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**REACHING THE HORIZON WITH AN
UNDERSTANDING OF *THE IDEA OF HOLY*
IN ILLUMINATION OF RUDOLF OTTO**

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1. Introduction

Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), was born at Peine in Hanover in 1869. He was one of the German neo-orthodoxy Christian Theologians and Scholars of the History of Religion and Phenomenology of Religion. He made a great impact in Germany, after the World War I. With *Das Heilige (The Idea of the Holy, 1917)*, he set the theological agenda for many years. His whole life work centred on understanding the nature of religion, and its divergent expression in the world religions. He was heir to the primary theological and philosophical tendencies in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. He studied at Erlangen, Göttingen (1897-1914), became *Privat-Dozent* of Systematic Theology and later attained the status of *Ausserordentlicher* Professor in the same University, and at Breslau he was appointed to an official Chair (1914-1917), until he went to Marburg (1917-1929). One of the special interests in the last ten years of his life was the establishment at Marburg of a museum for the comparative study of religions, not as dead curiosities but as living faiths. In 1917 he was appointed to a Chair of Theology at Marburg-on-the-Lahn, quaintest and most fascinating of German university towns, and there he resided till his

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death.¹ He was strongly influenced by Luther and the subject of his 1898 Dissertation was *Die Anschauung vom Heiligen Geiste bei Luther* (*Luther View of the Holy Spirit*). By this he discovered the importance of religious intuition and the sense of the inward presence of God. A second major influence was Schleiermacher (1768-1834), especially *Speeches on Religion* which was later edited by Otto himself in the year 1899. He gleaned from here the importance of feeling in religious experience. The dominant influence of Kant's (1724-1804) thought in his early work cannot be eclipsed as well as that of the philosopher F. Fries (1773-1843), whose notion of *Ahndung* or longing as an aesthetic mode of perception that apprehends the meaning and purpose of existence.²

Unlike many other theologians of his time, Otto interested himself in the non-Christian religions of the world. He learned many languages, studied other writings, and made extensive trips to various places in his search to understand religious experience.³ He had made himself thoroughly conversant with the scientific outlook of the nineteenth century and the tendencies in it, namely, mechanism, neo-Darwinism, and the like, which were or might be inimical to religion. The significant year for the development of his own distinctive contribution to religious thinking was 1910, when he set out on a long journey to the East which was to take him round the world.⁴

Otto was not only a great scholar and interpreter of religions but was also a great liberal thinker, and most of all a great and true Christian.⁵ His main purpose was to emphasize on an objective reality.⁶ He was urging an overplus of meaning which was non-rational, but neither in the sense of being counter to reason on the one hand, nor above reason, on the other.⁷

Those who knew Rudolf Otto well, who profited themselves from his eager intellectual sympathy, his penetration of mind, and his deep

¹Rudolf Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, x.

²Theodore M. Ludwig, "Rudolf Otto," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vol. XI. ed., Mircea Eliade, New York: Macmillan, 1987, 139.

³Ludwig, "Rudolf Otto," 140.

⁴Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, ix.

⁵Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, xiii.

⁶Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, xvi.

⁷Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, xvii.

reverence for truth, can have no doubt that had he lived longer he would have learned much from such movements of the non-rational, positively or negatively, and that he would himself have had an important contribution to make to the Christian Faith.⁸

2. The Rational and the Non-Rational

The nature of God is rational insofar as a rational religion recognizes and maintains such view or thought by an analogy with our human nature of reason and personality. Therefore, we are aware that the attributes used for God are completed, that is, though as absolute and unqualified. They constitute clear and definite concepts, grasped by the intellect, analyzed by thought. Thus, an object that can be thought conceptually may be termed as 'rational'. This rational nature in view of God and religion is recognized, only as a belief made possible in contrast to 'mere feeling'.⁹ It is promoted by the traditional language of edification, with its characteristic phraseology and ideas, by the learned and the theological instructions; and furthered even by the Holy Scriptures, themselves. The rational element occupies the foreground. All language insofar it consists of words, purports to convey ideas or concepts. Hence, the exposition of religious truth in language inevitably tends to stress the rational attributes of God.¹⁰

