

Religious Apriori

ANDERS NYGREN'S

Religious Apriori

with an Introduction by Walter H. Capps

Edited by

Walter H. Capps &
Kjell O. Lejon

Linköping Studies in Religion
and Religious Education, No 2

LINKÖPING UNIVERSITY ELECTRONIC PRESS
2000

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Linköping Studies in Religion and Religious Education, No 2

Series editor: Edgar Almén

Linköping University Electronic Press

Linköping, Sweden, 2000

ISBN 91-7219-640-8 (print)

ISSN 1404-3971 (print)

www.ep.liu.se/ea/rel/2000/002/ (WWW)

ISSN 1404-4269 (online)

Printed by: UniTryck, Linköping

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Dedicated to

David August Brostrom and Jacob Lejon

*both of whom can be counted upon
to carry the tradition
into the next generation*

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Part I

Preface

By Dr. KJELL O. LEJON
Linköpings universitet, Sweden

The Swedish professor and bishop Anders Nygren (1890-1978) played an important role on the philosophical and theological scene during the mid 1900s. His ideas have been published in several languages and have had a major impact especially on Lutheran theological interpretation of the essence of Christianity. Together with distinguished colleagues on the faculty at Lund University, he created what has been called »Lundensian Theology». In 1947 Nygren was elected the first president of the Lutheran World Federation. In this capacity too, his work received widespread respect.

The foundation of Nygren's first theoretical structure was first published in his dissertation, *Religiöst Apriori. Dess filosofiska förutsättningar och teologiska konsekvenser* [*Religious Apriori: Its Philosophical Presuppositions and Theological Consequences*] (1921). For some inexplicable reason the book was never translated into English. Finally, on the initiative of Professor Walter H. Capps, some essential portions of the work have in this volume been made accessible for the English-speaking world.

It has been an honor to work with both Dr. Nygren and Dr. Capps. With Nygren through his written work, and with Capps first as a doctoral student and later on as a dear friend and colleague.

Bishop and Professor Gustaf Aulén once characterized his colleague Nygren as »one of the clearest and sharpest brains in the world of theology.» Nygren is still a person who stands out in the history of theology. Outstanding qualities were also something that characterized Walter H. Capps, who totally unexpectedly died in a heart attack in Washington D.C. on his way to the House of Representatives in October 1997. The honored professor, who just had started a new career as a politician, still stands out.

I am most grateful to be one of them who came to know Dr. Capps. His last letter to me was written the day before he died. It included this last version of his introduction to *Religious Apriori*. When I received the letter, Walter H. Capps had left this life for the life to come. His greetings from Santa Barbara were also greetings from Heaven. They were indeed also a sign for me to finally, after all, complete this work.

With gratefulness and respect I hereby leave the thoughts of Dr. Nygren and the introduction of Dr. Capps into the hands of the reader.

Linköping, Sweden
Januari 13, 2000

Biographical Introduction to Anders Nygren

By KJELL O. LEJON
Linköpings universitet, Sweden

Anders Theodor Samuel Nygren was born in Gothenburg [Göteborg], Sweden, on November 15, 1890. He was the third of four sons, all pursuing the Lutheran priesthood, of schoolprincipal Samuel Nygren and Anna Maria Lundström. The impressions from his home and the regular church attendance in the Evangelical Lutheran (State) Church of Sweden led Nygren into the world of Christianity, especially into the thinking of Martin Luther and Lutheranism. After his father died in 1906 the family moved to Lund in the south of Sweden. Nygren enrolled at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Lund, and graduated after only five semesters with a Bachelor of Divinity-degree [Teologie kandidat]. Practical-theoretical pastoral training followed and on June 3, 1912, he was ordained, 21 years old, for the diocese of Gothenburg.

During Nygren's ministry he deepened his knowledge in exegetics and pursued his special interest in philosophy and systematical theology. The works of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich

Schleiermacher was thoroughly penetrated during nightly study sessions. In order to confirm a »correct understanding« of these and contemporary German authorities, he took a leave of absence and left for studies in Germany, where he also met his future wife, Imgard Brandin, daughter of Superintendent Theodor Brandin. The marriage produced four children.

In the spring of 1921 Nygren completed his Licentiate of Theology-thesis [Teologie Licentiat]. Shortly after, on May 20, 1921, he defended his dissertation *Religiöst Apriori* at the Faculty of Theology, Lund University, where he also was appointed assistant professor [docent] after the disputation.

Several important articles and books in his authorship followed dealing with »a scientific approach« to dogmatical and ethical issues. Nygren received in 1924 a full professorship at Lund University.

In 1930, the fruits of a profound study in the area of Greek philosophy and early Christianity resulted in part I of his magnum opus *Eros och Agape* [*Agape and Eros*]. Part II was published in 1936. In this opus, Nygren clearly outlined the method of motif-research. Together with his colleague(s) professor(s) Gustaf Aulén (and Ragnar Bring), Nygren formed the foundation of the Lundensian system of thought, which started to capture more and more interest both within and without Sweden with a beginning in the 1920s. Their religio-philosophical and theological methods and theories declared that man cannot escape the dimension of the ultimate.

Nygren participated in ecumenical efforts starting as early as 1927 in the Faith and Order conference in Lausanne. During the Second World War he also participated in the international debate concerning nazism and Christianity and was named »doctor captivitatis«. In 1947 Nygren became the first president of Lutheran World Federation. Two years later, on May 22, 1949, Nygren was ordained bishop in the diocese of Lund. He had after this, the opportunity to practice what he for a long while only had dealt with on a theoretical level. After his retirement 1958, he continued his work with the »scientific task and method« in the area of philosophy of religion and theology. Nygren also lectured one semester at the University of Minnesota and was for a year resident scholar at the

Ecumenical Institute at Evanston. During this period he had a visiting professorship at the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. In 1972, Nygren's last major work was published under the title *Meaning and Method. Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology*. Even though illness heavily reduced his physical capabilities during his last years, he still, with a great interest and distinctiveness, participated in theological and philosophical debates. On October 20, 1978, Nygren died and was buried in Lund, Sweden.

Introduction to *Religious Apriori*

By Dr. WALTER H. CAPPS (†)
University of California, Santa Barbara, U.S.A.

Anders Nygren's *Religious Apriori* as Basis of his Philosophy of Religion

The publication of critical portions of Anders Nygren's *Religiöst Apriori* [*Religious Apriori*] in English translation is an accomplishment for which I first saw the need when I was a graduate student. Being of Swedish American ancestry on my mother's side, I was drawn to Nygren's writings, and to those of his colleague, Gustaf Aulén, since they were identified as being impressive studies of religion that had made their way from Europe to the United States.

It was not with *Religious Apriori* that I started, however, but with Nygren's best-known book, *Agape and Eros*, a study of the Christian concept of love, first published in 1930. Aulén's companion volume carried the title *Faith of the Christian Church*, and was published in 1947. Neither book qualified as philosophy of religion and/or history of religion per se. Rather, each was a theological treatise, focusing on the content of Christian faith. *Agape and Eros* was an exposition of the centrality of agape to early Christian

thinking, and contrasted this thematic focus with prevailing belief systems of its time, notably Judaism and Platonism. *Faith of the Christian Church* elaborated and explained the content of Christian belief in extended expository creedal formulation.

Agape and Eros is the book, known to persons outside Sweden, that offers the fullest portrayal of Nygren's point of view. But, from theoretical and methodological perspectives, this is not the work that laid the groundwork. This designation belongs instead to Nygren's first book, *Religious Apriori*, completed in 1921 as his doctoral dissertation. This was the study that established the theoretical orientation and philosophical basis for all of Nygren's subsequent work, for it was in *Religious Apriori* that he probed the histories of western philosophy and theological reflection to establish the foundation for his subsequent philosophical and theological work.

I came upon this treatise, situated side by side with Nygren's *Det religionsfilosofiska grundproblemet* [*The Fundamental Problem of Philosophy of Religion*], in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. On the same shelf were additional Nygren publications, notably *Filosofi och motivforskning* [*Philosophy and Motif Research*], the combination of which exhibited a deliberate, sustained and comprehensive work plan. But it quickly became evident that it was in *Religious Apriori* that Nygren first tackled the set of problems with which he would be dealing throughout his career. Consequently, the reader cannot obtain a comprehensive grasp of the underlying intentions in *Agape and Eros*, or any of Nygren's other books and essays, without a tutored sense of the intellectual program's overall design.

Everyone's entry into the world of scholarly reflection comes under the auspices of a particular intellectual spirit or temperament. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, when Anders Nygren was engaged in his doctoral studies, there was a strong tendency among theoreticians in Swedish universities to be critical of the grand philosophical systems of the nineteenth century. Their charge was that these systems were expressively speculative in addition to making philosophical reflection metaphysically dependent.

Whenever this intellectual situation is reviewed or described, the work of the Swedish philosopher Axel Hägerström (1868-1939), acknowledged founder of the Uppsala school, is cited as leading the charge against the previous way of doing philosophy. This is true and accurate, of course, but Nygren was not influenced directly by Hägerström, nor was Hägerström alone in urging that truth be conceived in a fashion that exhibited no metaphysical alignment or dependency whatever. Certainly the intellectual movements of the time both inside and outside Sweden, primarily linguistic analysis and logical positivism, had placed large challenges before all who wished to think critically within philosophy of religion.

As a doctoral student, Nygren was less fearful that these challenges carried threats to the possibility of sustaining truth claims in religion than he was tantalized by the prospect that the new insights created opportunities for fresh thinking. His desire was to think these matters through as rigorously and systematically as possible. His first task was to lay the conceptual and categorical groundwork for philosophy of religion. And he wished to do so in a way that honored the conviction that metaphysical entailment and entanglement, with complete circumspection, ought to be avoided.

Years later, in his intellectual autobiography [see »Intellectual Autobiography«, translated by Peter W. Russel, in Charles W. Kegley, *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*. Southern Illinois University Press. Carbondale 1970, pp. 3-29] Nygren supplied more information about his years as a doctoral student when he was thinking these matters through. He reports that it was in conversation with Docent Torgny Segerstedt, that he was able to formulate his intellectual task. He understood, first, that philosophy of religion is in no position to try to do what theological reflection attempts to do. He understood, second, that both philosophy of religion and systematic theology must be deemed unscientific if they are dependent upon metaphysics. On the basis of these two principles, Nygren, came to clarity about the intent of his research program: »the possibility of a

purely scientific nonmetaphysical philosophy of religion had to be fundamentally explored, as well as the scientific basis of dogmatics and moral theology.» The goal, he reiterated, was »to establish the philosophy of religion as a purely critical, scientific discipline, while repudiating every form of metaphysics.» This was his ambition when he wrote the treatises as a doctoral candidate in 1921.

It is also important to recognize that Anders Nygren believed the matter of the religious apriori to be the most critical subject within philosophy of religion. To attain clarity regarding this subject would enable the inquirer to establish religion on grounds of certifiable human experience. Nygren, together with the majority of scholars who came under this sway, was challenged by questions raised by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) concerning the status of religion as an ingredient of human consciousness. The intention was to identify the locus of religion, its source and ground, and the specific manner in which it attaches to being human. The Kantians were not content to explain religion by assigning it to divine revelation or some other transcendent conduit. Indeed, Kant himself explored this subject in his book, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. The grounding of the subject of religion, together with a full description of the methodological intentions and expectations of the fields and disciplines by means of which it becomes methodologically and intellectually accessible, was the subject of Nygren's first treatises. And the first steps in pursuit of this objective were taken, as we have noted, when he wrote his dissertation, *Religious Apriori*.

Religious Apriori

Anders Nygren entitled his doctoral dissertation *Religious Apriori*, signaling that his intention was to isolate the foundation or basis of religion within the world of experience that Immanuel Kant and others who had subscribed to the tenets of the Enlightenment were exploring. In this light, the significance of the dissertation was twofold. First, it demonstrated that Nygren—like Rudolf Otto, whose search for »das

heilige» was similarly motivated—was committed to foundational methodological interests. His dissertation focused on the most essential matter if philosophy of religion were to try to claim scientific respectability. And, second, the dissertation set forth the program that its author intended to pursue. In this treatise, he employed words like »preparation» and »propadeutic» with significant regularity, confirming that his intention was to establish a methodological basis from which the central issues could be most effectively approached.

Religious Apriori was guided by several convictional principles. First, Nygren intended that the treatise be classified as a work of philosophy of religion, the purpose of which disciplines is »to identify and examine the content of religion.» In his view, philosophy of religion does not function to account for religion, to make judgments about the truth or falsity of any of the assertions or avowals that are communicated through religion, or even to offer counsel on how one might decide in favor or against the claims of one or another religious tradition. Moreover, philosophy of religion should not be looked to as the source of religious ideas, nor does it offer itself as a worthy competitor to religion as a creator or stimulator of articles of belief. Nearly every time that Nygren wrote the words »philosophy of religion» he punctuated it with the prefatory word »critical». His intention was to show that philosophy of religion is a discipline engaged in the work of critique, just as, according to the Kantian precedent, the *Critique of Pure Reason* focuses on the subject of epistemology, *Critique of Practical Reason* pertains to the workings of ethics, and the *Critique of Judgement* is trained upon the world of aesthetics. None of these works of criticism creates or concocts the contents of the subjects they examine. In the same pattern, philosophy of religion must resolutely resist becoming the producer or sponsor of religious ideas.

While philosophy of religion is not in position to produce the content of religion, it is, nevertheless, definitely interested in the validity of religion. Here Nygren was meticulous in demonstrating that the validity of the subject is independent of whatever success there might be in demonstrating the confirmable objectivity of that subject. Throughout the treatise he worked diligently to de-link

validity of religion from objective demonstrability. That is to say, religion is not valid because there is proof that that to which its attention is drawn possesses an objective reality, for example, that the existence of God can be satisfactorily demonstrated. Rather, religion is valid because it inheres in a legitimate form or arena of human experience. Put in another way, religion is not valid because there is evidence to support a transcendent reality. This, for Nygren, would require making validity dependent upon objectivity. Objective reality does not need to be proven for validity to be established. Thus, the success with which arguments on behalf of the existence of God register has no effect upon the validity of religion. Rather, claims to validity are made on the basis of whether religion (like philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics) is »a necessary and indispensable form of life.« After validity has been established this way, the question for philosophy of religion is to identify and explore the contents of the subject.

To call religion a »necessary and indispensable form of life,« is to recognize that it (like philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics) possesses an a priori status. This, in Nygren's view, helps explain why religion does not simply appear here and there, or from time to time, in human experience, but is actually a »universal form of life.« One encounters religion wherever one encounters human beings, whether ancient or contemporary. These facts force Nygren to put not stock in any theory that would assign religion to a particular period in the evolution of human consciousness, or to the view that, following its time of origins, the contents of religion were quickly absorbed into subsequent modes or forms of expression. Here Nygren's argument is presented as follows:

Certainly this does not mean that religion has a factual necessity, but, rather, that it possesses a formal necessity: religion is an inherent, essential ingredient of human consciousness. Without the modality of religion, consciousness cannot be regarded as being complete. Without religion, consciousness must be portrayed as being, in a certain sense, underdeveloped.

In other words, religion possesses distinctiveness and status. Like science, morality, and aesthetics, religion is a sphere of human activity that possesses independence since it cannot be derived from any of the other spheres of legitimacy. To call each of these legitimate is not to suggest that they exist in isolation from each other. On the contrary, Nygren insisted that »life is always like a musical chord, where tones from the different spheres are sounded together.« There is clear distinctiveness when one compares and contrasts one sphere with the others, but they work together interdependently.

Nygren approached the religion as instruments or vehicles that lend content to religion. Thus, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and the other traditions are particular, comprehensive expressions of religion, yes, that are expressions but not still additional arguments on behalf of religion's validity. What makes these traditions religions rather than, say, centers or foci of religious truth claims, is that they incorporate the other valid forms of human life in their worship and practice. Thus, Buddhism is not only about belief, but is also about art and morality. Judaism is not only religious avowal, but is also about ethics. The religious exhibit these dimensions or strands that are due to the fact that they incorporate the other valid forms of experience in what they stand for.

