transform each individual into his love, and therefore it calls for a love of all persons even those outside one's own society.

In evaluation of Bergson's philosophy, it first of all should be noted that there is a gap that exists between his earlier work Creative Evolution and his later work The Two Sources of Morality and Religion. Bergson obviously intended the latter of these presentations to be a continuation of many of the ideas that he had already set forth in Creative Evolution, but he does not adequately demonstrate how these two treatments are related to each other. Consequently, there are several questions that remain unanswered as one seeks to understand his overall philosophy. One of these concerns the shift that occurs between the two works in regard to the nature of the flow of the evolutionary process. In the earlier work this process is described as a physical and mental development, but in the latter work the vital impetus is viewed in terms of a moral and religious activity. What is Bergson's justification for his assumption that the ongoing process of life has taken a moral and religious turn within human evolution? Why is it not possible to fully understand human evolution in strictly biological terms without reference to values? Bergson needs to explain how and why his shift has taken place.

Another question that arises in regard to the relationship of these two works has to do with the notion of intuition. In Creative Evolution and also in An Introduction to Metaphysics, intuitive knowledge is metaphysical in character in the sense that it is presented as being a sympathetic identification with the whole of life. But, in The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, intuition takes on a religious and moral meaning. It is described as a mystical experience with God in which divine love is received into one's innermost self and is then shared with others. The question that arises concerns whether Bergson intends for the earlier metaphysical meaning to be included also in this mystical concept of intuition. If a person has a genuine mystical encounter with God, does this mean that he will also gain this sympathetic communication with all living things? As it stands, two different views of intuition are presented with no indication given of how their relationship is to be understood.

A third question in this area concerns Bergson's identification of divine love with the vital impetus. It is obvious that Bergson intends for divine love to be equated with the vital impetus in human evolution, but what is the nature of the vital impetus before the time of man? Since Bergson does equate the vital impetus with divine love, it would first appear that his intention is for the

vital impetus to be understood as always having taken the form of love. However, it is true that this identification is found in The Two Sources of Morality and Religion and that in Creative Evolution there is no mention of the vital impetus being love. Therefore, the possibility must be left open that for Bergson the vital impetus only takes the form of love within the development of man.

Hence, there are difficulties in seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of Bergson's philosophy because he does not make an effort to explain the relationship of his later ideas to his earlier ones. Another problem within Bergson's discussion concerns his explanation for the origin of mankind's belief in supernatural beings. On the one hand, he refers to magic and religion as having arisen from man's desires to influence the world in his favor. In the religious dimension man is viewed as formulating the existence of personal beings called "spirits" or "gods" as a means of helping him in various ways. The implication is that man thought that he could persuade these beings to give him assistance. This means that in these statements Bergson is setting forth an egoistic motive as the basis for the beginning belief in spirits and gods. But, on the other hand, in his treatment of the myth-making function, he explains the origin of the belief in gods as being a reaction against the egoistic tendency of the intellect. The

gods are conceived as being altruistic, and belief in them is a natural outgrowth of man's need to protect himself against the dangers of egoism. Therefore, as it turns out, Bergson gives two opposing explanations of the origin of man's belief in supernatural beings, and he gives no indication of how this conflict might be overcome.

Other weaknesses of Bergson's discussion are pointed out by Jacques Maritain. He says that Bergson's concepts of static and dynamic religion present man as being caught between social obligation and mystical attraction. In the case of the static dimension man has a need to remain in cooperation with society, and along with this need there is social pressure for the individual to develop habits in conformity with the demands of society. However, the dynamic dimension demonstrates that man has a need to yield to the emotional allurements of the hero's call and to transcend the habits that are propagated by society.³²

Maritain agrees with Bergson that human decisions often do carry with them an ambivalence caused by social pressure and the appeal of a higher ideal, but he contends that Bergson's treatment carries with it certain inadequacies. For one thing, he omits the work of morality itself. Bergson does not set forth a procedure for making moral decisions,

³²Jacques Maritain, Ransoming the Time (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), pp. 91-92.

and this is revealed by the fact that his philosophy does not contain the notion of an end. There is no goal toward which humanity should strive. Furthermore, Maritain says that Bergson is an irrationalist in that he presents the social element as infra-rational and the mystical element as supra-rational and therefore leaves no room for practical reason. Maritain insists that practical reason is necessary in order for the individual to be able to determine the proper relationship between the social and mystical element.³³

Only reason, which is the principle of a moral universe distinct at once from social obedience and mystical impulse, can recognize, in dependence on the laws proper to that universe, the internal hierarchy which subordinates the social entity to the mystical and at the same time reconciles them with each other. But to posit that subordination and that reconciliation is to get away from Bergsonism.³⁴

Finally, Maritain criticizes Bergson for claiming that correct moral decisions can be made by simply identifying with an emotional force. He argues that the perplexity involved in making choices is not as easily overcome as Bergson implies. The human situation by nature is one in which individuals have to constantly struggle to decide what they should and should not do.³⁵

Reduced to its essential work, and especially if it is considered in its basic natural structures,

³³Ibid., pp. 93-95.

³⁴Ibid., p. 94.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 93-94.

morality is a very humbly human thing, and not brilliant or glorious—rough and resolute, patient, prudent, argumentative, hard-working. For that poor devil, a rational being, it is a question of finding his way as best he can along the paths of happiness, using as he must a certain little light which places him above the whole bodily world, and thanks to which he is in a position to choose freely, to select for himself his own happiness, to say yes or no to whatever guides and hawkers offer to show him the way. It is a matter of taking oneself in hand by means of reason and freedom.³⁶

In response to Maritain's criticisms, it is not accurate to say that Bergson does not have a morality, but it is certainly the case that he does not give it serious consideration. Bergson does present the concepts of a closed and open morality, but they are concerned with only one aspect of morality, the extension of one's moral practices. He does not give his attention to developing a moral system in the sense of setting up guidelines for making moral decisions. He does emphasize the importance of love, which for him is certainly an end or goal for human behavior, but he never does explain the meaning of love or show how it should be applied in particular situations. Instead, Bergson is concerned with stressing the importance for the individual of a mystical identification with divine love. In fact, he seems to think that this mystical experience in itself will enable the person to be what he should be, both for himself and in his relationships with others. But

³⁶Ibid., p. 93.

certainly, as Maritain insists, this quest demands more from the individual than simply intuitive experience. There must be a cooperative utilization on the part of the individual of all of his resources and not just an employment of his intuitive capacity.