The above mistake is a natural one, for it is less seriously misleading. They exhaust the idea of deity, that they in fact imply a non-rational Subject of the predicate. They are essential attributes of the Subject; they qualify for a synthetic element of which in its deeper essence cannot be comprehended. It eludes the conceptual way of understanding; there can be no absolute assertion of it, to a certain sense, in the object of the religious consciousness. In mysticism, we speak of it as – the ineffable.¹¹ Keeping the non-rational element in religion alive in the heart of the religious experience is a matter for admiration.¹² It is salutary that we should be incited to notice that religion is not exclusively contained and exhaustively comprised in any series of rational assertions but is also worthwhile to bring the relation of the different moments of religion to another clearly the

⁸Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, xix.

⁹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 1.

¹⁰Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 2.

¹¹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 3.

¹²Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 3-4.

mind, so that its nature may become more manifest. This attempt will now be made by the distinctive category of the holy or sacred.¹³

3. Numen and the Numinous

Holiness – the *Holy*, is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion. It is complex and contains a quite specific element or moment, which sets it apart from the rational, which remains inexpressible – ineffable – in the sense that it completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts. The words holy, sacred (*heilig*) means here is the *absolute moral attribute*¹⁴ denoting the consummation of moral goodness.¹⁵ The term *holy* simply means, minus its 'moral' factor or moment, and as we can now add minus its 'rational' aspect altogether. To suggest this unnamed 'Something' we can adopt words like the Hebrew *qādōsh*, to which the Greek *ἅγιος* and the Latin *sanctus* that these terms connote, as part of their meaning, good, absolute goodness, that has reached the highest stage in its development. We then use the word *holy* to translate them. This *holy* then represents the gradual shaping and filling in with ethical meaning, or the schematization of a unique original feeling-response. All the above mentioned expressions mean beyond 'the good'. This is universally agreed and rightly explains the rendering of *holy* by *good* as a mistranslation and unwarranted rationalization or moralization of the term.¹⁶

The element, *Holy* stands in isolation going beyond the meaning of goodness which is worthwhile. First, by keeping the meaning clearly apart and distinct, and secondly by apprehending and classifying connectedly whatever subordinate forms or stages of development it may show.¹⁷ Therefore, the word coined from the Latin *numen* – a unique 'numinous' category of value and of a definitely 'numinous' state of mind. It must be guided and led on by consideration and discussion of the matter through the ways of one's own mind, until it reaches the point at which the 'numinous' within one begins to stir, to

¹³Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 4.

¹⁴In this sense, Kant calls the will obedient to the moral law, the motive of duty a *holy* will, the *perfectly* moral will, meaning merely imperative of conduct and universally obligatory. Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 5.

¹⁵Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 5.

¹⁶Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 6.

¹⁷Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 6-7.

start into life, and into consciousness. This can be evoked, in the mind as everything that comes of the spirit must be awakened.¹⁸

4. The Holy

4.1. The Holy as a Category of Value

The creature-feeling is that of the diminution of the Self. This experience marks a definite depreciation or devaluation of the self in respect, of its reality and very existence.¹⁹ This self-deprecating feeling-response is marked by an immediate, almost instinctive, spontaneity. It is a palpitant from the soul – like a direct reflex movement at the stimulation of the numinous. These outbursts of feeling belong to a special category of valuation and appraisalment. It is the feeling of ‘absolute profaneness.’²⁰

Only the one who is ‘in the Spirit’ knows and feels what this ‘profaneness’ is. It comes with piercing acuteness and is accompanied by the most uncompromising judgment of self-depreciation, on. At the same moment one passes upon the ‘numen’ a judgment of appreciation of a unique kind by the category diametrically contrary to the ‘profane’, the category *holy*, which is proper to the ‘numen’ alone, in an absolute degree, as *Tu solus sanctus*. This *Sanctus* is not merely perfect or beautiful or sublime or good, though being like these concepts are also a *value*, objective and ultimate, it has a definite, perceptible analogy with them. The *holy* will then be recognized as that which commands our respect as that whose real value is to be acknowledged inwardly.²¹

The feeling of one’s own ‘profaneness’ and unworthiness might defile even holiness itself. We see here both the light thrill of awe before the *tremendum* of the numen and also the unique feeling of disvalue or unworthy of the profane confronted by the *numen*, which suggests to the person that even holiness itself may be tainted and tarnished by one’s own presence. The felt necessity and longing for ‘atonement’²² amounts to transcend this surrendering unworthiness given with the self’s existence as creature and profane natural being. It is an element in the religious consciousness, wherein it is deepened, heightened

¹⁸Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 7.