It is apparent, even from the material he presents in *Religious Apriori*, that Nygren intended to distinguish the purpose of philosophy of religion from that of theology. If the differences between them are properly understood, the two enterprises can function compatibly. Philosophy of religion derives from the uniqueness of religion as an apriori form of life. The religious traditions stand as expressions of that form or modality of human consciousness. The function of theology—performed not by the philosophy of religion, but by an expositor of a religious tradition—is to elucidate the contents of the beliefs of a particular tradition in some deliberately (usually systematically) ordered fashion.

Here we must quickly add that Nygren gave none of these subjects full development in *Religious Apriori*, choosing instead to

deal with motif-research in subsequent writings. Since *Religios Apriori* was originally prepared as his doctoral dissertation, he utilized it not to lay out the details of a full-scale comprehensive intellectual program, but, rather, in typical doctoral-candidate fashion, to demonstrate that he was appropriately aware of all relevant and related scholarly material on this subject. Thus, the treatise references Kant and Schleiermacher frequently, and pays respect to others who have addresses this subject, namely, Carl Strange in full scope, and Ernst Troeltsch, Paul Kalweit, Wilhelm Herrmann, Karl Heim, Karl Dunkmann, Jacob Fries, and others with less detail. It is apparent that Nygren was conversant with numerous others (more German than Scandinavian scholars, by the way were) as the analysis progresses.

As noted, *Religios Apriori* was Anders Nygren's first treatise, the work in which he laid down the basis for a rather elaborate philosophical and theological program to follow. I will devote the next section of this introduction to a brief sketch of the intellectual program for which this treatise stands as foundation, that is, as it would have been received and understood by those with whom he was working and conversing at the time of its inception.

Nygren's Philosophical and Theological Program

Taken as a whole, Nygren's foundational philosophical and theological work was designed to come effectively to terms with three durable and compelling intellectual traditions. In the first place, Nygren was a member of the priesthood of the Church of Sweden, a preacher and teacher who would eventually become a bishop and play a significant leadership role in the Lutheran World Federation. In this regard, he understood himself to be reaffirming Martin Luther's truths, all of which derive from emphasis upon the boundless love of God who bestows salvation on the sinner, not on the basis of merit but as an act of grace. Nygren's challenge in this respect was to breathe new life into this vision in such manner that it would support the work of the Church of Sweden. Luther's original formulation was posited in

a polemical situation of debate and disagreement with Roman Catholic theology. By Nygren's time, in Sweden, such theological hostilities were not very provocative. Thus, the task was to bring resilience to these fundamental Reformation truths by calling renewed attention to their inherent vitality.

Secondly, Anders Nygren inherited the challenges of the post-Kantian intellectual desire to identify the essence of religion. Kant, of course, had tapped the classical Greek trichotomy of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, to write *The Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and *The Critique of Judgment*, which, both for Kant and subsequent thinkers, stood as the conceptual framework according to which most items and subjects of reflection were given location and status. To inquire into the essence of religion, therefore, was to select from one of three firmly established categories—philosophy (the science of knowing), ethics, and aesthetics—as the most appropriate locus. Kant himself was fondest of ethics, and presented an account of religion in which duty was understood as »divine command.» But subsequent thinkers were not content. Friedrich Schleiermacher understood Kant to have devised a useful and appropriate problematic, but he believed aesthetics (finding the essence of religion in »the feeling of absolute dependence») to be the most appropriate locus. Rudolf Otto, writing at precisely the same time as Nygren, and dealing with the same intellectual puzzle, selected a fourth category (*das heilige*) to give religion a foundational independence from the other three categories.

Anders Nygren was thoroughly involved in the same quest. He too was intent upon identifying »that without which religion would not be what it is,» that is, with the isolation of the religious apriori. And this question pertained much more directly to the nature of religion and then, dependently and secondarily, to the nature of Christianity. He was concerned about the latter issue too, which he sought to clarify by distinguishing the spirit of the Christian religion—its motivational force—from those that animate the spirit of the two traditions with which Christianity is in closest conversation and in terms of which it is also to be distinguished: Platonism and Judaism. In this respect, considerable attention has been focused on

Nygren's description of the essence of religion and the relationships between this essence and the Christian religion's most vital force. In light of subsequent deliberations, however, the more significant element in Nygren's program may be the insistence upon the irreducibility of religion—which irreducibility protects it from being explained away by anything else, or dissolvable into anything else, and accords it an irrefutable status.

Thirdly, it was easier to make claims of this kind when the prevailing intellectual climate provided opportunities for analysis and reflection via the categories that Kant had certified, Hegel had amplified, and the Neo-Kantians and Neo-Hegelians refined, modified and extended. In this respect both Otto and Schleiermacher had working access to instruments and tools of philosophical and theological postulation that had come under deep suspicion in the intellectual circles within which Nygren received his formal education. We refer again, of course, to the prominent presence of the positivists and analysts and to their commanding influence within philosophical, theological, and religious self-consciousness.

Ludwig Wittgenstein said of religion that »whereof one cannot speak one ought to remain silent,» which statement illustrates that religious language carries obvious emotional content and emotive power, neither of which translate without serious questions into testable and/or verifiable truth claims. Anders Nygren understood that such an observation seriously affects the epistemological status of the truth claims that are lodged in religious language. He recognized that all critiques of metaphysics would eliminate many (if not most) of the prevailing conceptual frameworks. Moreover, all critiques of most vocabularies of being would not pass successfully through the positivist screen. More pointedly, any characteristic of the ways of God in relation to the ways of humans can easily fall victim to the charge that a misguided attempt is being made to speak of matters about which there is no certifiable knowledge. And the easy recourse to the concession that, yes, religious language is a highly specialized and even private language that does not presume to submit its claims to such epistemological criteria did not satisfy Nygren.

It was not difficult for Nygren to proceed this way, for he knew himself to be supported by Martin Luther, who, in principle, had steered the same course. In short, Nygren observed that prescribed criticism of the excesses of metaphysical speculation were temperamentally similar to William of Occam's criticism of the excesses of Scholastic theology. Thus, Luther's cardinal teachings had already passed through both positivistic and linguistic screens. He was also like Luther in striving to isolate and protect the fundamental truth of the faith from untoward entanglement and debilitating associations. And, like Luther, he could approach this intention without obligation to protect the philosophical framework that had been serving as that truth's chief conceptual means of enunciation and articulation. Both Luther and Nygren understood the necessity of freeing the religion's intrinsic power so that it might do its own work, protected from fetters and impediments.

To assist this effort, Martin Luther had selected the language of *sola*—*sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *sola scriptura*, and *sola evangelio*. Nygren was fundamentally isolative too, but more committed to *sui generis* than to *sola*, when asking the series of questions that, under Kantian influence, had gained prominence in German scholarship: what is that without which the biblical message would not be what it is, and what is that without which Christian truth would not be what it is? In proceeding this way, Nygren understood himself to be exercising the same singleness-of-mind that was exemplified by Martin Luther.

Their attitudes to the nature and function of philosophical systems were similar too. Martin Luther was critical of both Scholasticism and Aristotle's philosophy because he believed that each had been employed incorrectly by Christian thinkers, to the obscuration and diminishment of Christianity's core truths. Luther recognized that expositors of Christianity had effected a working arrangement with classical Greek philosophy, certainly by the time of the Church Fathers. This arrangement was significantly responsible for many of the insights Christians brought to their experience, and was remarkably helpful when they sought to communicate their truths both within and outside their own circles. But he did not believe that

such communication was necessarily dependent on this specific means of expression, and was wary of all systematic conceptual syntheses that accorded the philosophical structure, regardless of its name or sponsorship, anything like equal status or function. In Scholasticism's case, Luther judged that the Aristotelian influence had been dominant as to become all-controlling. Theology had gotten itself in an entangling situation where it found itself wrestling energetically with intellectual issues created by its fascination with Aristotelian categories. Thus, Aristotle's philosophy had become much more than intellectual scaffolding in support of effective enunciation, elaboration, and communication of the gospel. In addition, it had become part of that which was to be believed, as if the philosophy itself should stand as an article of faith.

Anders Nygren was of the same intellectual temperament. He had a good grasp of the history of western reflection, and understood that philosophy systems had played a role in lending conceptual articulation to the articles of the Christian faith. But, understanding the Reformation to be the normative historical period, he held no strong allegiance to the architectonic theoretical systems, whether philosophical or theological. And he was also acutely aware that the philosophical systems that were most amenable to this kind of, in his judgment, questionable theological use were those with the greatest degree of propensity toward idealism and idealistic metaphysical elaboration. Therefore, he acknowledged and joined with the force of positivist criticism of the idealist tradition, knowing that this carried the power to undermine and/or severely restrict the range of idealist-supported theological affirmation. Once again, in being suspicious of such intellectual ventures, he could align himself both with the methodological temperament of Martin Luther and with fundamental contentions of contemporary critical philosophy. He understood clearly why the philosophers were critical of such enterprises, such speculative intellectual fights of fancy. Therefore, having nothing to lose in the transaction himself, since he was in no way an advocate of the old-style, metaphysically-dependent, idealist conceptual orientation, Nygren was free, without malice, defensiveness, or reservation, to help theological reflection find a way out. Of course,

the sharpness of the critiques of metaphysics made them extraordinarily threatening. But Nygren perceived freedom to lie there too, for they forced theologians to rethink their work in terms that would both refresh and perhaps even validate the undertaking.

We have now come full circle, for this is the spirit in which Nygren approached his work when writing *Religious Apriori*, and it was *Religious Apriori* that gave him permission, intellectually speaking, to undertake this threefold task in the manner prescribed. Being young, confident, and resourceful, Nygren affirmed that selected post-Kantian insights as how systematic reflection is ordered had given philosophy of religion a fresh start. He, in turn, was given opportunity to take the lead in charting the new course. Thus it was not out of a sense of foreboding that he proceeded, but with confirmed anticipation that his inquiry would clarify the purpose of philosophy of religion as well as substantiating the subject of religion. Consequently, *Religious Apriori*, was both an inquiry and a statement. It was both eloquent acknowledgment of the propriety of such critical pronouncements and a translation and transposition of those pronouncements into theological conversation. What Martin Luther had done with William of Occam's philosophical nominalism of the fourteenth century Anders Nygren accomplished with the emergent philosophical nominalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Assessing Nygren's Achievement

In assessing Nygren's intellectual achievement, we must recognize that *Religiöst Apriori* was written three quarters of a century ago, when Kantian and Neo-Kantian methodological sensibilities held the day. Consequently, his book reflects the intellectual conversation its author was having with other like-minded theorists who were also attempting to come to terms with the impact of Kantian-rooted critical philosophy on understanding of religion. Since 1921 philosophy of religion has moved forward. To be sure, more recent philosophical challenges to the legitimacy or status of religion have incorporated Kantian criticism, but do not necessarily flow from that starting point.

Nevertheless, when the original circumstances are stripped away, some features of Nygren's work have stood the test of time. First among these is his interest in rooting religion in human experience, and finding its *validity* there to be just as impressive and defensible as art, philosophical reflection, and ethical decision-making. Second is his successful avoidance of arguments from metaphysics, claims from natural theology, or employment of the language of being in lending substance of religion. And third in his proposal that the various religious traditions offer culturally-dependent responses to matters of profound human significance. Though they differ in their responses, they are in agreement in recognizing that the questions themselves are fundamental human questions.

Thus, he understood that the relationship between religious traditions is best understood via the employment of comparative motif analysis. That is, the way in which the traditions construe what is fundamentally human can be conceptually and even schematically differentiated. As we have noted, he illustrated the workings of comparative motif analysis in *Agape and Eros*, gave some hints of how this methodology might be applied to relationships to other or additional traditions in *Religious Apriori*, and returned to this complex subject much later in life.

In 1972, in retirement, Anders Nygren published *Meaning and Method: Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology*, which, like the treatise he published fifty years before, he continued to call »prolegomena.« In the final portions of this remarkably extensive attempt to come to terms not, as previously, with the advent of linguistic analysis, but, instead, with its full flowering, the author offered some new judgment about the relationships between the religious traditions. No, there is no apology for the theses he set forth in *Religiöst Apriori*. Theology retains its primarily descriptive function, and philosophy of religion is concerned with foundational matters. The theologian's task is to answer scientifically the question, »what is Christianity?« but not to provide a rationale for the truth of Christianity.

The fresh element in *Meaning and Method*, therefore, does not come in any revision of controlling convictions or suppositions, but rather, in the expansion of motif-possibilities with respect to the wider range of religious traditions with which Nygren had gained greater familiarity. No, he does not admit to making the comparisons and contrasts offered in *Agape and Eros* too neat and tidy, or that the comparative motif-research for which he is already on record is itself a Lutheran theological treatise. But he does progress far beyond what he had attempted in his initial try. In *Meaning and Method*, he urges that religions be approached within »religious contexts of meaning,« and he offers this comment: »There are after all so many religions—Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, etc.—*each characterized by its own fundamental motif*« [emphasis mine]. He adds that it is important that these fundamental motifs not be confused with each other nor be understood as variations on a single motif.

In such astute comments lie very provocative indications of how he might have approached comparative studies in religion, and perhaps, how some of the historical description in *Agape and Eros* might have been revised too. An updated »motivforskning« would find a way to compare Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Confucist, Taoist, and other traditions with the same degree of analytical precision that Nygren sought (or claimed) for his original comparison and contrast.

Moreover, Nygren intuited that each of the traditions is motivated, guided, and ordered by a formative impulse. Though he didn't do it himself, it would be interesting and useful to approach cross-cultural comparative analyses from this methodological starting point. That is, it makes good intellectual sense to look for the formative element, the driving force, or most characteristic impulse, when comparing and contrasting religious traditions. And it makes equally good sense to approach descriptions and definitions from such intentional vantagepoints. Here, too, it seems that Nygren's perspective is eminently worthy of current intellectual interest both for its contentions and for its scope.

Anders Nygren understood himself to be in conversation primarily with philosophers and theologians. In retrospective, however, it becomes apparent that the larger conversation is with comparativists and practitioners of »religionsgeschichte.« In equipping »motivforskning« for specific cross-cultural investigations, scholars today will certainly discover that they have transcended the scope of Nygren's original program. Nevertheless, when contemporary comparativists (like Huston Smith and Arvind Sharma, for examples) differentiate religious traditions on the basis of their characteristic driving forces, they are operating with an extended, and more informed conception of »motif-research.« They need not cite Nygren as precedent, and yet they are all working on similar intellectual challenges.

Thus, the final introductory comment is about the perspective of time. *Religious Apriori*, as has been noted, was Anders Nygren's first book, whose conceptualization is foundational to all his subsequent writings. Our translation, the very first to appear in English, comes three quarters of a century after the publication of the original treatise, indeed, several years following the hundredth anniversary of the author's birth. Still, the translation promises to be received as something more than an item that fills an until-now-vacant place in the historical record. It will be received as something more than this by virtue of the extraordinary perspicacity of the author. Nygren's insights, judgments, and intuitions were far ahead of his time.

On the other hand, one wonders how the treatise would read were Nygren given the opportunity to write it today, that is, if he were in possession of the scholarly information that is available today. In assessing this matter, we must recognize that Anders Nygren had the benefit of no more than the first two or three waves of post-Kantian criticism, to which several more have already been added. Consequently, Nygren was able to envision a project in what deserves to be called »deconstruction» without identifying it as such. One can only speculate on what product would have been created had he engaged in deconstruction deliberately, and with benefit of the erudition that is available on this subject, say, because of recent and current developments associated with Lacan, Derrida, Foucault and other writers and scholars these have inspired.

For instance, while Nygren was eager to disengage philosophy of religion from metaphysical categories, how would he have responded to the demand that all transcendentals be relinquished too? While he was intent on reading western intellectual history as being the product of at least three variant motivational sources, he didn't follow his nominalistic instincts into more radical forms of variation and difference. How would he have handled the sorts of cultural aberrations and incompatibilities that post-modern histories highlight? He paid closest attention to apriori formal factors: were he writing his book today, what sense would he have made of change. In treating religious traditions that have grown up side by side, he concentrated on distinctiveness: were he writing his book today, how would he have treated borrowings, shadings, and the formative influences of contact between distinct traditions?

Certainly there are no possible answers to questions such as these. But based on the timeliness of Nygren's insights there are good reasons to believe that he would have done extraordinarily well in today's intellectual climate too. In fact, in numerous ways he anticipated the primary intellectual developments that came to prominence after his time. All of this says that the appearance of *Religiöst Apriori* in readable English is tardy indeed, and yet the passing years only strengthened the timeliness of the important treatise.