Even if mystical experience can be said to contribute to the attitude of love within the individual, this is not sufficient in itself for the implementation of a life-style of love. There is more that is needed in being what one should be than simply the desire to do so, and it is this additional process that demands the use of reason. In seeking to carry out the most loving act possible under the circumstances, an individual is confronted by numerous alternative ways of acting. It is at this point that reason contributes to the efforts of the individual by giving him the ability to analyze the possible consequences of these various alternatives and to make comparisons between them. In this way reason is necessary for the individual to be able to discern that activity which would be best for himself and others in particular situations.

However, in spite of these weaknesses, Bergson does make several contributions to a knowledge of God and man's relationship to God through his concept of dynamic religion. One of these contributions is his notion of complete mysticism. Like Kierkegaard, Bergson recognizes that

mysticism should not end with contemplation and the experience of ecstasy, but instead it must continue through an activity in the world that seeks to extend love to others. Another contribution is his emphasis upon God's involvement with man. As he indicates, God is constantly encouraging man to adopt his love. He is seeking to share himself with man and thereby transform man's existence into divine love. Furthermore, Bergson is correct in pointing out man's need to cooperate with the Divine. Man must accept the love which God seeks to share with him and assume the responsibility of extending it to others, for it is only in this manner that man's inner fulfillment can be achieved. In addition, he is correct in his emphasis that genuine love is directed to all persons. This is demonstrated by the nonrestrictive nature of God's love for man. God's love is extended to each person, which indicates that the highest form of love has this character.³⁷

In summary, for Bergson the vital impetus is the force within life which has guided it through its various

³⁷ These various issues concerning God, the universe, man, and their interrelationship will be further discussed in Chapter VI of this work. But it should be noted at this point that although Bergson does make a contribution through his notions of divine love and an open morality, his definitions of these notions are still too narrow. God's love is no doubt directed toward all beings in the universe and not just to man; therefore, a truly open morality would also be one that extends to all existents.

developments. The highest form of expression of this impetus is human intuition, which itself has evolved in the stages of static and dynamic religion. Although there are weaknesses in Bergson's presentation, several of his ideas within his concept of dynamic religion offer valuable insights into the nature of God and man's relationship to him. These include his notions of complete mysticism and an open morality and also his claim that God is involved with man and that man needs to accept God's love.

CHAPTER VI

MAN'S EXPERIENCES OF GOD

This final chapter sets forth the author's own view of the meaning and relationship of the mystical and ethical aspects of human experience. It claims that the mystical is an intuitive type of experience which brings about communion with the Divine, whereas the ethical is the experience of God that comes through interaction with the animate and inanimate beings within the universe. However, both of these dimensions in their own manner provide an avenue by which God is encountered, and it is through the divine involvement in each that their significance for man is acquired. Therefore, in order to more fully define these two modes of experience, attention must first be given to a treatment of the nature of God and his relationship to the universe and man.

God and the Universe

God is a spiritual being operating in the universe who is not to be equated with all or any part of material existence. He is not identical with material existence, but he does act upon it. God extends himself to both the inorganic and organic phases of nature, and it is this extension which is the divine love. God is essentially

self-giving love. He loves the universe by sharing with it what he is and is able to do. He gives himself for the benefit of others.

The ground of this love is God's concern for the universe and his ability to empathize with it. God extends himself to the universe because he cares about it. Rollo May says, "Care is a state in which something does matter; care is the opposite of apathy."¹ "It means to wish someone well"² This describes God's attitude toward the universe. God considers the universe to be valuable, and he is interested in it. At the same time, he wants the best for it. He wants it to be what he knows it should be.

Therefore, God's care for the universe provides the basis for his willingness to act on its behalf. Furthermore, his empathy is the foundation for his ability to share with the universe what it needs. God is able to provide the proper assistance for the universe because he possesses empathy. May explains the derivation of the word "empathy" in the following manner:

Empathy comes to us as a translation of the word of the German psychologists, "einfuhlung" which means literally "feeling into." It is derived from the Greek "pathos," meaning a deep

¹Rollo May, Love and Will (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), p. 286.

²Ibid., p. 289.

and strong feeling akin to suffering, prefixed with the preposition "in."³

Empathy is the ability to identify with another so fully that there is a participation in the other's being. One assumes the state of the other so that one is able to feel, think, or just exist as the other does. At the same time the one that is exercising empathy gives up awareness of himself. His attention is directed toward the other, which means that he forgets about himself. In order to demonstrate the meaning of empathy, May gives the example of artistic experience.

In artistic experience empathy is also basic, for the individual must in some way identify himself with the object if he is to experience it aesthetically. Thus people speak of music "carrying them away," or of the violin playing upon the strings of their emotions, or of the changing colors of the sunset creating a corresponding change in their emotions Drama is the form of art in which empathy is most easily understood; for there occurs the very obvious identification of the actors with the fictitious characters they are representing, as well as the more subtle identification of the observers with the actors.⁴

The goal of empathy is not determined by empathy itself, but instead it is determined by the one who is practicing it. Empathy may serve as a basis for self-giving love, but it

³Rollo May, The Art of Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1939), p. 75.

⁴Ibid., p. 78.

may also be used as simply a means of attaining pleasure or understanding. In the case of divine empathy, the ultimate goal is always to share for the good of the other. God wants to provide for the needs of the universe, and empathy aids him in implementing this purpose.

Through his empathy God participates in the being of the particulars of the universe, and in this way he is able to know their individual conditions. This is true of his love for both the animate and inanimate objects of existence. God is conscious of the situation of various plants and animals, but he is also aware of the status of inorganic substances such as air, water, and soil. However, divine empathy is directed not only toward particular beings but also toward the universe as a whole. As a result of his identification with the whole, God understands the inter-relationships between parts of the universe. He is cognizant, for example, of the effect that mankind has had upon other animals and upon the air and water of the planet.