¹⁹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 50.

²⁰Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 51.

²¹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 52-53.

²²Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 54.

and grows continually stronger and more marked belonging wholly, to the non-rational side of religion.²³

As the title of the book suggests *to investigate the non-rational element in the idea of the divine*,²⁴ these are some of the vague and most diverse interpretation of the non-rational, pure fact in contrast to law, empirical in contrast to reason, contingent in contrast to transcendental, a posteriori in contrast to a priori, will in contrast to determination, and many more. We began with the rational in the idea of God and the divine, meaning by the term which is clearly to be grasped by our power of conceiving, and enters the domain of familiar and definable conceptions. To maintain this beneath the sphere of clarity and lucidity, there lies a hidden depth, inaccessible to our conceptual thought, which we in so far call the non-rational.²⁵ It is this non-rational which we experience with religious bliss and it's essentially numinous aspect, the *fascinans* (fascination). Not the most concentrated attention can elucidate the object to which this state of mind refers, bringing it out of the impenetrable obscurity of feeling into the domain of the conceptual understanding. It remains purely a *felt* experience, only to be indicated symbolically by *ideograms*, non-rational.²⁶

The *Object of Religious* cannot be fully determined conceptually: non-rational, as is the beauty of a musical composition, which no less eludes complete conceptual analysis.²⁷ It is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.²⁸ According to Otto, the numinous experience is a category of *sui generis* and cannot be reduced to any other ordinary knowing, intellectual or rational. It has a unique feeling-response which characterizes the religious experience. It regards them as a mode of apprehending the *divine*.²⁹

²³Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 55.

²⁴Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 57.

²⁵Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 58.

²⁶*Ideograms* – concepts and doctrines which cannot be understood logically but symbolically. Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 58-59.

²⁷Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 59.

²⁸Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1973, 92.

²⁹The *Divine* is the eternal, immortal, the supremely conscious and this is possessed or experienced in a passionless way, in peace and objectless consciousness. It is called the Mystery, the Inexpremable, the totally Other, the Beyond. It finds

4.2. Means of Expression of the Numinous

Direct Means – The essential nature of the numinous consciousness cannot be taught, but be awakened from the spirit. For in religion there is very much that can be taught – that is, handed down in concepts and passed by instruction. But the numinous can only be induced, incited, and aroused. One can experience the numinous with the ‘spirit in the heart,’ this inborn capacity to receive and understand, is the essential thing.³⁰

Indirect Means – The numinous feeling is presented and evoked indirectly by means of which we express kindred and similar feelings belonging to the natural sphere. It is through the elements of the *mysterium tremendum* the natural feelings that bear the analogy – *mutatis mutandis* – to the religious consciousness of ineffable, unutterable mystery, the absolute other, as the incomprehensible, unwonted, enigmatic thing, in all that it confronts us.³¹

Art – The most effective means of representing the numinous is *the sublime*. It has been this feeling of expression that have awakened, motivated, and stimulated the conscious. It has been a means of creating a unique impression - that of the magical – apart from and independent of reflection. The magical is nothing but a suppressed and dimmed form of the numinous, a crude form of it which great art purifies and ennobles. It is confronted with the numinous itself.³²

4.3. The Holy as an *a priori* Category

Holy, in the fullest sense of the word is a combined, complex category, the combining elements being its rational and non-rational components. In both the assertions, it must be maintained against all sensationalism and naturalism – it is a *purely a priori* category.³³ The

expression in symbols which are of the profane sphere, by means of which the divine is attained (human experience). Dhavamony, *Phenomenology of Religion*, 93-94.

³⁰Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 60-61.

³¹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 62-65.