Acknowledgments

I thank the Rev. Dr. Kjell O. Lejon most heartily for making this project possible, and very much appreciate the ongoing friendship and collegiality that I enjoy with him, his family in Horda, Sweden, his wife Annika and their son Jacob. Lejon came from Sweden to Santa Barbara to do his doctoral work in religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Before arriving in California, he had done extensive work in both philosophy and theology at Lund University. Though it was not what he had come to Santa Barbara to do, Lejon agreed help me produce an English translation of Nygren's foundational work. The translation, of course, is primarily his. It was left for me to refine, edit, paraphrase and offer judgments regarding interpretive choices.

I wish too thank two American scholars, Bernhard Erling and Thor Hall, who are working to keep American interest in Lundensian thought alive. I am particularly indebted to Erling for recent and ongoing conversations. In addition, all of us who are interested in this field owe more than we can ever recount to the late Eric H. Wahlstrom, who is responsible for translating so many of the Swedish treatises of Nygren's era into English. For me personally there is no way to return sufficient thanks to Nils Arne Bendtz, who continues to be my teacher, and who was the first to give me an orientation to Scandinavian scholarship as scholars and students there see and understand it. As I was working on the project, I had the late Carl and Ruth Segerhammar in mind, as I frequently do, grateful for the steadfast inspiration they have been to me and our family over the years. Profound thanks to Birger Pearson, my friend and long-time colleague at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who loves Sweden too, and with whom I have had the good fortune of a lifetime of good conversation. I thank Professor Göran Bexell, dean of the faculty in religious studies at the University of Lund, for giving me opportunity to preview some of these findings in a lecture in Lund in October 1995. Finally, to Anders Nygren's daughters, Anna-Elisabeth and Imgard, and their husbands Henrik and Gunnar Ljungman. I will

always have vivid memories of the magnificently beautiful day they provided me and our daughter Laura Karolina Capps when we visited Lund, in May 1993.

Santa Barbara, California
October 22, 1997

Part II

Religious Apriori

The Systematic Position of the Religious Apriori

When one considers systematic reflection, as it progresses through the history of humankind, constantly seeking new forms, resisting the impulse to come to rest in the form of some already fixed ideas, one cannot avoid the impression that this developmental process is neither accidental nor arbitrary. Rather, the process is motivated by an inner necessity, compelled by an intrinsic logic. To be sure, Hegel's attempt to identify this development as a dialectical process is difficult to demonstrate. It is similarly difficult to ratify W. Windelband's attempt to portray the history of philosophy as an exclusively European project in which a European world view, including an inherent conception of life, is expressed in scientific terms, and, therefore, is to be understood as the history of the perpetually recurring problems of humankind as well as the history of attempted resolution of those problems. We need not make a decision about the explicit character of the process. But it is powerfully apparent that the development of thought over the years stands as refutation of what we might call an atomistic-historical understanding, namely, the viewpoint that systematic reflection is nothing more than an arbitrary game of thoughts and ideas, which has taken a particular form, but could just have easily been constructed according to different forms.

Certainly what is historically given is not something that can be constructed. Rather it is to be received and accepted as being something factual and given. But it certainly does not follow that

historically-based reflection is no more than some accidental or circumstantial set of individual proposals. On the contrary, each era has its own questions and problems. These issues are not interchangeable arbitrarily. Every problem has special meaning by virtue of the constellation of problems of which it is a part. The atomistic-historical understanding, which we are criticizing, does not acknowledge the presence of the constellation. It fails to recognize that problems inhere in a network of theoretical considerations. They have a relationship of systematic interdependence with each other. They cannot be understood without due consideration of their status within that system.

Thus, when we notice that both contemporary philosophy of religion and contemporary theology are concentrating increasingly on the question of »the religious apriori,« even to the extent that no other theoretical problem attracts the same degree of attention we should not dismiss this concentration as a temporary fashion or trend. Rather, if we want to come to a firm understanding of the meaning of this issue, we must pose the question concerning its systematic status. In other words, we must examine the foundations of the issue/problem, and identify its place and significance within our thinking.

At the most fundamental level, one can assume that the idea of a religious apriori is legitimate. One can also assume that the idea has significance only if it belongs integrally to a critical philosophy of religion in Immanuel Kant's strictest interpretation of these terms.

In order to bring clarity to this situation, it is necessary for us to dwell, to an extent, on fundamental differences between pre-Kantian and modern philosophy of religion. From the outset we recognize that Kant introduced and gave definition to a new era in philosophy of religion. But this is a very curious matter, for Kant can also be assigned to the pre-Kantian era. This will be explained, as we shall illustrate later, by the fact that Kant did not utilize the expansive possibilities for philosophy of religion that his own general thesis made available. Rather, he made a compromise with traditional philosophy of religion, as previously and traditionally conceived. However, we should not let this observation obscure the fact that two completely different types of philosophy prevailed at the time. And

these two types were so different, so distinct, that philosophy of religion in our own era has virtually nothing in common with pre-Kantian philosophy of religion, with the exception that the two enterprises are accorded the same name.

As its name indicates, the task of philosophy of religion is to identify and examine the content of religion. It may appear, from this, that the character of this scientific undertaking would be sufficiently defined and clarified, and that every inquiry that matches this description would be recognized as constituting legitimate philosophy of religion. Were this the case, the two kinds of philosophy that we have differentiated (i.e. pre- and post-Kantian) might simply be compared to the kinds of varieties of approach that are common in science: they are distinct from each other without challenging each other's scientific status. But this is not the case with the situation before us. It is important to insist that differences between pre-Kantian and modern philosophy of religion involve more than simple varieties of standpoints. Rather the question is really about which one holds right to be called scientific. With respect to this question, the differences between the two orientations represent a basic contrast.

Pre-Kantian philosophy of religion is to be distinguished not simply for its tendency to approach religion as being a legitimate object of inquiry and investigation, but, in addition, because it offers and presents itself as religion that has been transposed into thought. The untenability of this prescription has been documented in other places. To summarize, the claim collapses because it involves a highly intellectualized attitude toward the nature of religion, which attitude rests, in turn, on failed epistemological theory. Such a point of view tries to be religious and philosophical at the same time. But it does not succeed. What it does instead is to intellectualize religion and religionize philosophy. Its offspring is an illegitimate child of a very questionable joining of religion and philosophy, which neither parent is willing to claim or even acknowledge. For its part, religion cannot acknowledge it since philosophy of religion that has been transformed into metaphysics is more competitor to religion than an ally. And, for its part, philosophy cannot accept this version of philosophy of religion either, for to do so would alter philosophy's self-conception as

well as its intrinsic sense of function. Incapable of being influenced by the actual conditions of true reflection, metaphysical philosophy of religion invites its own death sentence whenever it asks to be treated as a scientific discipline.

Now, in contrast to this pre-Kantian, Neoplatonic metaphysical philosophy of religion, we wish to propose and identify a philosophy of religion that is both critical and scientific. Such philosophy of religion neither claims to be religion nor wishes to produce the kind of religious ideas that may indeed compete with and, perhaps, outmaneuver the articles of belief of the historic religious traditions. Nor does it see as its task some philosophical purification of these conceptions.

Since we have described such philosophy of religion as being critical, we should emphasize that this does not mean that this science uses philosophy to persuade the religious traditions to utilize certain valid conceptions, and to dismiss others—judging the latter to be able to measure up to certain canons of intrinsic philosophical verification. Rather, we employ the word »critical« to emphasize the close relationship such philosophy of religion has to Immanuel Kant's critical framing and posing of questions. Ours is a viewpoint that approaches religion as a network of interrelated, interdependent, historically-given components whose features critical analysis tries accurately to depict and interpret. To repeat, our understanding of critical philosophy of religion contrasts with philosophy of religion in the metaphysical sense, the latter of which is misguided philosophy since it traffics in the production and construction of religious ideas. This kind of philosophy deserves to be called »false prophet« since it is not able to deliver what it promises. Philosophy of religion, in the critical sense, on the other hand, restricts itself to the single intention of desiring to understand actual existing religions. Such critical philosophy of religion has every right to be called scientific, for the task of science is to understand a given reality, and its validity, and not to pretend that it can produce or concoct either of these.

But if we are going to progress further, we must employ the distinction between *specific* and *universal*. Why? Because a scientific approach to a given reality can be generated from two different points

of view—the *specific* and the *universal*—and still claim to be scientific. The former approach displays a willingness to concentrate on the origin and development of the reality, and understands the same to possess a normative quality. The latter more comprehensive approach is eager to view the reality in its totality, and to understand claims to validity from the variety of required perspectives. With particular reference to the subject of religion, this comprehensive approach utilizes the resources of a wide range of disciplines in order to examine religion in the variety of its forms. Accordingly, how such forms originated and developed would be the task of psychology of religion, history of religion, and historical theology. In addition, it is necessary to probe whatever coherences and interdependences exist between belief systems and the forms of life that are directed by certain patterns of piety. For this purpose systematic theology, dogmatics, and ethics are called into play. In this manner, the task of the science of religion can be likened to the specific disciplines that belong to theology. But the comprehensive understanding we are aiming for requires even more. It requires inquiry of a more universal but still critically-scientific kind. Why? Because religion claims to be more than a subjective reality; it requests consideration as an objective experience. Thus, to deal with this aspect of the inquiry, the resources of philosophy of religion must be invoked, for philosophy of religion is uniquely qualified to assess religion's claim to this kind of validity.

In this respect, what is good for one is good for all. Philosophy of religion does not restrict itself to an inquiry about the truth of one or another religious tradition, nor even to an inquiry about the objective validity of a particular religious idea or belief. Rather, philosophy of religion concerns itself with the validity of religion itself, in its entirety. Here the question is: can the claim of religion to be an objective experience be sustained? If so, on what basis and under what conditions?

In the manner according to which we are describing the situation now, that is, in contrast to a philosophy of religion that is metaphysically construed, critical philosophy of religion has no interest in interfering constructively or otherwise substantively in the formation of religion. Similarly, it has no interest in linking its

resources to the objectives of theology. Rather, in contrast to any and all of these enterprises, critical philosophy of religion strives to do only what it is equipped and called upon to do, and to work within the only sphere of operation in which it carries any qualifications. Its primary task is to try to understand the historically-given religion with specific reference to all claims concerning objective validity.

But, in approaching this single task, critical philosophy of religion encounters an additional difficulty, which, from a perspective we have yet to acknowledge, even threatens its existence. Indeed, this difficulty is so ominous that it nearly carries the power to dissolve the advantage critical philosophy has over metaphysical philosophy in the former's claim that it has no intention of being constructive. We must explain. From a scientific point of view, metaphysical philosophy is discredited because it is founded on a false epistemology. Why? Because it claims to be able to soar beyond the limits of human experience to actually reach a transcendent reality. Such a claim is rejected by everything real science stands for. But, with reference to its primary task, and whether it wishes to or not, even critical philosophy of religion appears to be compelled to undertake the same journey into transcendent realms. Because religion does indeed pertain to transcendence, since what is essential to it is elevated above experience, any critical assessment of religion's claim to be objective experience would seem to imply that philosophy of religion, if it is to be employed as an accurate measure of this claim, possesses some access to the transcendent reality. If not, how is it able to judge the validity of religion's claims?

This difficulty, however, is more ostensible than real. Here we must remind ourselves that the difficulty we are citing is not unique to philosophy of religion, but applies, right across the board, to all philosophy, since the question about validity as well as objectivity is the main question of philosophy. In this regard, one can always place an obstacle in the pathway of theoretical philosophy whenever such philosophy presumes to explicate the foundations of the objectivity and validity of our knowledge. When it gets to this point, philosophy feels some compulsion to make a move into transcendent realms, that is, to take its refuge in what Kant called »the thing in itself« (or »*ding*

an sich»). Philosophy is directed toward that which is independent of our views, even independent of our apprehension and thinking concerning it. Philosophy behaves this way to put itself in appropriate position to determine the objectivity of our knowledge.

Moreover, one must recognize that the question of objectivity—both for philosophy of religion and for critical philosophy—is bound to the object. In other words, the objectivity of knowledge, according to critical philosophy, cannot be established on the basis of objectivity alone. Rather a line of connection must be drawn between subject and object. This circumstance weighs even heavier when we include ethical considerations in judgment on the matter. Viewed from a psychological perspective, ethical consciousness is reflective of subjective reality. At the same time, we ascribe both objectivity and objective validity to subjective ethical consciousness. But even if we are willing to grant that the ethical ideal has no correspondence within objective reality, we are not restricting the demand for objectivity and validity. We are only using the field of ethics to illustrate the point, namely, that the concept of objectivity cannot be equated with agreement with the objective. Rather, objectivity connotes a certain modality of knowledge.

Or, let us take another example. In the field of mathematics, objectivity is easily distinguishable from the objective, and the object can be approached as an unreality. We could explore and extend these considerations, but they would only take us further away from our actual area of investigation. In this regard, we must insist on a clear differentiation between objective reality and objective validity. It is only with the latter, that is, with objective validity, that critical philosophy has to deal. Now, have the difficulties been removed, as if they grounded in a misunderstanding? Yes, and in the process we have demonstrated how philosophy of religion is constituted, and the methods according to which it must operate. It has been shown that philosophy of religion—dedicated to a critical inquiry concerning the objective validity of religion—cannot expect to possess its grounding in something transcendental. This follows by virtue of the fact that the transcendent is not immediately given, and, furthermore, that the object of belief cannot be considered to have the status of a »*ding an*

sich». While these may appear to be negative conclusions, they nevertheless give positive determination to philosophy of religion. For, while philosophy of religion is not equipped, as it were, to reach the object itself, it is remarkably well equipped to carry out the very legitimate intellectual task of inquiring into the objectivity of religious phenomena. Thus, while remaining principally within the sphere of the subject, it must identify the basis for drawing boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity. Dispossessed of the expectation that some transcendent element can be employed to guarantee its success, it is nevertheless in strategic position to discover all that it needs within the realm of immanence.

We have reached the point in the development of our argument where the question about a religious apriori takes on considerable significance. The sequence runs as follows: the task of philosophy of religion is concentrated on the issue of the validity of religion, which validity must be decided according to criteria that apply strictly to immanent consciousness or immanent experience. Next, within this framework, given this foundation, the purpose of philosophy of religion is to examine whether the phenomenon of religion demonstrates any quality that can be used to certify religion as a necessary and indispensable form of life. When this consideration is broken down into smaller pieces, the question has to do with whether what religion offers is fundamental or derived. If the good that flows from religion is derived, it can be traced back to other sources. But if what religion stands for and is identified with is intrinsic, then this good enjoys the status of being a foundation upon which other goods depend. These are the questions with which the philosophy of religion is designed to deal. In other words, philosophy of religion inquires into the place religion occupies within the worlds of human consciousness and human culture. And all of the questions attendant thereto can be summarized with a single question: *is religion an apriori form of life?*

Now it might appear, at first glance, as if we were merely in pursuit of a current fashion, namely, the interest in apriori conditionality that is receiving so much attention in contemporary philosophy of religion as well as in contemporary theology. The truth

is that the matter reaches much deeper than this because the question we are addressing has a systematic basis. Thus, by identifying the systematic conditions of the origin of the issues, we are also demonstrating that formation of the problem is neither arbitrary nor accidental. Rather, it has emerged with compelling necessity from within critical philosophy of religion. In short, it is as necessary that modern philosophy of religion profess its allegiance to critical (as distinct from metaphysical) philosophy as it is necessary that it acknowledge that its central problem is the issue of the religious apriori.