Thus, through empathy God gains an awareness of the state of the universe and its constituents. This knowledge is a necessary foundation for his being able to give assistance to the universe. Without it he would not be able to extend to others what they need for their advancement. But what is it that God extends to the universe? God has given the universe an orderly structure consisting of a

variety of forms, both inorganic and organic, which are interrelated in such a fashion so as to provide for their continual existence. This interrelation is revealed first of all in the dependence of the organic realm upon the inorganic. Inorganic matter provides the environment for the organic phase of nature in that life is located in and upon the inanimate, but also the nonliving substances provide the necessary elements for life to exist. Plants need soil, air, sunlight, and water, and animals rely upon air, water, and heat. Furthermore, there is an interdependence between plants and animals, such as in the carbon dioxide-oxygen life cycle. Plants are in need of the carbon dioxide exhaled by animals, whereas animals must have the oxygen that is given off by plants. But there is also the fact that animals need the nourishment that comes from particular types of plants. All forms of animal life, including man, receive their sustenance either entirely from plants themselves, from other animals that do consume plants, or through both of these means. At the same time God has provided animals with the capacities of instinct and intelligence by which they are able to acquire food and satisfy their other basic needs. In addition, there is interdependence both among plants and within the animal kingdom. Plants as well as animals rely upon the previous reproductive activities of their own kind in order to come into being, and it is also the case that animals need the

care and protection of other animals during the early stages of their development.

However, God not only has provided a universe in which a variety of things are able to continue existing, but also he has simultaneously made it possible for these forms of being to have a rewarding existence in relation to each other. This type of existence comes only as an individual being shares what he is and has with other beings. There is present therefore an existential paradox that only in giving does one gain what he needs. A being must share himself before he can acquire himself. It is necessary for both living and nonliving things to practice giving toward other beings before they can be what they ought to be. This means that God has patterned the universe after himself. He has given to it what he himself essentially is, self-giving love. That is, he has placed within all existing things the need to share themselves with others. All things must be like God in that they are called upon to use what they are in a loving manner.

God and Man

To be properly understood, man has to be viewed as having an interrelatedness and kinship with the other material existents of the universe. Man is dependent upon both organic and inorganic nature to satisfy the basic

biological needs of his existence. There are also various qualities of man, such as being subject to the physical laws of nature, which he holds in common with all material beings. In addition, there are other human characteristics, such as bodily functions—respiration, circulation of the blood, etc.—which man has in common with certain other life forms. However, that which is most important in understanding man and his existence in the universe is the fact that he is a part of God's intention for all physical beings. Man has a kinship with all other material things in that like them he must be like the Divine. The implementation of his capacities must be motivated by self-giving love. Of course, man has capacities such as memory, conceptualization, reason, reflection, and language which are either not present at all in other forms of life or not present to as great a degree. These abilities give man a knowledge of the universe and of God which other material things do not have and at the same time enable him to have a greater influence upon the state of the universe. But, nevertheless, their possession does not mean that man is to view himself primarily as something set apart from all other material existents. Instead, man must first of all interpret these capacities as an indication of his similarity to other beings in the universe. He must understand that just as other material beings have ways of sharing themselves, these faculties are his means of doing this.

Man therefore has this affinity with the rest of the universe of needing to be like the Divine, but it is also the case that a significant dissimilarity is operative between human being and other forms of being. Jean-Paul Sartre makes this distinction in Being and Nothingness. He claims that the being of those existents which are not self-conscious perfectly coincides with itself. This means that their being is complete in itself so that they are wholly determined by whatever they are. Consequently, there is no possibility of their becoming other than what they are; they simply are what they are. In contrast, self-conscious being has nothingness at its center. Nothingness necessarily accompanies human reality because in reflecting upon himself man is aware of that which he is not. It is this nothingness or lack of being which prevents the self from being able to coincide with himself. That is, nothingness is that which separates man from being something definite and complete. However, in being aware of his nothingness, man is able to conceive of what in actuality he is not; he understands that he is not all that he can be. But at the same time he wants to be more than he is, and through his choices he is constantly seeking to overcome this lack in his being. Although man can never entirely rid himself of his nothingness, he is free to pursue those possibilities which

he wants to make a part of himself.⁵ At one point Sartre summarizes the human situation in the following manner:

Human reality is not something which exists first in order afterwards to lack this or that; it exists first as lack and in immediate, synthetic connection with what it lacks. Thus the pure event by which human reality rises as a presence in the world is apprehended by itself as its own lack. In its coming into existence human reality grasps itself as an incomplete being. It apprehends itself as being in so far as it is not, in the presence of the particular totality which it lacks and which it is in the form of not being it and which is what it is. Human reality is a perpetual surpassing toward a coincidence with itself which is never given.⁶

Thus, as Sartre says, the elements of incompleteness and freedom are characteristic of man and not other existents. As a result, the divine love does not stand in exactly the same relationship to man's being as it does to the being of others. The being of the other material members of the universe is set by their very nature to follow their own particular expression of self-giving love, and their expressions cannot be altered by the existents themselves. Inorganic matter must be what its constitution dictates, and lower forms of life are directed by their inner functions and instincts. But, in contrast, man's existence is not so

⁵Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1953), pp. lxxiv-lxxx, 26-55, 89-103, 108-125, 208-227, 589-599.

⁶Ibid., p. 109.

highly determined. He is free to examine himself and his surroundings and to choose in what way he wants to act in relation to others. It is the case that man has certain physical demands made upon him which he must obey in order to continue to live, yet man still has the opportunity of choosing the manner in which he will satisfy these needs and the outlook that he will carry with him as he does this.

However, the choices that man makes arise out of an opposition within his being. He must choose in the midst of opposition, for, at the same time as he is a being of possibilities, he is also a being of conflict. This conflict is between man's need to be like the Divine and the tendency that Kant points out for man to let his selfish desires control his actions.⁷ Man has the potential for making choices that grow out of a self-giving attitude, but, on the other hand, he is held back by narrow self-interests. Paul Tillich uses the notion of estrangement to describe the element in man that interferes with the Divine. He says that

We know that we are estranged from something to which we really belong, and with which we should be united. . . . It is this which is the state of our entire existence, from its very beginning

⁷Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, pp. 14-16, 18-19; Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, pp. 74-85.

to its very end. . . . It is our existence itself. Existence is separation!⁸

According to Tillich, man is always to some extent alienated from God, himself, and others. It is a state of human existence, but at the same time it is something that man chooses to make a part of himself. Man inevitably chooses an alienated existence. This alienation consists of both unbelief and self-elevation. Unbelief is man's turning away from the Divine as the center of his life; it is man's will being separated from the Divine. Self-elevation is man's turning toward himself as the center of his world. Included in this self-elevation is an unwillingness by man to acknowledge the limitations of his being, limitations such as ignorance, insecurity, loneliness, and anxiety.⁹

Man does exist in a state of estrangement, as Tillich says, and the reason for this is that the empathetic and self-giving attitude is never fully present in his life. To some extent man is always rejecting divine love and accepting an outlook of distorted self-love. He is constantly letting self-interest play a part in his being, which at the same

⁸Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 155.