³²Anyone who approaches this figure will realize that it has a religious significance without knowing anything about its motivation. It matters little whether we call it a prophet or a god, because it is a complete work of art permeated by a spiritual will, which communicates itself to the beholder. The religious element of such a figure is immanent; it is a ‘presence’ or an atmosphere rather than a formulated idea. It cannot be described in words, because it lies beyond intellectual definition. Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 67.

³³Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 110.

non-rational elements of our category of the *Holy* we are referred back to something still deeper than the 'pure reason,' which mysticism has rightly named the *fundus animae*, the bottom or ground of the soul (*Seelengrund*).³⁴ The ideas of the numinous and the feelings that correspond to them are the rational ideas and feelings, absolutely pure and the criteria which Kant suggests for the 'pure concept' and the 'pure feeling' of respect which are most precisely applicable to them.³⁵ It comes from the deepest foundation of cognitive apprehension that the soul possesses but not arises out of them, but only by their means.³⁶ The facts of the numinous consciousness point therefore – as likewise do also the pure concepts of the understanding of Kant and the ideas and value-judgments of his phenomenology – to a *hidden substantive source*,³⁷ from which the religious ideas and feelings are formed, which lies in the mind independently of sense-experience, a 'pure reason' in the profounder sense, the surpassingness of its content, as something yet higher or deeper.³⁸ It begins in undirected emotion, and goes on, by a continual onward striving, to generate ideas, till its nature is self-illuminated and made clear by an explication of the obscure *a priori* foundation of thought itself, out of which it is originated. This emotion, searching, generation and explication of ideas, gives the warp of the fabric of religious evolution.³⁹ Every religion springs from personal assurance and inward convincement – as Christianity does in a unique degree – must presuppose principles in the mind enabling it to be independently recognized as true, *a priori*.⁴⁰

5. *Mysterium Tremendum*

The nature of the numinous can only be reflected in the mind in terms of feeling. Its nature is such that it grips or stirs the human

³⁴Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 112.

³⁵Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 112-113.

³⁶Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 113.

³⁷The *hidden substantive source* is a sort of predisposition, a religious impulsion that only finds peace when it has become clear to itself and attained its goal. The assumption of such a relation in the world of mind (that is, a relation between potential and kinetic mind) is to be expected from one who is prepared to accept as the final cause of all mind in the world as a whole the absolute mind as 'pure actuality'. It is an inconsequent proceeding to postulate actuality, and yet reject the analogous assumption in the world of mind and spirit. Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 114–115.

³⁸Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 114.

³⁹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 116.

⁴⁰Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 175.

mind and determinates the affective state. *Mysterium* denotes merely that which is hidden and esoteric, beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar.⁴¹ The essentials picked up are absolutely clear on what Otto, has his mind on:

It is the deepest and fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotion. It is to be found in strong, sudden ebullitions of personal piety, in the fixed and ordered solemnities of rites and liturgies, and again in the atmosphere that clings to old religious monuments and buildings, to temples and to churches. It may be peaceful and come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship or faster moving thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its profane, non-religious mood of everyday experience even violent, erupting from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions and leading to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy.⁴²

This further proceeds to analyse the elements of *mysterium tremendum*.

5.1. The Element of 'Awefulness'

Tremor is in itself merely the perfectly familiar and natural emotion of fear.⁴³ Of modern languages, English has the words 'awe,' 'aweful,' which is deeper and most special sense closely to our meaning. The suggested term *Scheu* (dread), the *special numinous*⁴⁴ thus begins to stir in the feeling of something uncanny, eerie, or weird. It is this feeling which, emerging in the mind of primeval man, forms the starting point for the entire religious development in history.⁴⁵ The natural man cannot fear God perfectly, but we ought to go further and add that the natural man is unable even to 'shudder' (*grauen*) or feel horror in the real sense of the word. For shuddering is something more than natural, ordinary fear. This bears witness to a completely new function of experience and standard of valuation, only belonging to the spirit of man.⁴⁶ The numinous emotion in its complete

⁴¹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 12.

⁴²Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 12-13.

⁴³Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 13.

⁴⁴Making it *awe* rather than *dread* in the ordinary sense. A 'religious dread' (awe) would perhaps be a better designation. Its antecedent stage is 'daemoniac dread.' Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 14.

⁴⁵Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 14.