Moreover, only in this way will philosophy of religion reach rapprochement with scientific philosophy, which, by necessity, is critical in its method, and, as a consequence, is obligated to focus upon the question of the apriori as well as upon the very crucial matter of validity. As A. Liebert attests in his book, *Das Problem der Geltung* (1914) [*The Problem of Validity*]: »Each time philosophy draws a phenomenon or a series of phenomena into its circle of investigation, it happens that philosophy will ask about the principal inner meaning, that is, about the peculiar value contained in this series of phenomena, upon which the latter is fundamentally and logically based, and by virtue of which the empirical representation of this series of phenomena is valid.«

In order to get a general orientation to the problem, it is appropriate, even in this context, to identify the two main interests that are united with each other in the concept of the religious apriori. We put it this way: what has philosophy of religion achieved if it demonstrates success in identifying and displaying such an apriori? This is a key question. And the first part of the answer is that, if successful in this way, philosophy of religion has certified that religion is a necessary and universal form of life. Of course, this understanding stands in sharp contrast to any definition of religion that takes the subject to be a matter of mere incidental construction or fabrication. We refer here to the view, for example, that religion is only illusion. So too are we discrediting the positivistic view, namely, the false notion that religion belongs to a certain stage of culture, then subsequently disappears or is absorbed into the contents of subsequent

stages of culture. If the religious apriori is a given, the necessity of religion can be demonstrated. Certainly this does not mean that religion has a factual necessity, but, rather, that it possesses a formal necessity: religion is an inherent, essential ingredient of human consciousness. Without the modality of religion, consciousness cannot be regarded as being complete. Without religion, consciousness must be portrayed as being, in a certain sense, underdeveloped. This is the first and primary aspect of the investigation concerning the religious apriori, and this is the aspect of the inquiry that, until now, has received predominant intellectual attention.

But there is a second, interrelated interest, and we can pose the situation as follows. If a specific religious apriori can be demonstrated, then religion can be incorporated into the system of necessary and universal forms of consciousness and culture. In addition, then religion possesses its own uniqueness, through which it distinguishes itself from other forms. Or, to take this thought further: religion, together with science, morality and art (and, quite possibly, still additional forms of culture) is included within the system of universal and valid modalities of human experience. As we have noted, the task of philosophy is to probe and reflect upon the methods and contents of these modalities. It follows, then, that religion is not identical with science, morality and art, or with any other sphere. Rather, religion is unique, unique in the sense of *sui generis*: it is not derivative from any of other modes or spheres. Of course, it owns close connections with all of the other spheres. Thus, when we talk about the distinctiveness of each of these spheres, and when we dearly differentiate any one of them from any of the others, we must not extend the differentiation to isolation, for they cannot be isolated from each other. On the contrary, life is always like a musical chord, where tones from the different spheres are sounded together.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of philosophy of religion to pay attention to these connections, and to demonstrate how impossible it is that knowledge, morality, or art exist without the religious tonality being present too. Starting from religion, the same principle applies: while the distinctiveness is clear, the differentiation is not absolute, for there are significant overlaps between religion and the

other spheres. We can even say that there is no religion that is not, at the same time, knowledge. This is an important point, for there is a strong tendency today to contest this view; the opponents wish to claim that »religion is not theory, but life.« Of course, on its positive side, this is a true statement. But it is also true that the religious life penetrates into theoretical considerations. For example, religious life expresses itself in conceptions of faith. It would be incorrect to separate these spheres absolutely.

In the same way, there is no religion that does not also encompass a certain form of morality. All religion gives expression to an ethical ideal, which ideal is expressed in a distinctiveness form of life. We can illustrate this by referencing the distinctiveness ethical ideals of life that are produced, say, by Christianity and Buddhism, yes, and even close related variations of the same religion. For example, Lutheranism and Calvinism manifest an ethical dissimilarity, which, perhaps, is even more pronounced than their respective differences in dogmatics.

We can take this thought further. There is no religion that is not also cultus, that is a community of worship and devotion. Whenever an attempt is made to create a religion that is free from cultus (that is via a desire to produce a sterile, highly over-intellectualized version of religion), this attempt has been unsuccessful. In cultus, religion owns numerous relationships with esthetic life. However, it is less important to identify the relationships between religion and the other areas of life than to clarify religion's uniqueness, and to show that religion, in comparison and contrast with other areas or spheres of experience, represents a completely independent and unique form of experience. It is unique, independent, and develops according to its own autonomous laws.

Thus, religion has first to be considered from the vantagepoint of its own center, and not from its connections to other forms of experience. This is the specific task of philosophy, namely, to give appropriate consideration to the matter of the specific religious apriori. The interest of critical philosophy of religion, in this regard, lies in direct opposition to the well-known words of Goethe: »whoever possesses science and art also possesses religion.« Not true.

While it may be admitted that religion is ubiquitous in human consciousness, religion cannot be replaced or substituted for by the other functions of consciousness. Philosophy of religion, which is oriented toward the validity and uniqueness of religion, has much greater interest in examining religion on its own grounds than in collecting whatever scraps might be scattered on the grounds of its neighbors. It also has greater interest in searching for that which is characteristically religion—that is, in how it is differentiated from everything else—than in searching for that which is common to all areas of experience. When philosophy of religion inquires into the specific religious apriori, it seeks to identify that which is specifically religious within religion.

Thus, the question concerning a religious apriori combines two elements: (1) the question about the validity of religion, and (2) the question about the uniqueness of religion. Therefore, it is obvious that this problem occupies a central place in philosophy of religion. In general terms, the main tasks of philosophy of religion are considered to be the search for the essence as well as for the truth of religion. The first of these problems is referred primarily to an inquiry of a psychological nature. The second question, on the other hand, has to be solved by epistemological means. But the question about the essence of religion is nothing else than the question about its uniqueness. For the critical philosophy of religion, the question about the truth of religion is identical to the question of the character of its necessity and validity. Thus, on the question of a religious apriori, the two main tasks of philosophy of religion encounter and intersect each other at one and the same point. On the question concerning the issue of the systematic place of the religious apriori, we are able to give this response: it is located within the critical, scientific philosophy of religion, and at the point where both of its central problems intersect each other.

Historical Position of the Issue Concerning the Religious Apriori

When the question about the religious apriori has been properly placed within the systematic framework we have identified in the foregoing section of this study, the impression might be created that this problem can be rather strictly situated within the boundaries of philosophy of religion. If this were the case, one would have no reason to concern oneself with this problem except from within these boundaries. It turns out, however, that this is not the case. When the extensive literature on this subject is consulted, it becomes apparent that the question has enjoyed a broad influence, even within other frameworks. If it were exclusively of a religious-philosophical nature, it would not have created so much interest elsewhere. During the time that it has been on the intellectual agenda, it has captured the attention not only of philosophy of religion; it has acquired even more attention from theology, and this, to a such a large degree that R. Seeberg, following an account of Troeltsch's attempt to demonstrate a religious apriori, can characterize the present theological debate in the following words: »Aside from the school of Ritschl, the basic defenders of the old teaching method, and the strict biblicists, almost all systematic theologians try to make a similar path.» This state of affairs will be explained when we acknowledge the historical conditions of the question.

The central problem of theology has always been inquiry into the basis upon which Christian faith is grounded, and upon which the certainty of this faith rests. Throughout the history of Protestant Christianity, the consideration of this question moves along two different plains. One of them tries to find the foundation of faith in historical revelation. The other looks for it in the dictates of reason. In examining the problem of certainty in systematic theology, Karl Heim has demonstrated that this conflict also surfaced during the Middle Ages. Heim believes that two opposing epistemological conceptions were at stake, the first of which he calls »unilinear» and the second »bilinear» modes of thought. The »unilinear» is characterized by

nullification of all differences between subjectivity and reality. This mode provides an apriori-ontological basis of certainty to faith, based on the highest or unitive forms of reason. The »unilinear» mode of thought finds expression in rational proofs of God and in mystical religion. The second path, the »bilinear,» employs dualistic conceptualization to keep subjectivity and reality distinct. Subjectivity and reality are likened to two parallel lines that never cross each other. And in this modality, faith is dependent upon special revelation of God, and finds expression in submission to the authority of scriptural revelation.

Now we can see why the concept of a religious apriori is so popular in so many quarters. Its popularity is to be explained largely on grounds that the concept can be correlated beautifully with one of the two identifiable foundations of faith. Specifically, the availability of a religious apriori would be useful to those who would rather not search for the foundation of faith in a historical revelation of God, but who prefer to look to some innate capacity of rationality, or to some innate capacity for mystical experience, or to some combination of these two. And look at the potential advantages. If this use of the religious apriori is legitimate, a situation is created in which a concept central to philosophy of religion is identical to a concept that is central to the most critical issue in theology, namely, the question about the foundation of the certainty of faith. In other words, by this intersection and interdependency, a precise parallel is created between philosophical inquiry into the validity of the religious sphere of human experience and theological inquiry into the foundation of the validity of Christian faith. Whether it is legitimate to combine these two questions this way cannot be determined at this point in our examination. But it is important for us to point out that this combination exists. Moreover, as we have also pointed out, this helps explain why the religio-philosophical question about the religious apriori has attracted so much attention within the field of theology. The movement away from finding the foundation of faith historically stimulates interest in the foundational role that might be played by the concept of the religious apriori. We note in passing that these

interconnections have been acknowledged in the writings of W. Bousset, P. Kalweit, K. Dunkmann, E. Troeltsch, and H. Süsskind.

No matter to what extent the conjunction of philosophical and theological interests in the foundation of faith have contributed toward generating consideration of issues surrounding the religious apriori, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that all of this has had a decidedly detrimental affect upon the possibility of impartial and systematic treatment. Here there have been two specific but dominant responses. First, those who have a negative attitude toward the prospect that there is a rational foundation for faith also take a dim view toward the possibility of a religious apriori. Second, those who advocate that the foundation of faith is independent of history simply assume that the religious apriori is somehow guaranteed. As we have already pointed out, theological reflection is driving this interest, in spite of the fact that philosophy of religion has its own stake in the matter. In fact, by now, the interests of philosophy of religion appear to be secondary to those of theology. But this is a situation that must be examined very closely, for it cannot be assumed that the resolution of the theological issue can serve as resolution of the philosophical dilemma. Again, there are two contexts here, and what happens in one of them cannot simply be transposed to the other. For example, it is quite conceivable that the religious apriori within philosophy of religion does not really serve as a foundation of faith. It is quite possible that these two have been brought together more out of historical circumstance than via an inner necessity.

Thus, from a methodological perspective, it seems very appropriate to distinguish the two questions, then bracket all possible theological viewpoints in order to examine the concept of apriori strictly within the framework of philosophy of religion. As we have previously demonstrated, this is the framework within which the religious apriori has its systematic place. After having done this, we can proceed to examine theological consequences, if any, and then, just what kind of consequences there may be. Methodologically, our intent is to situate the subject in its most appropriate location, making no judgments of our own. But it is quite clear that this concept is fundamental to both philosophy of religion and to theological

reflection. Within the philosophical frame, the religious apriori pertains to the foundation of religion as a valid form of human experience. Within the theological frame, the religious apriori pertains to matters concerning the certainty of faith. Thus, the religious apriori is located at the point where the central problems of both critical philosophy of religion and theology intersect each other.

The Problem and Its Treatment

The survey of the literature pertaining to the issue concerning the religious apriori has justified completely the judgment that this problem stands in the center of current work in philosophy of religion. The same survey also attests that this subject carries great significance for theology. But it is also apparent that there is extensive lack of clarity on this matter in both fields. For example, it is certainly not the case that all who speak of the religious apriori mean the same thing when they employ these words. Indeed, it even happens that one and the same author will employ the words in different senses, without specifying how these various senses can be related to each other. This means that not very much is known even when one learns that a particular writer is either a supporter or an opponent of the idea. Everything depends on how the concept is being defined, how it is being explicated, for what purpose it is being adopted or rejected, etc. Therefore, something very arbitrary is involved in branding a theorist an opponent or a supporter of the concept. If support or opposition is being registered, it is always with respect to a very specific understanding of the meaning of the concept that opposition or support should be taken seriously, and not on the basis of an accidental or arbitrary position toward any one of a number of possible interpretations of the subject. Therefore, nothing rules out the possibility that one can stand in opposition to the apriori concept from a certain vantage point while accepting or adopting the concept from another vantage point. E. Schaeder, for example, harshly rejects the concept when writing his *Theozentrische Theologie* (1914), then,

later on, fashions a new or revised conception of the apriori in his *Religion und Vernunft* (1917).

Part of what has made the issue of a religious apriori such a controversial problem is the ambiguity of the concept. This fact should be admitted by both supporters and disclaimers or detractors. Thinking now of the way Ernst Troeltsch approaches these issues, to try to comprehend every treatment of religious truth and validity in both philosophy of religion and theology as belonging to »Platonism« is to follow a procedure which, from a historical perspective, may have a certain legitimacy, but certainly does not contribute anything of any substance to systematic clarity. Rather, such procedures only contribute to obscuring the problem further in that the common name might erroneously support an expectation that all of the various attempts to provide philosophical grounding for the validity of religion belong to the same stream of thought. One must be on one's guard against all such reductionist tendencies. In fact, any survey that tries to show that there are a multitude of conceptions of the religious apriori cannot also be employed to demonstrate that these various concepts have anything of any substantial significance in common.

Thus, the concept of the religious apriori can be likened to a coin that has lost its imprint. When this happens each person is able to inscribe whatever significance and value seem most desirable on the basis of what would seem most desirable for that person. Of course, one can even declare the coin to have lost all value. However, when the subject is approached with scientific rigor, the arbitrariness that can easily attach to the definition of content can quickly be eliminated. From this vantage point, real intellectual and conceptual clarity can undergird an attempt to provide terms and definitions acceptable to all standpoints. This allows some specification of the investigative assignment. The task need not consist of an assortment of assignments; rather the task is to identify the presuppositions that are involved in the use of the concept of apriori within both philosophy of religion and theology. That is, critical inquiry must sort out the various elements and strands that belong and/or are attached to this fundamental concept.

At the outset, one must recognize that the issue belongs first to philosophy, and then transfers to theology by virtue of the fact that philosophy has trained its attention on religion. Consequently, it is impossible to stay within the bounds of theology when engaged in this critical work. That is, the first task is to undertake an analysis of the concept of apriori, within a purely philosophical context, to determine how much variability may be hidden in the concept itself. Such variability must be isolated and enunciated, and, if possible, traced back to its philosophical sources. Once there is clarity regarding the understanding that obtains within philosophy, the next step is to assess the possibility of applying such understanding to an examination of what occurs within religion, that is, when religion is understood to identify a particular form of life.

We can put the intellectual challenge specifically and concretely. The question is whether the concept of the apriori transfers from philosophy to an analysis of religion, and, if so, whether the philosophical grounding of the concept is transferable too. We are concerned here that there may be some special circumstances attending religion that might argue for some modification of philosophical understanding. It must be observed, though, that, at this point in the examination, the investigation of the religious apriori has no more than a hypothetical character. The overall intention is to render reliable judgment regarding the validity of religion, and the steps we have taken can do no more than establish validity in a hypothetical sense. That is, by the analytical apparatus we have devised, we can progress to some possible philosophical validation, but this is still some distance away from considering the relevant theological consequences.

Method

To analyze the concept of the apriori in philosophical terms, there are two distinct approaches that are readily available. The first of these we shall refer to as »the genetic-historical,» and the second is best called »the logical-systematic.»

If one pursues the first of these approaches, the task is primarily that of discovering the occurrence of the concept within a historical sequence, and then of tracing its evolution and development from that point to the present. To approach the issue this way is to invoke the kind of analysis in which Otto Liebmann was engaged when preparing his study *Die Metamorphosen des Apriori* (1900). However, for a number of reasons, this way of proceeding is the less suitable of the two procedures. First, it tries to incorporate materials within the investigation that are too broad and extensive, for it is evident that virtually the entire history of philosophical reflection can be written from this vantagepoint. What is involved is the ongoing dialectical interplay between rationalism and empiricism. In addition, since the purpose of this investigation is to develop a definition of the religious apriori, attention must also be directed to the materials that belong to the history of dogma, since this history can also be approached as a struggle between rationalist commitments to authority, on the one hand, and empiricist commitments to self-evidence, on the other. Moreover, this genetic-historical approach does not correspond very well to our more systematic intentions, for it is unable to produce a definition that is not time-bound. Therefore, it is unable to escape the multitudinous quality of definitions that we have tried very diligently to overcome or transcend. Under such circumstances there is very little hope of securing a uniform definition. That is, analysis has a difficult time using various conceptions of the apriori to produce an understanding that carries logical-conceptual consistency.

The second approach, on the other, has difficulties of its own. It does offer the advantage of the possibility of some systematic classification under a specific guiding principle, which one can draw upon to eliminate some of the concepts and give credibility to others. But there are no guarantees that the understanding that survives will match or reflect the conceptions that were developed historically. That is, there are wide gaps on both sides. Some of the conceptions carry logical consistency but do not evince historical referents, and some that have been developed within an identifiable historical sequence do not qualify for the validation that can only be given through logic or

systematic thought. There is a menacing danger that the pursuit of clarity through the logical-systematic approach—the second of the two methods we have identified—may lose touch with the very real problems and issues that are historically grounded. Should this ever happen, there will also be loss of connection to the problems and issues that have been identified in the previous chapter of this study.