⁹Ibid., pp. 154-155; Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, pp. 44-58.

time lessens to some degree his caring and sharing attitude toward the universe. That is, each individual is always overemphasizing his own desires so that he is never able to completely love other beings in the universe. This results in man's being separated from himself and from others. He cannot be what he needs to be, and at best his relationships with others only approximate genuineness. Therefore, his experiences of fulfillment are modified from the ideal. He is not able to experience the unqualified joy that would come from being purely self-giving.

Hence, man's estrangement is at its basis an alienation from the Divine. Man can never be a complete expression of self-giving love and therefore can never fulfill himself in the ultimate sense in his relationship with himself and with other beings. But even though man cannot reach the ideal, he is capable of more extensively incorporating the Divine into his being and thereby reducing the influence that his estrangement has upon his life. In order for this to take place, however, the individual must acquire a stronger will toward the practice of self-renunciation. This is the practice by which an individual denies his own interests for the purpose of benefiting others, and, as Kierkegaard says, in its true form it requires that the individual implementing it not expect any reward or approval

in return.¹⁰ The individual is able to transcend his own narrow situation of private desires and goals so that he might assist in meeting the needs of another.

The will in man toward self-renunciation is encouraged by the Divine. God encourages man to reject self-interest and to affirm self-giving. As Bergson insists, God is seeking to transform all of mankind into divine love.¹¹ He is constantly involved with every human being, attempting to persuade them toward himself. He wants each individual to develop a caring and empathizing approach toward all material beings so that every person will be able to share himself with the universe.

God's persuasion of man toward his love operates through the assistance of certain feelings in man that are concomitant with self-interest and self-giving. Self-interest brings about the disturbing and painful feelings of being apart from God, others, and oneself. The individual experiences despair and loneliness, which can serve to stimulate him to alter his outlook. In contrast, self-giving results in sensations of joy and fulfillment. The individual appreciates himself and feels a sense of belonging with the universe. Consequently, when an individual

¹⁰ Kierkegaard, Works of Love, pp. 133-134.

¹¹ Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, pp. 216-229, 237-246.

experiences these positive feelings and realizes that they accompany a self-giving attitude, he wants to continue in this approach to life in the future.

This divine persuasion is itself a manifestation of God's love for man. God is fully self-giving love and therefore is in no way estranged from himself. But he cares about man and identifies with man's predicament. He experiences man's alienation through his empathetic nature, and even more important for man's sake is that God gives man assistance in overcoming his alienation. God shares himself with man by providing encouragement for him to practice self-renunciation and to adopt the divine attitude.

In summary, God is a spiritual being who cares about the universe, has empathy toward it, and shares himself with it. He provides an orderly existence for the particulars of nature, both the organic and the inorganic, and also demands that each of them with their own individual capacity follow his self-giving pattern. Man is one of these existents that is a receptor of this divine provision and intention for the universe. However, man is a being of freedom and possibility who must decide for himself whether he will affirm or deny divine love as an approach to life. At the same time he is a being of conflict in that he has a need to be self-giving but a tendency to be alienated. Consequently, in order to develop toward the ideal of self-giving love, man must practice self-renunciation. This is

an exercise that is encouraged by God in which the individual rejects his estranged self with its narrow personal interests so that he may be more like the Divine.

With this understanding of God and his relationship to the universe and the human situation, it is now appropriate to more specifically discuss man's encounter with the Divine. The question can be raised as to the various types of experiences through which man is able to acquire self-giving love, and this question is answered by pointing to the basic categories of the mystical and the ethical.

The Mystical

There is no single, universally agreed upon definition for "mystical experience," but instead the term is used in a variety of different ways. For some it refers to mysterious phenomena associated with such practices as clairvoyance, magic, and the occult, and for others the term denotes the hearing of voices and seeing of visions. There are also those who use it in the extremely broad sense of referring to any type of event that is vague or difficult to explain, and there are still others who confine the use of the term to a special state of consciousness that is achieved through particular methods of contemplation.¹²

¹²Walter T. Stace, The Teachings of the Mystics (New York: New American Library, 1960), pp. 9-12; Georgia Harkness,

However, in the present discussion the term will be used to refer to any experience in which an individual has an immediate awareness of the Divine. In such an experience the individual may have contact with other material existents, and these existents may provide favorable conditions for the person's encounter with the Divine. In fact, God is actively seeking to encourage those conditions that will provide an opportunity for this encounter, and in this sense God works through other material existents in a mystical experience. But, in an immediate experience of God, this divine activity through other existents is secondary compared to the central thrust of the encounter. The predominant and most essential means by which the Divine is known in this experience is through God's direct communication of himself. In a mystical experience the divine nature is directly communicated to the individual, and the individual has a direct insight into the self-giving love of God.

This immediate awareness of the Divine is possible because God is constantly reaching out to man and seeking to transform him into divine love. Without God's willingness to extend himself to man, there would be no mystical experiences regardless of what man tried to do to foster this occurrence. The necessity of the Divine in a mystical

experience is emphasized in the following statement made by John Ruysbroeck, a Christian mystic in the latter medieval period:

This essential union of our spirit with God does not exist in itself, but it dwells in God, and it flows forth from God, and it depends upon God, and it returns to God as to its Eternal Origin. And in this wise it has never been, nor shall be, separated from God; for this union is within us by our naked nature, and, were this nature to be separated from God, it would fall into pure nothingness.¹³

But it is the case that God cares for man and seeks to share his love with him; consequently, the divine empathy is directed toward man as well as toward the other material beings of the universe. God is always involved in empathizing with each person so that he will know every personal life situation, and with this knowledge he is able to provide assistance for human needs. But, as God identifies with an individual, he at the same time extends the possibility for that individual to have a mystical experience. That is, it is empathy which serves as the divine presence. Through empathy God projects himself into the person's life and makes himself available for a direct relationship.