⁴⁶Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 15.

development shows a world of difference from the mere 'daemonic dread' by clinging to the ineffable, something that holds the mind. It is the mystical awe, reflected in self-consciousness, that creature-feeling described as the feeling of personal nothingness and submergence before the awe-inspiring object directly experienced.⁴⁷

The *ὄργη* (*orgé*), the Wrath 'ideogram' of Yahweh, is nothing but the *tremendum* itself, apprehended and expressed by the aid of a naïve analogy from the domain of natural experience which is most disconcertingly apt and striking in an inevitable way of expressing one element in the religious emotion.⁴⁸ This state of mind is a numinous which features the *tremendum* pass over into the man who has experience of it.⁴⁹

5.2. The Element of 'Overpoweringness' (*Majestas*)

Attempting to unfold the implication of that aspect of the *mysterium*, *tremendum* may be summarized in two words, constituting, as before what may be called 'ideogram', rather than a concept proper, viz., 'absolute unapproachability'. It will be felt that there is yet a further element which must be added, namely, might, power, absolute Overpoweringness.⁵⁰ The name *majesty* shows a faint trace of the numinous still clinging to the word. The *tremendum* may then be rendered more adequately as *termanda majestas*, awful majesty. This forms the numinous raw material for the feeling of religious humility.⁵¹

The point of speculation starts from a consciousness of absolute superiority of supremacy of a power other than oneself, originally apprehended as plenitude of power, becomes transmuted into plenitude of being.⁵² This leads to mysticism – stressing to a very high degree, the overstressing of the non-rational or supra-rational elements in religion.⁵³ A characteristic common to all types of mysticism is the *Identification*⁵⁴ in different degrees of completeness,

⁴⁷Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 17.

⁴⁸Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 18.

⁴⁹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 19.

⁵⁰Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 19.

⁵¹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 20.

⁵²Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 21.

⁵³Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 22.

⁵⁴It springs from moments of religious experience and requires separate treatment. It must be done with something that is at once absolutely supreme in power and reality and wholly non-rational. Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 22.

of the personal self with the transcendent reality. It is only among the mystics that we most encounter this element of religious consciousness.⁵⁵

5.3. The Element of 'Energy' or 'Urgency'

This element is comprised in those of *tremendum* and *majestas* and calls for the *urgency* of the numinous object. It clothes itself in symbolical expressions – vitality, passion, emotional temper, will, force, movement, excitement, activity, impetus.⁵⁶ In mysticism, this element is a very living and vigorous factor, where it is forcibly seen in the consuming fire of love and claims a perceptible kinship with the *ἀργή* (*orgé*) itself, the scorching and consuming wrath of God; it is the same energy, only differently directed.⁵⁷

5.4. The Element of 'Wholly Other'

It is a synthetic attribute to it, that is, *tremendum* adds something not necessarily inherent in *mysterium*.⁵⁸ In the religious sense, it is that which is beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which falls outside the limits of the canny, and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment.⁵⁹ The feeling or consciousness of the *wholly other* will attach itself to objects which are of a surprising or astounding character such as extraordinary phenomena or astonishing occurrences or things in inanimate nature, in and among men.⁶⁰ The 'mysterious' object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently *wholly other*, whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own.⁶¹

In mysticism, we have in the beyond again the strongest stressing and over-stressing of those non-rational elements which are already inherent in all religion. It continues to its extreme point this contrasting of the numinous object (the *numen*), as the *wholly other*, with ordinary experience. It concludes by contrasting it with Being

⁵⁵Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 22.

⁵⁶Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 23.

⁵⁷Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 24.

⁵⁸Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 25.

⁵⁹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 26.

⁶⁰Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 27.