To avoid all of these pitfalls, we propose that analysis follow a middle course, that is, a middle course between the two methods that have already been identified. In contrast to these two methods, the one we propose proceeds by *typological classification*. It is essential that the items that are of special significance to this inquiry be taken from their historical context, certainly not to further the genetic analysis, but, rather, to develop a sense of the characteristic types of apriori conceptions that have been considered and employed. Hence, the real task is to determine connections between these typical conceptions with ones of clear contemporary currency. Therefore, we are not looking for a complete historical survey, or even for a kind of photographic portrayal, but simply for an elaboration of clear and characteristic types.

The Results of the Investigation

As already emphasized in the introductory portions of this treatise, our analysis of the concept of the apriori intends neither to provide a complete historical account of the development of the concept nor a systematic survey of possible forms of apriori. Since we have had to make some logical distinctions in preparation for this examination, we are not obliged to question the legitimacy of such distinctions. Rather, what we need to do is to proceed with the analysis by examining a series of types of apriori that have more or less manifested their influence within current discussion about the religious apriori. We have also discovered that these examples cannot be presented as pure and distinct types; rather, they have been woven together, so that some of their elements are taken from one and some from other types of

apriori. To make this clear, we shall identify the prominent forms and place them side by side.

(1) The universal apriori, which is to be discovered within one's own experience, is a loan from another transcendental source, from which source it receives both its reality and its validity. This is the Platonic model which gives a prominent, definitive place to »recollection.« This model draws insight from the possibility of pre-existent existence, which makes it unnecessary to make claims of validity dependent upon that which is either historically or empirically given.

(2) The second conception of apriori belongs to presumptions about the natural or innate insight that human beings seem to possess. Such intuitive capacities are understood to be responsible for our basic ideas concerning God, our belief in the immortality of the soul, our inherent ability to distinguish right from wrong, etc., all segments of which seem to display incontestable, incontrovertible evidence. We shall refer to this position as the Stoic-rational apriori.

(3) The third conception is most appropriately identified as the ontological apriori, referring of course, to the apriori considered as being part of or identical with absolute being and/or the immediate reflection of eternal light.

(4) We list Descartes' conception fourth. Descartes understood apriori to be equivalent with innate ideas.

(5) Following Descartes is Leibniz, who asserted that all concepts are apriori in an innate sense.

(6) The sixth version, which we are calling the transcendental apriori, has it that the apriori is identical with the logical conditions of experience. The characteristic of the same is strict universality and objective necessity. The reference here is to both Kantian and Neo-Kantian schools.

(7) In the seventh version, the apriori is vague, immediate rational knowledge that stands as the foundation of all metaphysical statements. As immediate knowledge, it cannot be proven nor grounded, but is raised beyond all doubt by virtue of the self-confidence of reason. Here, our most explicit reference is to the work of Jakob Friedrich Fries, author of *Dialogues on Morality and*

Religion (1808), and to the work of Fries' disciples and successors, which work combines the methods of psychology and anthropology.

(8) The eighth version regards the apriori as consciousness itself, when consciousness is understood as a productive spiritual energy, which energy brings forth different worldviews and systems of life. Our most direct example of this orientation is Georg Simmel, sociologist of religion, commentator on Kant's philosophy, and noted methodologist.

(9) The ninth version has it that the apriori is an epistemological fiction. When we cannot apprehend experience as an immediate whole, given the inherent limitations of our thinking, we must divide into its apriori and empirical components. But the acknowledgment of apriori does not provide any compelling insight into the real nature of our existence. It is simply and primarily necessary if we are to understand the validity of experience.

(10) The tenth version places the apriori as the fundamental condition for science (knowledge), morality, art and religion. This makes the concept of the apriori foundational to all cultural life. In other words, apart from these foundations the forms of culture could not exist.

Now, against the background of these several types of apriori, we can now distinguish the specific religious apriori, in the process of which we will also demonstrate the ways in which the various modalities of experience can be differentiated from each other when this is the overriding intention. We can proceed in this fashion, by trying to sort out the components and strands, but we have not yet moved to consider the analytical criteria by means of which determinations can be made concerning which of these components and strands are legitimate and sustainable. Again, proceeding systematically, one can think of two possible forms or modalities of measurement. The first one is philosophical, and the second is religious. The two questions against which every theory concerning the religious apriori must be tested are these: (1) to what extent is it supported by the scientific standard? and (2) to what extent does it do justice to given religious experience? At this point, our fundamental task is to pursue the first

question, for the religious apriori is a philosophical and not a religious concept.

Given matters already covered in this treatise, it is not particularly difficult to render a judgment as to which of the various forms of philosophical apriori meet the scientific standard, and, therefore, are in position to serve as the foundation of a religious apriori. At first glance, it may appear that ten different versions of the apriori are available; each are of equal rank; therefore, all of them are equally valid. But this is not the case; if it were, it would be most difficult to render a judgment. The sustaining judgment is based on a compelling basic fact that stands as the point of orientation for all possible conceptions of apriori, namely, the basic fact concerning the validity of experience in its various forms. We refer here to the validity of theoretical, esthetic, ethical and religious experience, or to whatever forms of experience are given. The support for this judgment is that the various understandings of the apriori, each in its own way, tries to provide psychological-genetic and metaphysical justification and explanation of this basic fact. However, such explanations should be accorded no more than subordinant positions. They should not be elevated into self-standing philosophical ideas that are no longer attached to the matter of validity. To do this is to obscure the problem instead of contributing to its clarification.

With respect to the list of ten, all that has been suggested so far is descriptive of the Platonic, Stoic-rational, ontological, Cartesian, Leibnizian, Friesean, and Simmelian versions. None of these offers real justification for the validity of experience. Plato, for example, gives us a metaphysical assertion that we have already apprehended certain ideas in a transcendent, preexistent world, and the validity of these ideas now is due to the conviction that they continue to inhere in this pre-existent, transcendent realm. Plato's view, of course, is nothing more than an assertion, satisfying no available criteria regarding justification or explanation. Neither do the Stoics offer justification of the validity of experience when they assert that there are certain concepts and propositions that possess self-evident validity, and, therefore, require no further validation. Moreover, there is an unfounded and even tautological statement that can attract no

more than weak support regarding the prospect that such a concept reflects a common notion of the status of shared human insight. Certainly one cannot come to anything more than a kind of formal, theoretical statement were one to try to attribute ontological status to the apriori. As to the notion that some radiation of eternal light is the basis of validity, well, all that need be said that this is not an approach that offers anything very substantial to the tests of validity. And the viewpoint that links the apriori to capacity of reason, whether innate ideas or virtual conceptualization, is no more than tautological. We can put the claim that is being made here in ordinary terms, namely, that if I am able to think logically, the capacity to think logically must reside within me. Similarly, if I am able to act morally, the capacity to act morally must reside within me. All of this is well and good, of course. Unfortunately, it says nothing at all, and makes no contribution whatever toward explaining or making the apriori comprehensible. Even Fries' theory, that we have some vague immediate knowledge of reason, is nothing more than an unfounded statement. It is no more than a decree, a declaration, by means of which the troublesome questions surrounding validity are simply avoided. Let us consider the viewpoint which draws upon psychological-anthropological deduction, namely, that this deduction stands as demonstration of the immediate knowledge of reason. Recall, as background, that Fries argued against Kant that the latter had not answered questions Fries believed possible to resolve through anthropological deductions. But here we must object: the way in which knowledge originates, and the psychological source from which it flows, are not criteria for truth. This argument can be extended to Simmel's psychological-based apriori. And we can add that this value becomes even more problematic whenever it is connected with biological concepts of truth and validity.

Finally, therefore, we have discovered that the transcendental theory of apriori refrains from all psychological-genetic and metaphysical explanations, and only seeks to state the problem of the validity of experience with the greatest possible clarity. Accordingly, we have developed a method that can be applied to the particularities of our problem, namely, a transcendental method. In this context, we

are careful to distinguish this method and theory from the way Kantian theory treats transcendental factors. In spite of the fact that all of the theories previously mentioned stand in sharpest contrast to transcendental understanding, this is not necessarily the case with the theory that understands apriori to be an epistemological fiction, or with the theory that holds universal values, in a logical sense, to be conditions of experience. Furthermore, without any need to undergo any essential transformations, these values can be incorporated naturally into the transcendental scheme. The only thing we have to consider in order to give the fiction theory a transcendental-critical reference is to avoid every sensible positivistic secondary meaning, which is the natural consequence if it is connected with the critical conception of experience.

If the danger with the fiction theory is that it easily tends to slide over into sensualism and skepticism, the conception of apriori as universal normative value is exposed to the danger of sliding over into metaphysical dogmatism. This danger is especially acute in the half mythological anthropomorphic formulation which can so easily attach itself to the concept of norm, and then only obscures the situation. In practical terms, it is an advantage that the normative elements appears opaquely. However, in theoretical terms, conceptual clarity stands in an inverse proportional relationship to the extensive degree of inclinations that are present on the other side. When the standard of validity and the standard of preference are placed in relationship to each other, it becomes evident that this is not a matter than can be decided simply by invoking some schematism of likes and dislikes. Also, should one proceed in this latter, highly misdirected manner, one is forced to relinquish the transcendental perspective. Certainly one can rid oneself of troublesome metaphysical entanglements this way, but one also loses hold of the important truth that the concept of the apriori is a legitimate factor in transcendental philosophy.

Thus, we have examined the entire list of versions of the concept of the apriori, and have noted some overlapping and interrelationships. From this examination we now propose that the various approaches can be properly arranged in two groups. First, we have the vantagepoints that are oriented in transcendental terms. These

are focused on issues of validity, which issues are explained—and clarification is sought—in a transcendental way. Second, there is the psychological-metaphysical group, which is also intent on validity, but attempts to resolve the matter by means of psychological or metaphysical hypotheses. We have suggested that the latter approach pushes the question of validity away from its central place.

From a strictly scientific philosophical perspective, when we seek an unassailable concept of apriori that can appropriately serve as the basis for examining the religious apriori, we are left with the prospect of making a choice between these two groups. But to present the situation in this way, and to respond to it in favor of a transcendental critical framing of the question is, in fact, to make one and the same determination. The definitive point in the decision has to do with which concept contains the least amount of philosophical-metaphysical presumptions and presuppositions. That is, an investigation into the religious apriori can have no abiding interest in identifying itself with the contentions of any particular philosophical or metaphysical schools, or in attaching itself to a set of dubious metaphysical theories which, at best, may enjoy the approval of certain schools of thought, but which are always on the verge of manifesting their untenability.

Therefore, it is of the greatest importance to our inquiry that an approach be followed that is completely independent of the arbitrary opinions of philosophical schools and movements. Nothing substantial or lasting is gained if, from the one side, there is pressure to support Kant's views on this matter, or, from another side, there are pleas that Fries' philosophy be considered and approved. The inquirer must always be aware of the fact that beneath these various meanings and formulations is a set of issues which is responsible for bringing all of these schools and positions into being. The issues remain even when disguised in a variety of formulations. The challenge before the inquirer is to explore the problem, and try to discover in what direction the solution is to be pursued. Since this effort is precisely the basis for the transcendental framing of the question, it is not at all arbitrary to make the transcendental apriori the foundation for the following assessment. We are ready to proceed.

The Necessity of the Question of a Religious Apriori

It has been stated in the previous chapter that the concept of apriori, independent of the areas to which it pertains, must be understood in a transcendental sense. However, this does not give us permission to speak of a specific religious apriori. It is perhaps true that religious experience will be violated if it is drawn into discussion and debate about the apriori. Actually, the question as to whether or not we have the right to employ the transcendental apriori in religion cannot be decided conceptually. Rather, it can only be answered in terms of the factual characteristics of religion.

The question at stake here is simply this: does religious experience make a claim to both necessity and validity? If the answer is yes, then no violence is done to religion when it is placed under the aegis and sponsorship of the apriori, since this is no more than the philosophical rendering of the expression of religion. Neither does one violate religion by invoking the transcendental issues, which, in this instance, acknowledge that the claim of validity has been subjected to critical examination.

Transcendentally understood, the concept of the apriori stands in closest harmony with the character of religious experience, and consists in the philosophical formulation of the claim such experience makes upon transsubjective validity. The same transcendental approach must also be employed when consideration is given to the question of validity in the other, interrelated areas: morality, art, and philosophy (including science). Here, clearly, there are distinct parallels between the different frameworks of validity. Therefore, any argument that makes the validity of religion dependent upon religion's special nature or quality is actually untenable. To put the matter in simple and straight forward terms: it is not any special quality or content that qualifies religion, but, rather the presence of the apriori concept in a transcendental sense. The apriori disposes both universality and necessity. Certainly, questions have been raised

about whether or not the dimension of universality conflicts with the essence of religion. Wilhelm Herrmann, for example, contends that universality is equivalent to universal ideas. And the same holds true with respect to the concept of necessity. In this regard, August W. Hunzinger argues (in his *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Methode*, 1908) that necessity is the same as psychological impulse. But we do not have to worry about these potential qualifications since, correctly understood, they do not conflict with the uniqueness of religion. Rather, they lend expression to important elements of religion. But the main theme must be sustained: the universality and necessity of religion is grounded in a transcendental apriori sense.

Though no real legitimate objection can be raised against asking the question concerning the religious apriori, questions have surfaced in some quarters that the intended, desired answer cannot be obtained via a transcendental method. Religion bases its claim to validity on grounds that its object possesses a transcendent referent. Characteristically, the transcendental critical perspective functions primarily within the sphere of immanent consciousness, and thus leaves open and unanswered questions about consciousness of transcendent reality. Therefore, this method can be usefully employed in every situation in which the question of validity, in its general sense, is playing a role, and in which whatever special significance is attached to the transcendent reality of the object is given lesser importance. With specific reference to religion, where this situation does not pertain, but where everything is dependent upon whether the object that stands as the foundation of faith is a reality, the transcendental method is not even in good position to venture a strong hunch. This method has no capacity to cut the vital nerve of religion. Were it otherwise, the transcendental method and the idea of religious apriori would have to be dismissed.

But all of this will find clarification when we learn of the findings of the application of the transcendental perspective in the area of religion. Thus, what we are doing here is subjecting our analysis to potential criticism and objection in advance. However, if the thesis that the transcendental apriori conflicts with the uniqueness of religion cannot be upheld by virtue of the objection that religion

does not claim universality and necessity in a transcendental sense, it can perhaps be sustained through the manifestly contradictory statement that even if the transcendental universality of religion has been demonstrated, one has not thereby secured the validity that religion claims to have, namely, that its object should be valid as transcendent reality.

The results of our examination thus far can be stated as follows: if one holds to the critical character of philosophy, and does not wish to see it transformed into some metaphysical, dogmatic, pseudo-philosophy, and if one takes the essential claims concerning the universality and validity into account, one cannot avoid the question concerning the transcendental apriori.

Is There A Religious Apriori?

As the reader will appreciate, our investigation is still very much of a hypothetical character. This hypothetical quality also extends to the results that have been acquired so far. Thus, all that we have been able to determine with assurance so far is simply this: if there is a religious apriori, this apriori must have the same status and character as the concept of apriori that pertains to philosophy; otherwise it would be impossible to conduct an inquiry on relationships between religion and philosophy on equal terms. In other words, the results of our inquiry to this point provide evidence that the concept of a religious apriori must be understood in a transcendental sense pertaining to apriori validity. If there is such a transcendental religious apriori, it must stand as the philosophical expression for the essential claim of the necessity and universality of religion, we trust in close harmony and agreement with the factual character of religion. Put in another way, if there is a transcendental religious apriori, this apriori has nothing to do with any theory concerning the origin of religion, say, in primordial consciousness. Neither does it pertain to the evidence of some religious force in the world. And we are not talking about the occurrence of religion in a psychological sense. In summary, we

vigorously distinguish the position we are advancing here from both psychological and metaphysical portrayals. To make this point positively and simply: the transcendental religious apriori must be identified as being purely formal. Certainly formal status cannot be employed to explain or defend the historical or philosophical development of religion, since, as we have contended, there was never an expectation that a formal category would function in this capacity. And, should one allow oneself to be misled into conceiving the religious apriori as something that can be determined on the basis of presumed religious content, even worse consequences follow. Were the religious apriori invited to assist this errant cause, the concept would lose all ability to respond to the question concerning the validity of religious experience as a whole. That is, if there is a religious apriori, the relation of transcendent to concrete cannot be construed as a matter of actualization. Nor, as we have indicated, can the religious apriori be understood as the constitutive psychological element of religious experience. And should there be transcendent religious experience, this cannot pose danger to the conceptualization of religion, as happens, for example, when the religious apriori is psychologized. To psychologize the concept nullifies any real effort at accurate conceptual representation. This, in turn, is to approach the religious apriori as being both non-theoretical and at least partially irrational. But we need proceed with this line of thought no further. Indeed, such tendencies are so alien to everything that has been established in our prior discussion that they do not deserve to be taken seriously.