However, in addition to this divine contribution, there is also a human element involved in a mystical experience.

¹³F. C. Happold, Mysticism: A Study and An Anthology (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 286.

This human element is the appropriation of the divine presence by the individual. Before a mystical experience can take place, the individual must receive the divine love in a manner that allows God to have an effect upon his being. This demands that the individual have a degree of tolerance, a quality that Nietzsche recognizes as being desirable.¹⁴ In a mystical experience the individual must to some extent be tolerant toward the divine attitude of self-giving. There must be a tendency toward this attitude or at least an openness toward the possibility of its truth. But this tolerance must be present just prior to the mystical experience. An individual could have this perspective at one point in time and not have it at some other time. Even the individual who has made self-giving the predominant approach of his existence is still to some degree intermittent in his outlook. There are occasions in which he is closed to new experiences with the Divine.

Although this tolerance is necessary before an individual is able to appropriate divine love, this alone is not sufficient. There must be circumstances surrounding the person's existence which afford him the opportunity to give attention to the Divine. There must be a chance for the individual's being to be directed toward that which he

¹⁴Kaufmann, pp. 574-576.

does not usually experience. The presence of other people, for example, may serve to prevent an individual from having a mystical experience. A person is not able to be alert to the Divine when he is preoccupied in seeking to communicate with others. For a mystical experience to take place, it is advantageous for an individual to be alone, but if he is accompanied by others, he must be able to concentrate upon his own situation and relationship to God. It is also the case that an individual needs to have sufficient time to be able to appropriate divine love. This time is not present, for instance, when an individual is heavily involved in performing mundane tasks.

Therefore, this human element in a mystical experience demands a proper outlook on the part of the individual as well as favorable circumstances for the reception of the Divine. However, it should be noted that this so-called human element is not purely man's endeavor, for even at this point God has a contribution to make to the experience. God is also working in the process by which human perspectives are developed and human situations arise. He seeks to encourage an individual to adopt a tolerant attitude and at the same time attempts to lead him toward advantageous circumstances for concentration. As previously indicated, this divine persuasion takes the form of a system of positive and negative feelings within the individual.

Actions affirmed by the Divine are rewarding to the individual in some fashion, whereas those which are in opposition to the Divine are discouraged through some sort of negative consequence. An example of how this works in regard to a mystical experience is the individual's need from time to time to reflect upon himself and the meaning of his relationships in the world. Such acts are often helpful for coping with life, and also they are frequently refreshing in the sense of offering a respite from one's usual activities. Through the positive outcome of these acts, the individual is motivated toward future acts of a similar nature. But, in addition, these acts themselves set up favorable conditions for a mystical encounter with the Divine.

Hence, a mystical experience consists of both divine empathy and the proper human response, but even the human element includes a divine contribution. When this experience occurs, the individual is joined with the Divine and has the feeling of the presence of the Divine. There is an intimate encounter of man with God, but, even though this is the case, the encounter can never be one of complete unity with the Divine. Estrangement from God is a state of human existence and can never be entirely removed. Even during a mystical experience man's being is not one of divine love in the complete sense. A mystical experience is one

in which self-giving becomes predominant in the individual but not one in which it is absolute as is the case with God himself.

In addition, the part that the past plays in an individual's life indicates that a mystical experience can never be one of complete unity with God. John Cobb points this out in the following statement about this type of experience:

Experientially speaking, it may well be understood as an experience of union with God, even though, philosophically speaking, actual identity must be denied.

An experience of communion is differentiated from that of union by the continuing self-identity of the human person. The human occasion continues to inherit from its personal past to an important degree.¹⁵

That is, an individual's past is the clue to his personal identity. The nature of an individual is determined by his past experiences and the interpretations that he gives to those experiences. Furthermore, an individual is constantly drawing upon these past experiences and responses in seeking to understand new events in his life. He always utilizes his past in coping with his present. Therefore, an individual's response to the Divine during a mystical experience must be a response which has reference to his personal past, which means that the individual's self-identity

¹⁵ John B. Cobb, Jr., A Christian Natural Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), pp. 234-235.

is maintained throughout the experience. Even though during this experience an individual may feel as though his being is completely absorbed into the Divine, it is, nevertheless, the case that both he and God remain distinctive entities. As Cobb indicates, the relationship in such an experience is actually one in which God shares himself with the individual and not one in which the individual becomes fully identical with the Divine. Instead of being a union between God and man, it is a relationship of communion between the Divine and human.¹⁶

Since a mystical experience is one in which God shares himself with man, this means that it must be an experience of divine love. In a mystical experience that which the individual is joined with is self-giving love. The individual responds to divine empathy and allows it to become a part of himself. As a result, there is a transformation of the individual's being into a predominantly divine outlook. This alteration in man during a mystical experience is pointed out by St. John of the Cross, a sixteenth century mystic. Although he recognizes that the human does not become identical to the Divine, he does emphasize that the various functions of the self take on a divine approach during the experience. For example, he says that

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 233-235.

. . . the understanding, which before this union understood in a natural way with the strength and vigor of its natural light, is now moved and informed by another principle, that of the supernatural light of God, and has been changed into the Divine, for its understanding and that of God are now both one. And the will, which aforetime loved after the manner of death, that is to say, meanly and with its natural affection, has now been changed into the life of Divine love;¹⁷

Accompanying this transformation during a mystical experience is a weakening of the self-centeredness within the individual. The narrow selfish outlook becomes ineffectual, and the Divine gains the major influence. This aspect of a mystical experience was given attention by a mystical movement in Islam called Sufism, which acquired importance in the ninth century A. D. and continued for several centuries thereafter. One of the emphases of the Sufis was that, in order to experience the Divine and see the world as it really is, one must seek to practice self-renunciation and to free himself from egocentric judgment. It was insisted that through the proper preparation it is possible for one to have an ecstatic experience of the Divine without the interference of the self-centered ego.¹⁸ The following statement by a Persian Sufi named Jami is an example of the emphasis:

¹⁷Happold, p. 365.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 249-251; Stace, pp. 201-203.