⁶¹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 28.

itself and all that 'is', finally actually calling it 'that which is *nothing*'.⁶² The 'void' of the eastern, like the 'nothing' of the western, mystic is a numinous ideogram of the *wholly other*. The feeling-content here is that of transcendent and supernatural of a unique *wholly other* reality and quality, something of whose special character we can feel, without being able to give it clear conceptual expression.⁶³

5.5. The Element of 'Fascination' or '*fascinans*'

The qualitative content of the numinous experience to which the mysterious stands as form, is one of its aspects, the element of daunting awefulness and majesty. It has at the same time another aspect, in which it shows itself as something uniquely attractive and fascinating (*fascinans*).⁶⁴ The ideas and concepts which are the parallels or schemata on the rational are love, mercy, pity, comfort, these are all natural elements of the common psychical life, only they are here thought as absolute and in completeness.⁶⁵ But besides these there is a series of strange proceedings which are constantly attracting greater and greater attention, in which it is claimed that we may recognize.⁶⁶

The religious feeling of longing is the only experience in that the moment of *fascination*, a living factor is alive and present in the moment of solemnity, both in the gathered concentration and humble submergence of private devotion.⁶⁷ It appears as strange and mighty propulsion towards an ideal good known only to religion and in its nature fundamentally non-rational. This shows that above and beyond our rational being lies hidden the ultimate and highest part of our nature, which can find no satisfaction in the mere allaying of the needs of our sensuous, psychical, or intellectual impulses and cravings. The mystics called it the basis or ground of the soul (*fundus animae*).⁶⁸

⁶²This *nothing* is that which is absolutely and intrinsically other than and opposite of everything that is and can be thought. Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 29.

⁶³Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 30.

⁶⁴*Fascinating* seen as *Fascination* is not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances one, wherein one feels a something that captivates and transports one with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication. Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 31.

⁶⁵Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 31.

⁶⁶Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 32.

⁶⁷Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 35.

⁶⁸Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 36.

The element of *fascination* is a possible transition into mysticism. At its highest point of stress it becomes the overabounding, and the exuberant.⁶⁹ This is seen most clearly from the psychology of those great experiences – of grace, conversion, second birth – in which the religious experience appears in its pure intrinsic nature.⁷⁰ Thus, as one would write:

For the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained. It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra, when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony that leaves the listener conscious of nothing save one's soul is being wafted upwards and almost bursting with its own emotion, that which unknown.⁷¹

Therefore, God is not merely the ground and superlative of all that can be thought, He is Himself a Subject on His own account and in Himself.⁷²

In a nutshell, Otto has reached the heart of the matter. He pins down this sort of experience for dissection in terms of a Latin phrase *mysterium tremendum*. He presents the *tremendum* component of the numinous that is being experienced as comprising three elements: *Awefulness* (inspiring awe, a sort of profound unease), *Overpoweringness* (that which, among other things, inspires a feeling of humility), and *Energy* (creating an impression of immense vigour). On the other hand, he presents the *mysterium* component in its two elements, which he discusses at considerable length. First, the numinous is experienced as *Wholly Other*. It is something truly amazing, as being totally outside our normal experience. Secondly, there is the element of *Fascination*, which causes the subject of the experience of the numinous to be caught up in it to be enraptured.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have made an attempt to venture with, 'A Phenomenological Outlook on The Idea of Holy according to Rudolf Otto.'

⁶⁹Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 36.

⁷⁰Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 37.

⁷¹Quoted by Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 37 from William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, London: Longmans, 1902, 66 or New York: Modern Library, 1999, 66.

⁷²Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy*, 39.

Otto's attempt to analyze the essence of religion and describe the religious object as the presence of the *Holy* is a matter simply to marvel at. It provides a penetrating analysis of religious experience and a model of comparative religious research, that has stimulated much thought and that will continue to exert great influence.

He has given altogether a different slant in the thinking trend to the 'Phenomenology of Religion' by introducing to us a part that was not given much importance to, that is, the *non-rational*. The term *Holy* came to a crescendo because of Otto's overstressing the *Numinous* and further developing this numinous in his *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

Otto was one of the first persons who gave a 'special twist' in the ordinary thinking and understanding of the 'Phenomenology of Religion' by giving us the experience and creating within us the stimulation for the *fascinans*. A postmodern and an existential in his outlook, though may not be fully soaked in it, Otto surely gives one a glimpse of dipping oneself with this experience. This has surely helped me in my approach and attitude towards life and linking my thought to religion (catholic) and religions (other faiths) as a person, as a Christian, and above all as a professed religious.

Finally, I venture to say with certainty that this 'Phenomenology of Religion' has helped me gain hindsight to which I would always have an inclination to and has given me a stand to my thinking regarding the *Holy*.