Therefore, if the theory of apriori is not going to soar off into outer space, we must finally ask the crucial question: *is there a religious apriori?* And, for the sake of clarity, we shall immediately divide this question into two distinguishable questions: (1) are conditions present for a specifically religious apriori? and (2) is there, after all, such an apriori?

(1) It has already been demonstrated that the conditions for the assumption of a religious apriori are available on grounds that it represents valid human experience. Therefore, we have to deal next with the question as to whether the conditions for the assumption of a

specifically religious apriori are available and accessible. This, of course, is connected to the second question as to whether religion is to be considered as an independent, distinctive mode of life. As we have noted, there is still a way to challenge all of this, for one can base the validity of religion, and, to a certain extent, even its apriori character and status, by attaching it to some other valid form of human experience. But if one were to do this, religion would no longer be independent, and the religious apriori would no longer be exclusive. For example, when Kant understands religion as »applied ethics» (*»angewandte Ethik»*), the validity of religion is borrowed, since it derives from a validity owned by the ethical apriori. We recognize, of course, that several Neo-Kantian thinkers have proceeded in just this way, and in the course of their deliberations they have felt compelled to deny the autonomy of religion. From this it follows that there is no convincing way to speak of the religious apriori unless there is an insistence upon the assignment of both autonomy and uniqueness.

At this point, we shall not proceed to an examination as to how the autonomy and uniqueness of religion can be maintained. To approach this question adequately would require a complete and extensive phenomenology of religious experience. Suffice it here to demonstrate that the denial of the autonomy of religion is based on false presuppositions.

Of course, Hermann Cohen, author of *Der Begriff der Religion in System der Philosophie* (1915), argues that religion cannot be maintained as a unique and autonomous form of consciousness. Cohen has no problem, then, dissolving religion into ethics, which, as we have noted, lies in full keeping with the Kantian tendency. Cohen's motive is neither to harm nor delimit religion, and certainly not to weaken its function. Rather, he has done this in order to secure religion, by giving it rightful place in solid attachment to an inviolable foundation. He writes:

I have not shied away from the methodological consequence that religion must dissolve into ethics. This inflicts only apparent damage on religion, but, in actuality, it confers on religion the title of glory. How could religion

ever be more glorified than when its dissolution into ethics is identified as religion's own goal?

In Cohen's view, religion's dissolution into ethics is its surest and most certain way of qualifying as truth.

Why did Cohen hold so tenaciously to this conviction? Historically speaking, the reason is to be found in the influence of Kant's moralistic conception of religion. Philosophically speaking, it is due to the fact that Kant himself did not find a distinctive and intrinsic place for religion within his own conceptual system, except as a derivative from ethics. From Kant's perspective, nothing is valid except that which has its foundation in the life of understanding, will, or in emotions and feelings, that is, within one of three specific forms of experience or consciousness. But all of these already inhere, in Cohen's words, »within the unity of a system that has no space that religion need fill, that is, neither within the ethical sphere nor among the dynamics of cultural consciousness,» which dynamics, Cohen explains, »seem to be exhausted by knowledge, will, and feeling, when all three of these are understood in their purest senses.» Hence, when Cohen observes and explains that »the cultural fact of religion itself does not provide sufficient justification for a transcendental inquiry,» it is obvious that he has not approached the transcendental formulation of the problem as a candidate for his system. Rather, he is working with distinctive forms of consciousness. Thus, by orienting his system according to the old theory of faculties and capacities—witness the staying power of the true, the good, and the beautiful—Cohen became a victim of the same psychological reductionism that he otherwise so successfully opposes. His system, worked out on questionable systematic foundation, cannot stand as sufficiently impressive evidence that religion has no autonomy. Certainly, even when abandoning claims regarding the autonomy of religion, Cohen wishes to protect the other element in the equation, namely, the uniqueness of religion. But even here he fails, for a relative uniqueness is not strong enough to sustain a specific religious apriori. To put it bluntly, Cohen's formulation does not give religion adequate autonomy and independence since such claims are based on

a derivative status; from start to finish, religion is born and carried by other forms of experience. This is why we have judged that Cohen's formulation represents no more than a wayward product of psychological reductionism.

A similar situation is reflected in W. Windelband's (and his successor J. Cohn's) declaration that »religion possesses no intrinsic, characteristic sphere of rational value.« We don't even need to know to what systematic conceptual scheme this viewpoint is attached to recognize that this is misguided. What we know for certain is that objective forms of culture correspond to the subjective forms of consciousness. Now if, with H. Scholz, we say that the concept of culture includes but three spheres—knowledge (science), ethics, and art—we still do not have a basis on which to deny religion its independence. Why? Because the range of human experience is more expansive than particularized conceptions of culture. Thus, the transcendental question can have meaning even outside the sphere of culture, if the latter is defined either narrowly or too exclusively.

We conclude that the denial of the autonomy of religion does not rest upon any particular investigation which might, in one way or another, have attained conclusiveness regarding the factual nature of religion. In other words, there is no way to confirm that religion should be explained as being ingredient in the valid forms of culture, namely, knowledge (science), ethics, and art. On the contrary, it is only by virtue of rather dubious demarcations within a philosophical system that honors a traditional tripartite arrangement, which Kant, of course, took as the foundation for his own system, that has landed us in this difficulty. But there is really no need to accept Kant's principles of systematic division as being representative of the general forms of experience. For there is no guarantee that such a system can provide a complete and exhaustive rendition of all forms of validity and experience. We actually believe that an unbiased examination of religious experience will testify that religion is an independent form of experience, which is thoroughly violated when it is reduced to other forms of experience. We must see that this tendency is due to the force of the tripartite philosophical system Kant promulgated; as we have asserted repeatedly, the tripartite structure is not due to the nature of

religion. The objection we are raising against the Kantian system (including its refinements in Cohen and Windelband) is not being raised simply on the basis that religion should be accorded a rightful place. Rather, the system itself is deficient. Therefore, what is required is a correction that can be made in the interest of procuring an independent place for religion within a legitimate system of philosophy. And a glance at what is occurring in modern philosophy will convince one that the effort to create a new orientation has already begun. One example of this is H. Münsenberg's *Philosophie der Werte* [translated as *Philosophy of Values*] (1908). Even more significant testimony is offered in H. Rickert's important study *Vom System der Werte* [translated as *Concerning a System of values*] (1914). That the Neo-Kantian point of view that both Cohen and Windelband have adopted does not necessarily lead to a denial of the independence of religion follows from the fact that A. Gorland, in *Mein Weg zu Religionen* [translated as *My Path to Religion*] (1910), using the same philosophical orientation as Cohen's, forcefully argues for the independence of religion. The same argument is put forward by H. Rickert and G. Mehlis, and in spite of the fact that their standpoints are closely related to Windelband's philosophy.

Religion, as a special form of experience, can and does claim validity. But the way in which this claim is expressed is nuanced via the uniqueness of religious experience. Even if theory, ethics, aesthetics, and religion all lay claim to validity, it is obvious that religion's way of being valid cannot, without distinction and differentiation, be placed on the same level, for example, as science's way of being valid. Here we can find the basis for the legitimacy of the formula, namely, that »for religion there is only one religious apriori« (Heinzelmann). From the standpoints of both religion and philosophy, nothing conflicts with the acceptance of a specific religious apriori. Do we then have positive right to make such an assertion? Now we are in position to proceed to the second of the two questions that were raised at the beginning of this chapter.

(2) *Is there such a religious apriori at all?* Those opposing this prospect—we think particularly of the arguments of K. Bornhausen and other members of the Marburg school—say that the uniformity of

reason insures that there is but one apriori. As Bornhausen puts it: doesn't the way in which our entire spiritual and cultural world comes interwoven with the capacity for logical discernment force us to drop the expression »apriori» for the particularities of the ethical, aesthetic, and religious sub-divisions of rationality? In Bornhausen's view, the particularities of agency, imagination, and feeling are constituted much more by other criteria, but are unified by an epistemological apriori that connects agency to will, imagination to aesthetic perception, and feeling to religious belief. If we now also discover in religion an added value, which we draw upon to help establish religion as an unconditional modality, then we must concede that this new entity has emerged from within the synthesis of emotional values in conjunction with apriori knowledge. If this is the case, that new entity does not qualify for »apriori» status.

Once more, in spite of the fact that Bornhausen appears to have argued his point persuasively, this is but one more argument that is based primarily on a demarcation of human functions and capacities, that is, another version of what we have been referring to as psychologism. The term apriori refers to that which is valid universally and necessarily. R. Köhler has put his finger on the sore point in Bornhausen's formulation; at issue is the question by means of which the apriori is to be discerned. If no method can be discovered, it is really futile to try to claim validity for religion. At the same time, it has been demonstrated over and over again that the psychological method, based as it is on a differentiation of human functions and capacities, cannot provide the necessary evidence, and is thus not conclusive. But there is a transcendental method, Köhler asserts, about which there is as yet no conclusive evidence that it cannot achieve the goal to which our analysis aspires.

Thus, the argument that since there is only a logical apriori there can be no given religious apriori has shown itself to be untenable since it exhibits a faulty psychological presupposition. From the transcendental point of view, there is no reason to claim that only knowledge can possess validity, and that validity can be ascribed, for example, to an act of will, even if this latter cannot in one way or another be transformed into certifiable knowledge.

If this counter-argument must be rejected as having proved nothing, we must nevertheless, answer the present question—is there a religious apriori?—with a distinct »no«, at least in this formulation. In this form the question is whether the religious apriori can be characterized as a reality, that is, as something that is either in being or in existence. The problem is that being and existence are categories that are completely useless when employed to describe formal transcendental conditions. Apriori possesses neither being nor existence. Indeed, in these senses, it cannot even be considered as possessing reality, though, via a combination of necessity and universality, it does indeed own validity. Even in Plato's writings we can observe how valid categories can be hypostasized into transcendental realities. And since Plato, this has been the dominant practice: the conditions of transcendentality have been falsified in wayward metaphysical and psychological directions. This tendency also feeds the desire to make the religious apriori into an existing reality.

One can find this same tendency in linguistic form within which the idea of apriori is being increasingly used in a substantive form, which unconditionally evokes object-associations, and, in this fashion, smuggles in conceptions of a transcendent reality, or, in more general terms, a reality of some substantive kind. All such tendencies can move in the direction of metaphysical and psychological reinterpretation. Indeed, were one to ask Immanuel Kant the question, »is there a religious apriori?« one would hear Kant responding »no.« This answer is to be attributed not only to his moralistic conception of religion, which results in an inability to acknowledge the independence of religion, and, with it, a specific religious apriori. In fact, we would get the same answer were we to ask Kant, »does knowledge possess an apriori?« The answer would be »no« here too. The truth of the matter is that Kant never ever references an apriori as having substance or existence. He never speaks of an epistemological apriori, an ethical apriori, or of an aesthetic apriori, but only of apriori knowledge, apriori judgments, and so forth, all of which carry the force of apriori validity, as we have noted, since they combine the qualities of necessity and universality. To speak in some other way

about an apriori—whether with respect to knowledge, morality, art, or religion—is to proceed in a fundamentally non-Kantian way, not only in mode of expression, but also with respect to the set of ideas which tend to be concealed behind such formulations. On the other hand, it is thoroughly Kantian (as well as correctly transcendental) to speak of the theoretical, ethical, aesthetic and religious experience as possessing apriori validity. It is correct, in these terms, to speak of religion as an apriori form of experience: religious experience includes an apriori moment, dimension, or ingredient. It follows that it would be highly desirable to return to this correct usage of language.

When language has power over thought, the conception of the apriori that comes from psychology gains the kind of force that actually gives evidence of how weak this argumentation is. In spite of its deep-seated inferiority, it gives the appearance of having conceptual strength, and of being capable of sustaining it. But to show its deceptions, all we need do is reiterate the discussion we have covered in connection with Bornhausen's and Köhler's views. To put it simply: we have no right to assert that there is some religious apriori, but we do have a right to assert that religion possesses apriori validity, and that religious experience is, in transcendental terms, both necessary and universal. The language can be misleading, for not all of the theorists are coming from the same place. But the principle that must always be before our eyes is this, namely, that it is not a question about something that is real, but about something that is valid.

(3) After having made the case on behalf of the religious apriori, it would be a mistake to try to legitimize this judgment further by demonstrating that the apriori is actually encountered within the religious or spiritual life. This would be a mistake, for there is no tangible proof concerning the apriori validity of religion. Proof should be considered, for there is no proof. Nor can we answer the questions that are sometimes asked: why is it necessary? On what basis can its universality be maintained? We should avoid trying to respond to questions like these, and not allow anything hypothetical to attain some speculative reality. Our intention, instead, should be to ground fundamental issues reliably. In the presence of all other questions,

there is no problem in being perplexed, but we can surely choose to circumvent such issues rather than trying to solve them.

This is precisely what Rudolf Otto has done too in rooting philosophical understanding on subjectivity. That is, on the basis of the self-consciousness of reason, which cannot and need not be grounded, we have, according to Otto, the right to ascribe validity to our immediate rational knowledge. If, via a psychological-anthropological reduction, we could show that certain fundamental religious ideas emanate forth from our understanding of the creations of the soul, no more proof for their validity would be necessary. To say, as Otto does, that the rational and irrational affirmations of religion cannot be traced back to sense impressions does not prove sufficiently that they have their source in rational knowledge. And when it comes to speculative religious ideas, Otto acknowledges that these are acquired through »double negation,» and are thus their origin is not completely independent from spatial and temporal existence. When considering the matter of self-evidence, we must remember that what may appear as self-evident at first glance often turns out, upon closer examination, to be anything but valid. There is something to be said for the self-confidence of reason in contrast, say, to absolute skepticism, particularly in the effort to secure the foundation upon which the question concerning validity can be settled. On the other hand, it is a complete waste of time to try to demonstrate in what way valid differs from invalid, and how useless this is as a criterion of truth.

The situation is markedly different, however, for Ernst Troeltsch. One would also expect Troeltsch to try to sidestep foundational questions in the critical philosophy of religion including, of course, the question concerning the basis of the validity of religious experience. Similarly, we would not expect Troeltsch to take refuge in some subjective understanding of the religious apriori; we would expect him instead to be concerned about the foundation of its validity. In this regard, we recall that the transcendental deduction of the categories was a major component in the epistemological work of Immanuel Kant. Therefore, there is good reason to expect that a critical philosophy of religion, informed by Kant's work, would

exhibit something that corresponds to this transcendental deduction. And this background is indeed reflected in Troeltsch's work. For instance, it is not sufficient for him that the fundamental category of religion has been demonstrated within psychology of religion, and that the epistemology imbedded within this category is cognizant of the religious apriori. What Troeltsch seeks beyond this is that epistemology should understand that the law of validity is connected with the legitimate economy of consciousness over all, so that it appears not as an isolated fact but as having emanated from the core place in consciousness. The presence of the transcendental method that has encouraged this demand is obvious, even though it can be obscured by the interference of subjective ideas and expressions. The same is the case when Troeltsch describes the results that he anticipates from this investigation, as follows: that the religious apriori is allocated to the interconnection with other aprioris, to whose inner unity it first gives a certain substantial basis. Even though much of this is presented within a metaphysical context, there are grounds on which to assess Troeltsch's contentions favorably, since they are expressions of a transcendental disposition.