Wherefore it behoves thee to strive and hide thy "self" from thy sight, and occupy thyself with Very Being, and concern thyself with the "Truth"

And in this course thou must persevere until He mingles Himself with thy soul, and thine own individual existence passes out of thy sight.¹⁹

As a result of this reception of the Divine and the wane of self-centeredness, the individual has the feeling of being more than he has been before. He experiences a sense of being filled with something superior to himself which at the same time is uplifting to the individual. That is, there is an inner joy that is present which is enlivening and refreshing, and along with this joy there is a general sense of gratitude and tranquility. During a mystical experience the individual gains an appreciation and contentment toward the nature of existence and toward himself. St. John of the Cross compares this experience of God by the mystic with the experience of a bride on the day of her betrothal. In each case love is central to the experience, and this love gives rise to the sentiments of joy, peace, and appreciation. At one point he describes both the bride and the mystical soul in the following manner:

And upon this happy day, not only is there an end of the soul's former vehement yearnings and complaints of love, but, being adorned with the good things which I am describing, she enters into an estate of peace and delight and sweetness of love wherein she does naught else but relate and sing the wonders of her Beloved,

¹⁹Happold, p. 259.

which she knows and enjoys in Him, by means of²⁰ the
aforementioned union of the betrothal

A mystical experience therefore is one in which divine love is permitted to become a part of the individual. This love dominates the person's being, and this produces feelings of joy, peace, and gratitude. An experience of this kind can serve to encourage the individual in the direction of a more permanent self-giving approach to life. It may give the individual a beginning appreciation of divine love, or, if this is already present, the individual may be stimulated toward accepting this love more tenaciously and practicing it more extensively. But the experience itself does not necessarily imply this sort of result, for it is possible for the individual to reject this love soon after the experience. Even though it is the case that during the experience this attitude does take control, it may not continue for any considerable length of time afterwards. The individual may revert to a former attitude or soon have new experiences that influence him toward some other outlook. He may develop the attitude that Kierkegaard points to as being characteristic of the mystic; that is, he may acquire an aversion toward this existence and ignore his responsibilities toward others.²¹ It is even possible that the

²⁰Ibid., p. 363.

²¹Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 247-249, 251.

individual may begin to think of the experience in a self-interested manner in the sense of interpreting it as primarily a means of attaining personal pleasure, and he may even become involved in seeking to have additional experiences of the same kind simply for the purpose of self-gratification. Furthermore, even if the individual continues in the affirmation of self-giving after the experience, it may not be something that he is able to practice. He may sincerely want to extend love to others in his relationships, but he may not be able to do so because of a weak character. He may be unable to control his physical desires and emotions, or he may not have the courage to act on the basis of his own will.

However, there is a need for the love of God to be maintained within the individual after a mystical experience, since it is this love which enables the individual to achieve a fulfilling existence. But, in order for this love to continue, the individual must be willing to outwardly express this love. He must be willing to develop a self-giving attitude by sharing himself with others. One means available to the individual for expressing his love is the direct relationship with God. In this expression the individual utilizes the love which the Divine has given him and extends it back toward God. He gives himself to God through his appreciation and trust toward what the Divine

has done for him and continues to do. He devotes himself to God.

There are several ways that this devotion can take place. One of these is the practice of praise and thanksgiving. In these acts the individual gives affirmation to the nature and activity of the Divine. He demonstrates that he is in agreement with God and is grateful for what God is and what he is doing in his own life and the rest of the universe. In another practice of devotion to God, the seeking of forgiveness, the individual asks God to accept him even though he thinks of himself as having been involved in wrongdoing. He communicates to God his belief that he has violated God's intention for him, but he also apologizes for what he has done and tells God he would like to begin or reconstitute a close relationship with him. A further way that devotion occurs is through the individual's efforts to acquire strength and guidance for his life. In these acts the person seeks to cooperate with God's intention for him. He expresses a desire for his thoughts, words, and deeds to be those which are sanctioned by the Divine, and he asks God to aid him in understanding and implementing the divine will for his life.

The Ethical

The other means by which an individual is able to express the love coming from a mystical experience is through

his relationships with other beings in the universe, both living and nonliving. This expression of love to these other beings is part of the ethical realm of man's life. The ethical is the experience of God resulting from one's interrelationship with other existents. It has reference to both the love that an individual receives from these other beings as well as the love that he extends to them.

Not only is man able to receive divine love through mystical experiences, but also he is able to acquire it through his interaction with the material universe. As Schleiermacher indicates, man is able to encounter the Divine through the finite.²² God shares himself and provides for human needs as man interacts with the beings around him. The extension of this love comes through man's relationships with several different kinds of beings. First of all, one's contact with other people is an avenue for receiving this love. Parents share themselves by giving birth, nourishment, and guidance to a child. Certain people provide an individual with friendship and companionship, and others give him instructions necessary for understanding and coping with life. Still others provide him with goods and services that are helpful in meeting his everyday needs. In these

²²Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, pp. 36, 45-51, 54, 101.

ways and others a person confronts divine love through human relationships.

One also is able to experience divine love through relationships with nonhuman life. Plants and animals give man some of the necessary ingredients for his existence by providing him with food, oxygen, shelter, and clothing. But these are not the only ways that man is able to benefit from these other life forms. There is the beauty of plants and animals that man is able to enjoy, along with the element of companionship which these forms of life give to man. Furthermore, there is no doubt that man has gained a great deal in terms of understanding his physical body and overcoming diseases and affliction as a result of the sacrifices of these other living things.

In addition, God's love can be experienced through relationships with the inanimate world. Man could not exist without this realm just as he could not exist without non-human life. It provides man with air, water, heat, and light as well as a location for his existence. The inanimate also enables man to have further experiences of beauty, such as through the presence of a waterfall or a sunset. Still other contributions made to man's life by this realm include the use of inorganic substances as medicine for diseases, as constituents of instruments and machinery, and as sources of energy.

Therefore, relationships with these various types of beings outside himself give man an encounter with the Divine. Every person has experienced God's love through relationships in each of these areas. All have benefited from the gifts and sacrifices of other persons, nonhuman life, and the inanimate realm. At the same time, these contributions from others to man's life point to man's moral responsibilities to the rest of existence. They serve as a justification for the claim that man has obligations toward each area of existence. Since an individual's life and well-being depend upon the activities of others, this means that he ought to value and assist their existence. He must to some extent be self-giving himself in order to protect his own life.