However, Troeltsch never does better than achieving weak attempts to make good on this promise. When considering the question of the validity of religion, for example, in spite of the fact that he presents this as a matter for serious consideration, he capitulates. In fact, like Otto, he actually abstains, excusing himself on grounds that the question is insoluble. In simple, straightforward manner, he acknowledges that there is no proof of the truth or justification of religious consciousness:

Neither the propriety of the ethical, the aesthetic, nor that of the rational can be proven by itself. Such intellectual foolishness must be resisted, as if science had the ability to break these factors down into substanceless dependencies, forcing them to struggle for survival, which is tantamount to treating them as the great selfdeceptions of humanity. Proof is not possible since they are derivative neither from something higher nor from something absolutely certain.

Confirmation can only be executed inherently and intrinsically.

Troeltsch's statement both overestimates and underestimates the capabilities of scientific philosophy to accomplish its objectives. He overestimates the competence of philosophy when he expects it to demonstrate an objective reality that is able to situate the logical, ethical, aesthetic and religious functions to prevent them from being swept up into a flood of subjectivity. Troeltsch admits, of course, that philosophy of religion cannot produce a scientific justification of the validity of religion. But he does not completely relinquish the possibility that philosophy of religion might one day demonstrate this validity, though it has not done so yet. We, for our part, must respond by asserting that philosophy of religion is actually claiming too much, much more than it can conscientiously prove or confirm. This is what is meant by saying that philosophy sometimes promises more than it can deliver. On the other side, Troeltsch underestimates the competence of philosophy when he deprives it of its capacity to confirm the propriety of the logical, ethical, aesthetic, and religious forms of experience. This is precisely the task of the transcendental method. Because he doesn't fully understand this, Troeltsch prematurely replaces transcendental philosophy with metaphysical philosophy. Without testing how far one can progress purely on the basis of transcendental philosophy, he hastens to make meta-physical assertions about the substantive foundation of validity. But these can never become anything more than assertions.

The nature of the transcendental apriori is such that it can only be validated through a transcendental deduction. This frees it from its hypothetical character; moreover, under the assertion that religious experience represents an apriori (universal and necessary) form of experience, religious experience can be validated via the workings of the transcendental method. From this vantage point, we can respond to the challenge that, from so many quarters, has been described as being insoluble. In other words, the applicability of the transcendental method to the subject of religion is not as problematic as it has seemed to Troeltsch, Otto, Fries, Nelson, Köhler, Günter, von der Pfordten,

Dunkmann, the Ritschlian school, the Biblicists, and even Erlanger theology. In any case, our assertion is that the validity of the religious apriori can be demonstrated in no other way than by transcendental deduction. Our next task is to examine the manner in which a transcendental deduction of religion is possible.

Transcendental Deduction of the Basic Category of Religion

In the closest possible connection to the formulation of the question under Kant and Schleiermacher, Carl Stange, in *Christentum und moderne Weltanschauung. I. Das Problem der Religionen*, and, subsequently, in *Die Religion als Erfahrung*, has tried to demonstrate epistemologically that religion has a necessary and intergrated place within the life of the spirit. In this sense, the purpose of his effort, so to speak, is to effect a transcendental deduction of religion. In his view, the significance of the formulation of the problem in both Kant and Schleiermacher is that their interest has created the possibility of placing religion under the concept of experience. But he recognizes that the concept of experience cannot be defined in sensate terms, so that the senses, alongside rational capacities, represent one of the two sources from which our knowledge is drawn. Nor is he pleased with an idealist reading, which might encourage the contrast between sensation and intellect to be traced back to the logical distinction between content and form.

In contrast to this sense-orientation, the emphasis in the idealist conception is oriented toward forms of knowledge. It follows, therefore, that the idealistic concept of experience is not oriented according to experience in general, but, rather, to a special kind of experience, that is, to scientific experience. Kant's theory of experience is primarily a theory about the certainty of mathematical and natural scientific knowledge. Thus, when religion is drawn into this framework, the categories must necessarily be extended and expanded.

The point where a revision of Kant's concept of experience is particularly needed pertains to the matter of the objectivity of experience, because the objectivity one can access in this way is just another expression of the necessity with which individual conceptions integrate themselves within the framework of consciousness. Carl Stange observes, »As soon as we speak of the objectivity of experience, we are not only dealing with a complex of conceptions; in addition, we are acknowledging that this complex of conceptions possesses a reality independent of consciousness.»

The question is this: on the basis of what criteria can the validity of experience be established? To respond, one must accept help from a theory that Immanuel Kant acknowledged, and yet neglected. If our knowledge did not have the concrete character of perception, we would have no possible way of deciding if it is merely a combination of conceptions, or, at the same time, if it possesses validity. Again, Stange writes: »The measure of the reality of the world is reflected in the fact that our imaginations have a concrete character.» Stange adds, »To the extent that we are dealing with concrete ideas, the reality of experience is validated for us.» But alongside external sense perception is an intrinsic given: even the conception of self is disclosed as a perception in that, like all perceptible representations, it is of a concrete character. When materialism makes external perception the criterion of reality, or when idealism insists that an interior perception should function as this criterion, both are guilty of the same error. It is self-contradictory to make a case for the completeness of reality on the basis of sense experience, for one is hereby being limited to but one element of sense experience. To give a more adequate answer to this question, it is necessary that another particular kind of perception be acknowledged alongside interior and external perceptions. We refer to a factor that lies beyond the experience of the senses: »The problem of reality accordingly points to a supernatural viewpoint,» Stange writes, »and this viewpoint constitutes the essence of religion.»

In this way, the transcendental line of thought has reached its conclusion. Through the same line of thought, it has been confirmed that religion is not an accidental phenomenon, but is inseparably

bound to the nature of consciousness. In religion we are dealing with a response to a question which, of necessity, appears in the context of the experience of the senses. Again, Stange writes, »There is, over all, in the life of humans, not a single element in which the religious problem is not present, or should not be answered, because in every distinctive moment of our lives it has to be determined whether we accept the world of sense impressions as the whole of reality.»

Therefore, the following statement can be proposed as a criterion of reality: our knowledge corresponds to reality insofar as it is of concrete character and belongs to the realm of experience. But since religious experience also claims to mirror an objective reality, the question will be whether alongside the two previously identified types of perception there is also a religious perception. Stange tries diligently to demonstrate the truth of this contention. He proposes that via perception experience is connected to reality. This is exactly how perception is connected to reality, and the connection distinguishes the experience from a mere network or combination of conceptions. But through sense perception, only one side of the relationship between experience and reality is determined. It is only established insofar as it belongs to the nature of experience, that is, to reality.

Thus, out of a logical necessity the reversed question forces itself upon us. Is the essence of reality sense experience? Is the reality given in sense experience the whole of reality? Or is there a reality that does not register in the form of sense experience?

It is obvious that this unavoidable question cannot find its answer within the context of sense experience. Since experience is not possible without sense impressions, and without self-consciousness, neither is experience possible within an answer to the religious problem.

If we compare this line of thought with both Kant's and Schleiermacher's formulation of the problem, we will discover immediately that this is a matter of one and the same transcendental problematic that Kant first applied to science (knowledge), morality, and art, and to which Schleiermacher, for the first time, applied to religion. We can also recognize that the solution to the problem is being pursued in essentially the same manner. Here, as in Kant and

Schleiermacher, the focus is on the question concerning validity. And when Stange's effort is directed toward demonstrating »that in the case of religion, it is indeed not a matter of their being something arbitrary or coincidental—the feeling of absolute dependence is not something coincidental—but instead a general element of life of considerable significance,» he is being guided by the same considerations Schleiermacher captured when he asserted that this feeling does not derive from some specific modality of human existence. Rather, for both Stange and Schleiermacher, the source and core is the essential nature and character of the human being. Even the way in which Stange seeks to demonstrate this proof is essentially the same as Kant's and Schleiermacher's. If, according to the transcendental method of Kant, one has to ascribe necessity and universality to that which is »a condition for the possibility of experience,» and if Schleiermacher, in this connection, is trying to prove the necessity of the feeling of dependence by means of the fact that if this were eliminated, self-consciousness (in the form in which we know it) would itself not be possible, then Stange is also pursuing the same line of thought, even to the point where it has become evident that experience is not possible without a response to the religious problematic. It is apparent from this that everything has been conceived and is carried through with complete consistency.

The main difficulty with this theory is clearly connected to the concept of religious perception. For even if it is admitted that such a religious perception lies at the core of the religious life, it is difficult to see how this will manifest itself positively in the epistemology which is oriented towards the complex of sense experience. It is also difficult to understand how the religious perception will be able to be placed parallel to the external sense perception and the interior self-perception. Inseparable from everything called perception is the positive characteristic of that which is given, by which something is distinguished from conceptual thinking. This gives something a completed form, not by ascription to concrete features, but through placing them in a relationship of exclusion relative to other objects. If one measures sense impressions, one will discover that they exhibit a very compelling quality of givens. But it is difficult to apply the same

tests to inner self-consciousness. The self, which can essentially be identified with what has distinguished as »the transcendental apperception,» is no doubt present in every experience. But the question as to whether it is present as immediate perception—that is, self verifiably present to itself—is more difficult to answer. In this connection, we recognize the applicability of the »via negativa.» Every epistemological attempt to determine the meaning of religious awareness is forced to use negative definitions, for example, when we testify that the reality available in sense experience is not the whole of reality. This indicates that as long as one remains within the boundaries of epistemology, one cannot speak, in any proper or constructive sense, about religious perception: one cannot positively demonstrate—indeed, one can only negatively postulate—such a perception. This seems to be Stange's intention exactly. What he wants to attain within epistemology is simply the conceptual construction of the religious perception. Under these circumstances, negative constructions are justified. This is simply to demonstrate the point where the necessary question about the totality of experience arises. This is the question that religious perception has the obligation to answer.

Connected to this is a situation which is of the greatest importance to the transcendental formulation of the question. For this, insofar as whether theoretical experience is at all possible, it is not enough to determine whether there is a way to distinguish between true and false. Rather, the endeavor is aimed at demonstrating that only under the presupposition of certain universal principles (to be likened with the certainty of the law of causality) is experience possible. In the area of morality, it is not satisfactory to assert that the possibility of ethical experience is dependent on an ability to distinguish between good and evil. There is also a compulsion to demonstrate that the most universal ethical principle, namely, the categorical imperative, must be acknowledged as being valid. Thus, the transcendental method is to be employed in the area of religion. It is obviously not sufficient to demonstrate that the issue of religion arises of necessity, or, in other words, that an attitude concerning the religious issue is necessary even though there may be no interest in

what direction the answer or attitude will take. On the contrary, the transcendental deduction should demonstrate that an attitude toward religion is necessary, and also, in which direction this attitude points. Expressed in another way, it is not enough to demonstrate that the religious »value« is of a kind that one cannot adopt complete indifference in relation to it, but that one has either to acknowledge or reject it. No, the transcendental deduction wishes to take the further step to show that it is necessary to acknowledge the presence of religion, and to adopt a positive attitude to it, since this is, in the now famous phrase, »the condition for the possibility of the experience.«

If we compare this with Stange's line of thought concerning a transcendental deduction, it appears that it gives less than what the transcendental method promises, and that it refuses to take the second step. Rather, it is satisfied with demonstrating that the religious issue is a necessary issue: »Religion is as deeply rooted in our consciousness as is anything else,« Stange asserted in his book *Die Religion*, just as we are unable to emancipate ourselves from thinking or feeling, so too are we unable to emancipate ourselves from religion. One can certainly answer the question concerning the completeness of reality given to sense experience either negatively or positively. In the same way that there is opposition between good and evil in morality, there is a contrast between being pious and being godless. But both of these are religious predicates. For in both cases it is a question about an attitude to the problem of religion, or about a statement concerning the reality-value of the sense experience from the perspective of a desired wholeness. But in this the peculiar characteristic of religion is constituted, insofar as it is a question about the characteristic of knowledge. But the epistemological examination of all of this has to limit itself simply to demonstrating necessity. It must take a positive stance toward necessity. That is, results in less than the transcendental method promises is apparently due to the fact that, from the beginning, it is directed toward giving more than what the transcendental method is equipped to achieve. That is to say, it is impossible for the transcendental method to go beyond the sphere of immanent consciousness for the appropriate basis upon which to show the distinction between objective validity and subjective arbitrariness.

Therefore, when critical philosophy speaks about the objectivity of experience, this only means that the experience in question possesses a trans-subjective, or, only in this sense, an objective validity.

This is exactly the spot where Stange, according to the critical conception, fails by supplying too little. As he writes: »As soon as we speak about the objectivity of experience, we do not simply want to say that we are dealing with a complex of conceptions, but rather that this complex possesses a reality independent of consciousness.» With particular reference to the religious experience, it is necessary to vindicate objectivity in the latter sense, since truth has to do with whether the object of faith is an objective reality. It is this interest in transcending the viewpoint of immanent consciousness that has led Stange to the consideration of perception's contribution to our knowledge of reality. Here a new thought is introduced which partly encroaches on the transcendental progression of thought. If the transcendental formulation of the problem cannot obtain an establishment of the objective reality of religion, but is forced to limit itself to demonstrating its validity, no obstacle seems to stand in the way of this latter demonstration even if it must remain under the sponsorship of an analysis of immanent consciousness. To show that something within consciousness is valid, with necessity and universality, one does not need to go beyond the limits of consciousness, as would be necessary when the intention is to demonstrate an objective validity.

The two lines of thought, which run together in Stange's presentation, are calculated to demonstrate, first, that religion is something necessary and universal, and, second, that it owns a legitimate claim to objective reality. To solve the latter problem one is obliged to go beyond the viewpoint of immanent consciousness that appears in Stange's theory concerning the different kinds or levels of perceptions. The former problem can indeed be solved with the same success from the vantage point of immanent consciousness. And we can observe here that only the former problem has anything to do with the transcendental formulation of the question.

But when the analyst tries to take up the problem of the reality of religion in direct interrelationship with the transcendental problem,

he will encounter significant difficulties. Precisely here is where we find the reason for the interruption in Stange's transcendental deduction even before he has proceeded to take the last step. This is a totally consistent and necessary consequence of the fact that his entire presentation is oriented toward perceptions and attitudes. If one were able to demonstrate not only the necessity of the problematic of religion as well as the propriety of a positive attitude toward it, from this standpoint, this would assume that one can construe the perception or attitude epistemologically. This is an assumption that Stange correctly repudiates. In his words:

The conditions under which an answer to the question posed is reached are of a different kind than the conditions under which the question is posed. Of course, it cannot be the intent of the epistemological investigation to construct religion itself.

On this point, Stange distinguishes himself favorably vis-a-vis the positions of both Troeltsch and Otto.

But if the conditions are such that the interweaving of the transcendental question of religion with the question concerning religion's reality becomes an obstacle toward carrying through on the first of these two issues, then we must demand that the transcendental question be released in order to be accorded a completely independent treatment. Having done this, there is no reason to try to go beyond the perspective of immanent consciousness.

As a starting point, we are free to take up the question of validity in its most general sense. We can, so to speak, uncouple the question of validity at a stage where it does not yet allow any reason to differentiate between realist and idealist interpretations, and only includes as much as is common to both. For both the idealist and the realist interpretations there is a distinction between what is valid and what is not valid, between that which is of necessary and universal character and that which is only accidental. Similarly, each can agree with the other about the necessity and universality that must be

acknowledged with respect to the basis upon which everything that enjoins validity rests, namely, that without acknowledging its validity one cannot ascribe validity to anything else at all. On the other hand, the meanings are separate when it becomes a matter of explaining the fundamental fact of validity in that the realist position in some way tries to refer it back to accord with realities existing independently of consciousness. Idealism, on the other hand, finds sufficient support in the immanent integrity of consciousness. But this difference in attempts to indicate how validity should be explained is a secondary question when compared with the fact, acknowledged by all, that there is something valid in comparison to the question all raise, namely, what is valid? We have only to deal with this latter question in the transcendental deduction. The first question really has no influence whatever on the problem we are facing.

In the transcendental deduction of religion, it is necessary that we be able to demonstrate an ingredient within religious experience without which no experience is possible, or, in other words, to ascribe validity to this ingredient in order for anything at all to be valid. The transcendental deduction is required not to bring proof of validity to the religious experience as a whole, or even to undergird religious belief. Instead, the transcendental deduction is directed to the validity of religious experience as such. The inquiry focuses on the basic category by which religion is substantiated.