However, this is not the only reason why man needs to be self-giving toward the various spheres of existence. The activities of the other beings of the universe demonstrate that man is a part of an interrelated system that demands self-giving from its constituents. The contributions that these other members make to the universe indicate both that the welfare of the whole is maintained by the sacrifices of each area of existence and that each entity is what it needs to be through the practice of self-giving. Since man is a part of this system of being, he also needs to participate in self-giving. He must be willing to share himself for the betterment of others, and in this way he contributes to the enhancement of not only the entire universe but also

himself. As Nietzsche indicates, there is an egoistic nature to love in that, in acts of compassion toward others, the individual is meeting his own needs as well as the needs of others.²³

In order for a human being to be able to carry out this self-giving attitude toward others, it is necessary for him to think in terms of having direct responsibilities to all beings regardless of their nature. He must attain the perspective of regarding all beings as existing with value in themselves and not just with value as a means to something else. This means that he must have a basic respect for all beings. He must respect not only their right to exist but also their right to function as they do. Without this respect for others, alienation becomes a part of a person's being. The individual is separated from others in that he does not have the attitude toward them that he should and is unable to fully implement self-giving love. He is also alienated from himself in that he does not achieve the fulfillment that comes with self-giving love. There is an inner sense of satisfaction that comes to one who shares himself with others. It is the satisfaction of being a responsible person and of being properly joined with others. Furthermore, there is an alienation from God that results from the absence of this respect for others. As man practices self-giving, he has an additional ethical experience

²³Nietzsche, Human, All-Too-Human, Part I, pp. 134-136.

of the Divine. God's love is encountered as one receives from others in the universe, but it is also experienced as one gives in return.

But is it possible for one to be alienated from some of the spheres of existence without being alienated from all of them? Kant deals to some degree with this issue when he discusses the relation between a person's treatment of animals and his treatment of other human beings. He says ". . . he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with man. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals."²⁴ What Kant says at this point is often the case, but it does not always hold. One may think that he has very few or even no responsibilities to nonhuman realms of existence; he may not recognize the contributions of these other beings, or, because of his ability to overpower and dominate them, he may exploit them for his own self-interest. However, this individual may at the same time be highly considerate and sacrificing in his relationships with other people. He may have a high standard of responsibility toward humanity and be quite faithful in adhering to that standard. It is also possible for an individual to be alienated from other people but not from nonhuman beings. An individual might have a special

²⁴Immanuel Kant, Lectures on Ethics (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 240.

interest in nonhuman spheres or have suffered undue disappointment and hardship from other persons. Consequently, he might be understanding and giving in his relationships with nonhuman life and inanimate objects but apprehensive and even hostile toward other human beings. Therefore, it is possible for one to be estranged from some but not all kinds of beings. The way one treats one type of being is not always an indication of how he treats all beings.

Thus, when a person does not maintain a basic respect toward others, alienation becomes a part of his existence. But even when man's need for this respect is acknowledged, an issue that still has to be explored is the question of priority. Should man give priority in his value decisions to human beings over other kinds of beings, or should he give equal consideration to each realm of existence? Peter Singer argues that a person should give animals equal consideration with that of human beings. Since animals are beings that are capable of suffering and happiness, their interests should be given equal regard. However, the use of animals in experimentation and for food indicates that most persons have a bias in favor of their own species. The majority of human beings treat animals as merely a means to satisfy personal pleasures and to assist the human species.²⁵ Singer says

²⁵Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," Animal Rights and Human Obligations, Ed. Tom Regan and Peter Singer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 148-162.

The racist violates the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of his own race, when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. Similarly the speciesist allows the interests of his own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is the same in each case. Most human beings are speciesists.²⁶

There is no doubt that most persons are speciesists as Singer contends. Mankind for the most part does give greater attention to the interests of his own kind. But is this justified? Certainly there is no justification for the unnecessary mistreatment and waste of animal life that often takes place. Man does not have the right to perform cruel or uncalled for experiments upon animals. He also should not kill animals just for his own amusement or confine them to highly restrictive cages for a long period of time. Furthermore, there is a great need for improvement in the conditions under which animals are raised and transported.

Even though animals should be given greater consideration than they generally are, this does not mean that they should be given equal consideration with man. Man is a being with capacities, such as reason, memory, and imagination, that are superior to those of animals. That these capacities enable man to have a higher level of intellectual and social life does not in itself justify his being given priority.

²⁶Ibid., p. 154.

But rather the reason that he should be given greater consideration is the nature of the role in the universe that his capacities allow him to play. Man has the highly important task of being manager of the universe. He oversees the various activities of other beings and is able to intervene in the process to offer protection and guidance when this is needed. For example, man is able to remove animals from a particular environment in order to protect them from extinction or from a natural calamity such as a flood. It is through this role as director of the whole that man is able to be an instrument of the Divine. As a compassionate and wise manager, man cooperates and assists with God's work in the universe. He becomes an agent of divine love. Thus, because of mankind's position in the universe, human beings are normally to be viewed as taking priority over the particular beings of the other realms of existence. For instance, when forced to choose between saving the life of a dog and that of a person, under the usual circumstances one is obligated to first help the human being. The role of human life in the universe demands that it be given priority.

However, this priority that belongs to man should not be construed as being universal. That is, there are conceivable circumstances in which one would be obligated to give priority to another kind of being over a person.

For instance, suppose that one is forced to choose between saving the life of a dog and that of a human being who is a mere vegetable or whose death is near and inevitable. Would there then be justification for giving priority to the human being? It does not seem that there would be, especially if the dog was making significant contributions to other beings. In addition, the priority that normally belongs to man in value decisions is not a justification for the selfish activities of man. Man does not have the right to destroy, abuse, or mistreat other things simply to gratify his own selfish interests. For example, man does not have the right to dump his wastes in a nearby stream merely because it is convenient or to seriously harm an animal simply because the sound that it makes is annoying to him. Acts of this kind demonstrate a lack of respect for other beings and are certainly inexcusable.

Hence, in a person's relationships with others there are three areas toward which he has responsibilities. These areas are other human beings, nonhuman life, and inanimate existence. These obligations toward others can also be viewed as a part of an individual's obligations toward himself. At the same time that an individual is being self-giving toward others, he is also being self-giving toward himself in that he is providing himself with what he needs in these relationships. However, this is not the only way that an individual must carry out self-giving toward

himself. Each person is also responsible for his immediate relationships with himself. As an individual selects his actions, he has the responsibility of taking his own self into consideration. He must seek to treat himself in a manner that will promote his health and well-being. Each person, for instance, has an ethical duty to protect and care for his body and at the same time to develop his mental abilities and creative skills. But, in order for these obligations to be carried out, self-renunciation is again required. Self-renunciation is just as significant in these direct relationships with oneself as it is in one's relationships with others since narrow self-interests have to be avoided before one is truly able to uphold one's personal welfare. This means that one must be able to reject actions that only offer momentary pleasures or which in any way interfere with a long-term realization of oneself.

But what about the possible conflict between these two ways of being responsible to oneself? Is it possible on certain occasions for one's direct duties to oneself to be in opposition in some way with one's duties to others? Certainly situations occur in which one has to decide whether more attention should be given to obligations to others or to one's direct obligations to himself. Such a case would be the individual who must decide whether he should work additional hours in the evening helping a friend

in his business. On the one hand, he is aware that his friend has financial difficulties and that he has no one else that will help him. But, on the other hand, he realizes that he himself is plagued with poor health and that he will endanger his life if he loses a large amount of rest. This individual has a duty to help his friend, but he also has a duty to protect his health. There are also cases which concern positive benefits for oneself but negative effects upon others. For example, a young person may recognize his personal need to develop his mental abilities through a college education, but he may also be aware of the burden that his education will place upon his parents. There is therefore a conflict between the individual's responsibility to himself and his responsibility to his parents.

In making decisions of this kind, a person must analyze the specific needs that are present to determine their importance and the probability of his being able to meet them. It is also necessary for him to seek an estimation of the effect that his actions to satisfy these needs will have upon all of those involved. He must attempt to discover both the nature of this effect and the probability of its occurring. After examining the circumstances in this manner, the individual must then decide whether the needs that exist and the probability of their being met warrant the risks of the possible ill effects.

It should be noted, however, that in cases of this type one is not always obligated to make the choice that gives emphasis to one's duties to others. On some occasions, in order to be self-giving in the best possible manner, one must give favor to one's immediate duties to oneself. In the first of the two previously given examples, a situation is conceivable in which the man's ethical obligation would be to refuse to work extra hours to help his friend. The probability might be extremely high that if he did engage in any extra work he would become severely sick and even die. Under such circumstances it would be a wise and responsible act for this person not to do the work. Of course, he should seek to assist his friend in some other manner, such as by loaning him money or arranging for someone else to work with him. But, even if he is not able to help his friend in any way whatsoever, this does not mean there has been an absence of self-giving in this situation. There has been a genuine act of self-giving in the sense that the individual has legitimately provided for himself.

In summary, the mystical and the ethical are the two types of experiences through which man acquires divine love. In a mystical experience God is known through a direct communication with him in which there is an immediate awareness of self-giving love by the individual. This experience consists of both the presence of the divine empathy and the appropriate human response, but God is

involved even in the human aspect of the encounter in that he encourages man toward the attitude and circumstances that are conducive for the experience. Furthermore, instead of being an experience of complete union with the Divine, it is one of communion between God and man in which self-giving love dominates the individual. But, in order for this love to continue after the encounter, the individual must develop the self-giving attitude by extending this love to others.

On the other hand, a person's ethical experiences represent his encounter with God through his relationships in the material universe, and these relationships include both those in which he receives love and those in which he extends it. Because of the contributions of others and the nature of the universe which these contributions reveal, man is a being with certain ethical responsibilities. These responsibilities can be broken down into those which an individual has toward others and those which he has toward himself. An individual's duties to others consist of his obligations to other human beings, to nonhuman life, and to nonliving matter. A person's duties to himself overlap with his duties to others in the sense that by being responsible in one's relationships with others one is also exercising self-giving toward oneself. However, one's duties to oneself not only demand that one be responsible toward others but also that one carry out certain immediate obligations toward himself.

The Relationship Between the
Mystical and the Ethical

What can be said concerning the relationship between these two kinds of encounters with the Divine? One way that this relationship can be viewed is in terms of the positive potential that each of these experiences has for the other. Each can serve as a foundation for the existence of the other. Through a mystical experience an individual gains an appreciation of divine love, and this appreciation can function as the beginning of a will within the individual to be self-giving toward the material beings of the universe. Of course, it is not necessarily the case that an individual will interpret the love experienced mystically in broad enough terms to include the need for its extension to other human beings. He may think of self-giving love as something that only has reference to a direct relationship to God, or he may even consider it to be something that God only wants him to experience, or perhaps only a minority of persons like him. Nevertheless, a mystical experience does have the potential for leading the person toward the ethical, and in many instances this actually takes place. But how can the ethical be a basis for the mystical? In the case of the ethical, self-giving love can take on a more lasting presence in the person's life. It is the continuation of this love which functions as a basis for mystical experiences.

That is, through the acceptance of divine love in the ethical, the person is able to have the perspective needed for a mystical experience. Although this perspective in itself does not guarantee experiences of this kind, it is a necessary condition for their occurrence.

Another way of viewing the relationship between these two types of experiences is in terms of the close similarity that some expressions of the mystical have with the ethical. As most frequently described, the mystical is an inward experience which either in no way involves other material existents or involves them only in a secondary manner. But the mystical is not confined to this introvertive form. There are also mystical experiences that are extrovertive in character in which an individual uses his senses and turns outward into the world. In these experiences other material existents play a more important part in the experience than is the case with introvertive mysticism.²⁷

It is these extrovertive encounters which are on the border of the mystical and verge on being a part of the ethical. In fact, if the material existents are the primary agents of the Divine, then God is not being experienced in essentially a direct manner; consequently,

²⁷Stace, pp. 15-23.

the experience would have to be considered as ethical and not mystical. However, it is interesting to note that there is not a broad separation between these two ways of having knowledge of God, but instead there is a continuum of experiences by which man has contact with the Divine.

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