However, we need to point out a situation that gives more difficulty to the transcendental deduction of religion than to any of the other areas about which we are concerned. To be sure, we can refer to the idea of transcendental deduction as making direct application to all of the areas, but there are special circumstances involved when application is made to the subject of religion. For example, when epistemology raises the question as to what theoretical categories or principles of knowledge must be valid if anything at all is to be valid, it need not involve itself necessarily with transcendental references. Rather, it can be satisfied by identifying the principles of knowledge that have to be valid in order for any knowledge at all to be valid. That a considerable restriction of the transcendental occurs here is made even more obvious if we employ the second formula for the idea of

transcendental deduction: epistemology does not seek the principles which are the conditions for all experience, but on the ones that support the possibility of theoretical experience. It has accomplished its task if it can demonstrate that there can be no knowledge unless there is appropriate acknowledgment of the validity of the principles of knowledge. We encounter a similar restriction when the transcendental method is made applicable to ethics. When analysis wishes to demonstrate a highest ethical principle, namely, the categorical imperative, it does not proceed to produce proof for its validity—that without which such a categorical imperative theoretical experience as such would not be possible—which would be a rather dubious premise. It is of the opinion that it has accomplished its task by demonstrating that without the categorical imperative no moral experience would be possible. And precisely the same set of conditions are applicable to treat aesthetics' handling of the transcendental method.

If there were complete parallels in the use of the transcendental method in all of these areas, one would expect that all of the areas would be under the same restrictions. Then there would be no real need to prove the statement that would ascribe acknowledgment of the fundamental category of religion apart from which no experience would be possible: religion must be valid for anything to be valid. But this is a large claim. Indeed, it would almost seem to suffice to say that no religious experience is possible apart from acknowledgment of the fundamental category of religion. But, really, the claim is larger than this. And it is a somewhat difficult claim to make because religion cannot be compared with science, ethics, and art on the basis of parallel identities.

To explain this, one must pay close attention to the distinctions between these four subject areas. It is quite appropriate, we have noted, to label the first three of these with a common name. Call them cultural forms. Then contrast the three with religion which cannot be labeled cultural form in the same sense of the term. Why not? Because culture, in the common meaning of the word, always bears an active and productive character, more or less. And religion, by contrast, is typically characterized as being on the side of passivity. As

demonstrated previously, religious consciousness, in its original form, is not identified as active consciousness; it does not align itself with agency and productivity. Rather, it belongs to passive consciousness. [Note: Here Nygren is recalling Schleiermacher's distinction that individual experience is characterized by »abiding in oneself,» and »passing beyond oneself,» and that »abiding in oneself» is typically associated with one's religious nature. See Schleiermacher's *Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers.*] This fundamental difference between religion and the cultural forms is the reason that a transcendental deduction of religion should not be satisfied with elucidations that are applicable to the transcendental deduction of the cultural forms. Why not? Because the cultural forms are significantly easier to assert than the distinctive religious factor. It follows that whatever stands in close or necessary connection with cultural life will command a far more unanimous acknowledgment than whatever might stand in close or necessary connection with religion. Cultural life provides its own technology of sufficient certification. Whoever places himself in opposition to general cultural values, by so doing, excludes himself from the cultural community. For example, when one rejects the theoretical value of truth, one pushes oneself outside of all discussion of truth. We can utilize the situation to argue against the possibility of an absolute skepticism. Skepticism can be entertained as a theoretical possibility, but in actual fact it has never been an easy position to adopt.

Thus, when epistemology reduces the transcendental deduction to a point where it can only demonstrate that certain basic theoretical categories must be acknowledged if any knowledge at all is to be acknowledged as being true, it is behaving appropriately. But one can look at these procedures from another standpoint: the one who does not acknowledge these basic categories thereby excludes himself from all subsequent discussion, since he has negated the only foundation on which acknowledgment of every discussion can be conducted, apart from which every discussion is simply meaningless. Accordingly, whoever rejects morality's highest transcendental principles places himself outside the cultural community, which community only exists and possesses meaning when its principles are appropriately

acknowledged. When ethics reduces the transcendental deduction to the point that it only demonstrates that certain ethical categories must be acknowledged if there is to be any morality at all, this deduction is thoroughly accurate. Or to this insight in the other direction: whoever does not acknowledge the basic category of morality, by this very action removes himself from membership in the cultural community since he has destroyed the foundation apart from which such cultural community life is impossible.

But notice what happens when the same line of argumentation is applied to the subject of religion. Following the patterns we have traced above: whoever rejects religion is, by this action, removing himself from the religious community. And this is a statement which, from the point of view of religion, has to be accepted and counted as conclusive. Or does it? Is this valid or invalid? An opponent of this viewpoint; might argue: if there cannot be any religious experience, and no religious community, without appropriate acknowledgment of the fundamental category of religion, this does no more than demonstrate that both religious experience and the religious community are highly vulnerable. Here it is extremely difficult to demonstrate the possible untenability of various points of view. Indeed, when the subject is religion, it is not as convincing to cite negative consequences as it was when the cultural forms were being considered.

This helps explain why we must assume a greater burden of proof when dealing with the transcendental deduction of religion than when dealing with the transcendental deduction of the cultural forms. It also helps explain why a reduction of the transcendental proof does not come into question, and why the transcendental deduction must be executed with its original strictness. The challenge is to demonstrate not only that no religious experience is possible otherwise, but, in addition, that no experience at all is possible unless religion is appropriately acknowledged. Put baldly, there is no valid experience except on religious ground.

Of course, if this can be demonstrated, the religious experience will no longer stand isolated from the other forms of experience. Even if the religious experience is not amenable to being treated entirely as

a cultural form, it is not isolated from the issues of validity and certainty, but, on the contrary, is even more effectively grounded than any of the others if it can be demonstrated that all of them ultimately are dependent on the services it provides, and, further, that all of them would lose their status and vitality if this, their foundation, were to be removed or dislodged.

To prevent any misunderstanding, it ought to be remembered, perhaps, that what lies in question here has nothing at all to do with the foundation of religious faith. The certainty of faith itself does not rest upon such considerations. It is not our task at the moment to show which grounds are crucial for faith, but, instead, to show what scientific justification there is for regarding religion as a necessary and universal form of life. Since science belongs to culture and only has access to arguments that belong to the cultural sphere, with no access beyond to any transcendental criteria, the recognition of the necessity and universality of religion can only be based upon the meaning accorded to religion with a cultural system. And, in this respect, there are only two ways to assess the situation: either something essential is missing if religion is excluded or the entire system of culture is based on religion. We need not be overly concerned about the first possibility since religion itself protests against being regarded as a form of culture. Moreover we have already observed that the independence of religion is often due to difficulties involved in finding an independent place for religion within the cultural system. But even if this is to be attributed to the fact that a false subjective standpoint stands as the foundation for the cultural system, this denial of the independence of religion demonstrates that one should not base any great expectations on the possibility that an analysis of culture will identify an absence or emptiness that only religion can fill. It is difficult, from this vantage point, to demonstrate that religion is necessary and universal. Therefore, if it is impossible to demonstrate a necessary relationship between religion and the cultural system in this fashion, only the second approach remains, namely, to advance the thesis of the necessary connection in that the cultural system, in its totality, rests upon presuppositions within which religion is directly and substantially entailed. Even here someone

might wish to raise an objection by suggesting that we have become unfaithful to our own principle in that we are trying to establish a case for the universality and necessity of religion by arguing for its necessity to the cultural system. Isn't this a violation of the principle that religion is an autonomous form of life? That is, so the objectors might contend, if religion enjoys this autonomy, can it ever be understood except from the perspective of its own center? Can it ever be correct to approach it on the basis of its value and service to other forms of life?

Our response is to reiterate the argument that the transcendental necessity of religion for culture is not to be confused with the benefits the forms of culture receive from religion. For example, because it is an independent and autonomous form of life, religion is able to serve as the transcendental foundation of culture. At the same time, morality, for instance, can be conceptualized in ways that draw upon religion. Thus, by stressing that religion enjoys autonomy, we protect it from merging with or even vanishing into the various forms of culture. Were it to suffer any such mergers or captures, it would be diminished, say, into metaphysical extensions of philosophical knowledge, or themes amenable to artistic expression, or even effective instrumentation to be employed by ethics and morality. But all of these would do fundamental violence to the truth that religion is a basic category which stands as the foundation of autonomous religious experience, which is also a necessary presupposition for all other experiences.

In demonstrating all of this, we must, so to speak, probe behind the various general cultural values and penetrate to the conditions of their validity. That is, we must move to a consideration of what conditions must be in place for something to be regarded as true, good, or beautiful. Here our contention is that which is common to all of these forms of experience is that which lends validity to each of them, each in its own way. In the concept of validity we find crucial conditions that carry us beyond phenomenal experience, that is, beyond the limits of the spatial and temporal world. When we ascribe validity to something, be it an act of knowledge, a decision of the will, or even a specific activity, we elevate it above the limits of here-and-

now experience. When we refer to something as being valid, we do not mean that it is valid at this particular point in time or at this particular place, but, rather, that it enjoys validity regardless of spatial and temporal specifications and limitations. To put it simply, that which is true today was also true yesterday. Yes, it was even true before anyone recognized its truth, or even knew what it was. It was valid even before it was recognized within anyone's individual consciousness, just as it will remain true should all individual consciousnesses be extinguished. It does not require consciousness in order to be true. Its truth is not dependent upon decisions within consciousness. And it is completely self-contradictory that something which is true can ever be false, or that its logical status would be altered by some change in its apprehension within subjective consciousness, or even should knowledge concerning it cease to remain vital.

Our proposal is that for anything to be considered truly valid its conditions must abide beyond the limits of space and time. This is an axiom upon which cultural life itself is based, but it is an inviolable principle which none of the various cultural forms is able to establish and secure. We return to the nature and character of religion, precisely since religion elevates human life beyond the temporal, finite sphere. It raises the final and temporal to the eternal sphere. Therefore, cultural life resides, as it were, on loan from religion, and language frequently discloses this dependency. When we assert that something possesses validity, we support this assertion by invoking the quality of permanence. When we attach permanence to validity, we have not changed anything's substance or character. Rather, we have employed a tautology to lend recognition to a crucial insight. Nor is the attribution of permanence a cultural phenomenon, but has its source in religion in the most fundamental sense. That is, the category of eternity is the fundamental transcendental category of religion. It is the apriori form within which all religious experience inheres.

Additional clarifications are necessary. If the category of eternity is to serve as the basic category of religion, we must insist that the concept of the eternal is not to be construed in its vulgar sense as being the extension of time both forwards and backwards. Rather, the

category of eternity is to be understood in its purely philosophical and religious sense, to denote a form or modality of existence that is not subject to the conditions of temporality. Philosophically, this can be expressed as that which is raised above the limitations of time and space. From the perspective of religious understanding, eternity is that which has a rightful place in the life of God, which is really not to be understood in an eschatological sense. The person of religious sensitivity is conscious of the fact that he has been given a place in God's own life, not only because he has been convinced of this by virtue of events that are yet to occur, but precisely as a present possession. Just as validity can infuse the quality of an experience, even though it does not emanate directly from the experience, so can that which »is not of this world,« namely, that which possesses the nature of eternity, be given in the midst of temporality. And this is precisely the function of religion, that, theoretically and practically, religion makes conscious the fact that the reality given in sense-experience is not the entire reality (Stange). Put in other words, there is an eternal world that does not stand in exclusion of the temporal within which we live, such that we would have to leave temporality behind in order to participate in that which is eternal. On the contrary, it is the nature of piety to seek the traces of the eternal in everything that occurs. The more vigorous religious consciousness is, the less of the temporal world it will allow to fall outside the world of eternity, the more every moment in life is a religious moment, and the more everything that exists is placed under the species of the eternal (*sub specie aeternitatis*).

When the person of religious sensitivity duly regards the existence in which they find themselves, virtually everything gains a deeper religious significance by virtue of the relationship within which all things stand to the eternal. Conceivably everything, at least in principle, can have a proper place within the religious attitude, even when such things do not stand as objects of faith. This points, of course, to the fundamental transcendental necessity of religion. Schleiermacher has clear insight into this situation: »the more the subject, with his partial freedom and partial dependence, assumes the attitude of absolute dependence, in each moment of sensible

selfconsciousness, the more religious he is» (from *Glaubenslehre*, Chap.5). In addition, »the more one, while he always feels himself partially free and partially dependent in relation to other finite existence, feels oneself at the same time to be also (along with everything towards which he had that former feeling) absolutely dependent, the more religious is he.» Stange also has this situation in mind when he claims that there is never a moment in human life to which the religious challenge is not present, since it must be decided at every single moment of our lives if we are going to accept the world of temporality as the whole of reality. By describing the situation this way, Stange has given clear enunciation to the transcendental character of the fundamental religious category. And in the writings of Troeltsch, such insights are not actually missing, even though they do not come to such clarity of expression as one finds them in Schleiermacher and Stange. Troeltsch at one point even says that the religious apriori is assigned to the network of the other aprioris, and provides a firm foundation for their intrinsic unity. This gives additional credence to the fact that Troeltsch also regarded the religious factor as being the foundation of the other essential factors. However, when he elucidates this, that is, when he assigns the religious apriori both a subjective and a metaphysical cast, failing to approach it as a transcendental reality, it became impossible for him to carry his point of view forward.

The transcendental deduction of religion has clarified that the category of eternity carries validity as the apriori category of religion. As a consequence, religion is deeply rooted within the life of consciousness since all forms of culture are built upon the axioms, principles, and presuppositions that find their realization in religion. That is, what the other categories need, if they are not to be left floating in the air, is provided distinctively in religion. From this vantagepoint, therefore, religion does not deserve to be approached as being something accidental and arbitrary, as an element striving to force itself upon human life. Rather, religion is necessary, universal, and inseparable from the fundamental nature of human beings. Just as the progression from the state of nature to the state of culture

possesses a certain ineluctability for human nature, so is it certain that religion is an integral component of true human life.

Certainly nothing has yet been said concerning the content of religion. The category of eternity appears as a true »transcendental apriori« by virtue of the fact that it is a purely formal category. It enjoys equal status with the other aprioris, and even takes a certain precedence over them since they are dependent upon the foundations that religion provides. It is similar to the situation of the ethical apriori which is not equipped to lend any special direction as to how moral conduct and temperament ought to be characterized. Rather, the ethical apriori simply specifies the fundamental constitution of moral consciousness, namely, that it is required to stand under an urgent, unconditional categorical imperative. Accordingly, the transcendental apriori of religion is indicative of the basic form of religious experience, namely, that what is identified as belonging to religion must always stand under respect for the experience of the eternal, that is *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Part III

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ABSTRACT

Anders Nygren's *Religious Apriori* with an Introduction by Walter H. Capps. Editors: Walter H. Capps & Kjell O. Lejon. (Linköping Studies in Religion and Religious Education; No 2.) Linköping University Electronic Press, Linköping 2000, 135pp, ISBN 91-7219-640-8 (print), ISSN 1404-3971 (print), ISSN 1404-4269 (online), www.ep.liu.se/ea/rel/2000/002 (WWW)

The publication is based upon the first English translation of some essential parts of Professor Anders Nygren's dissertation *Religiöst Apriori. Dess filosofiska förutsättningar och teologiska konsekvenser* [*Religious Apriori: Its Philosophical Presuppositions and Theological Consequences*], 1921. In this work, Nygren established the foundation for his subsequent philosophical and theological thinking. Important theoretical and methodological perspectives that laid the groundwork in the thinking of Anders Nygren have hereby been made accessible for the English-speaking world.

A short biographical introduction to Anders Nygren is given, followed by an comprehensive introduction to the *Religious Apriori*, including an assessment of Nygren's achievement.

The extensive bibliography includes works in English by relevant Swedish theologians.

Key words:

Anders Nygren, religious apriori, sui generis, philosophy of religion, Lundensian Theology, Gustaf Aulén, Nathan Söderblom, Gustaf Wingren.

Linköping Studies in Religion and Religious Education

Series editor: Edgar Almén

1. Almén, Edgar & Öster, Hans Christian (editors), *Religious Education in Great Britain, Sweden and Russia. Presentations, Problem Inventories and Commentaries. Texts from the PETER Project.* 2000.
2. Capps, Walter H. & Lejon, Kjell O. (editors), *Anders Nygren's Religious Apriori* with an Introduction by Walter H. Capps. 2000.