

Religion

and the

Numinous Way

by

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Religion and The Numinous Way

Three Essays Concerning The Nature of Religion

One

Exegesis, and The Discovery of Wisdom

One of the problems of conventional Ways [1] is their reliance upon certain texts (original or derivative), which texts come to be regarded as either sacred, or as possessing wisdom, or both. For, almost invariably, all such texts require interpretation [2] and/or come to be used as a source, if not the primary and authoritative source, of information about, and a guide to, a particular Way. This reliance upon texts applies both to revealed Ways - such as Christianity and Islam, with Scripture (Christianity) and Quran and Ahadith (Islam) - and to non-revealed Ways, such as Buddhism and Hinduism [3].

What is common in respect of all Ways based upon or centred around certain texts, is that there invariably arises, over a certain period of causal Time, a particular attitude, both personal, and collective (among the community of adherents or believers), with this attitude being one of, if not veneration of the texts themselves, then of reliance upon them so that they are preferred over and above the *πάθει μάθος* of individuals: that is, preferred over and above the slow and the natural and the numinous (the living) accumulation of personal insight, understanding, and wisdom.

In addition, the interpretation of such texts - and/or the emergence or the writing of new texts concerning a particular Way - has, almost invariably, led to schism or schisms within a particular Way, with such schisms often being, at least in respect of revealed Ways - violent in nature, and leading to accusations of heresy.

These two features - the particular attitude of reliance upon and/or veneration of texts, and the emergence of schisms due to texts - may be said to represent *the religious attitude* itself. And it is this religious attitude, among individuals, and collectively - among a community or communities of adherents or believers - which is the fundamental problem of all conventional organized Ways.

However, in its genesis, a particular Way often does not possess nor require the cultivation of this religious attitude, this religious approach. Indeed, some Ways, in their genesis, may be quite opposed to such an attitude, such an approach, which attitude, which approach, often leads to the veneration, if not the deification, of the founder (known or perceived) of the Way.

One, particularly modern, manifestation of this religious attitude is in the desire, by adherents of a particular conventional Way, to find the results of modern science in such texts. Thus, there arises the desire to find, or to prove, that such texts prefigured, or indeed contain, certain scientific notions or certain recent rational explanations of natural phenomena, and this desire is often based upon a need to show or to somehow “prove” that the founder of a Way, or the supra-personal supreme Being of a Way, possessed a knowledge of such newly discovered matters.

Thus, and for instance, ancient texts are scoured to show that there was some ancient knowledge, and understanding, of such things as life existing elsewhere in the Cosmos; and/or there was some ancient knowledge and understanding of planets orbiting stars; and/or some ancient knowledge and understanding of what we now refer to as evolution, and the origin of diverse species; and so on.

This is, in effect, a re-interpretation of particular texts, where certain modern terms are mistakenly projected onto ancient or old words to give them a modern meaning, with this re-interpretation often being required by individuals, subsumed by the religious attitude, in order for those individuals to continue to believe in, or to continue to adhere to, what has become a particular Way reliant upon such texts.

The Problem of Reliance

Reliance on texts - revealed, venerated, or otherwise - is a fundamental problem because it not only removes wisdom from the personal experience of the individual, but it also tries to prescribe, to define, to restrict, the numinous.

Fundamentally, the religious attitude is itself a problem because it is a reliance on those abstractions that often derive or have been derived from an initial numinous experience, and which abstractions denude, undermine, or disrupt or conceal, the numinous itself.

For the truth is that wisdom is only - and only ever can be - personal, individual, and unique, and cannot be abstracted out from *πάθει μάθος* into some abstraction, religious or otherwise, or be found in some text, revealed or otherwise. That is, wisdom is a function of acausality - of acausal Time, of

what is living - and not the result of some cause-and-effect; not the result of adhering to or striving to adhere to what someone else, somewhere at some moment in causal Time, has transcribed, tried to describe, or might even have revealed or dis-covered in some manner.

Thus, wisdom is natural, within each of us, nascent - a potentiality to be discovered by and through the immediacy of personal experience. All some texts may do - and should do - is point us or guide us toward this of necessity interior discovery, which occurs in its own way, in its very own species of a living Time.

Furthermore, such an individual discovering of wisdom, by means of *πάθει μάθος*, leads to a knowing, an understanding, of humility - that is, to a placing of ourselves into that natural Cosmic perspective which forms the basis of Reality itself [4]. And it is such a natural and indeed spontaneous humility - beyond words, terms, abstractions - which is the practical antithesis of the religious attitude itself, and indeed which is a necessary precursor for our own individual change and evolution.

Similarly, the numinous itself is presenced, and can be found, within each of us, and within those natural things, those living things, such as Nature and the Cosmos, a personal love, and empathy, which arise, and which have arisen or unfolded, in their own way according to their basal acausal nature, *sans* any and all causal abstractions.

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Notes:

[1] By *Way* is meant a particular *numinous* Way of Life, distinguished from a particular philosophy (academic or otherwise) by virtue of the adherent of or believer in such a numinous Way finding therein a presencing of the numinous sufficient to make them aware of, or feel, or come to know, a distinction between the sacred and the profane.

I have used *Way* in preference to the more common and in my view, inaccurate and now often pejorative term, religion.

[2] By *interpretation* here is meant (1) commentaries (academic, theological, and otherwise); (2) explanations (critical, and otherwise); (3) translations; and - most importantly - (4) a seeking of the meaning of (a) both the text (in whole and in parts; and both esoteric and exoteric) and (b) of the words and terms used.

[3] In Buddhism, the primary texts are regarded as: (1) for Theravada Buddhism, the collections referred to as *Tipitaka/Tripitaka*; (2) for Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Tipitaka (in some cases, depending on interpretation) and the various *Sutras*, including the collection often referred to as The Perfection of Wisdom; (3) for Tibetan Buddhism, the various Tantric texts, plus some of the Tipitaka (in some cases, depending on interpretation) and some the Mahāyāna sutras (in some cases, depending on interpretation).

In Hinduism, there is the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the literature of the *Vedas*.

[4] See, for example, my essay *Humility, Abstractions, and Belief*.

Two

Humility, Abstractions, and Belief

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει

(Soph. Antig. 334)

There is much that is strange, but nothing has more strangeness than we human beings

One of the many questions that has occupied me recently is the question of humility - can there, for instance, be true humility without a belief in a supreme Being, be that supreme Being God, as understood for instance, by Christianity, or Allah, as understood by Islam.

For I have certainly come, through and because of my own peregrinations and my *πάθει μάθος*, to recognize, to understand, the need for humility - the need for us, as individual human beings, to place ourselves in such a supra-personal context, such a perspective, that we become aware of our own fallibility, our own mortality, our own humanity, our own weakness, so that there is within us, or develops within us, a natural empathy with other Life, with Nature, and especially with other human beings.

From humility, it seems to me, derives two most important human virtues, dignity, and awareness of the numinous, the sacred. From humility derives the necessary desire to forgo or at least restrain what seems to be, at least so far, our human need for arrogance, for personal pride, for *ὑβρις* (hubris); for pursuing some ideal, such as a disruptive, often suffering-causing un-numinous change, where we are intensely and personally dissatisfied with ourselves, our situation, our circumstances, and often with what we regard as

“society”.

Manifestations of Humility

One of the great advantages – a manifestation of humanity – of a Way such as Islam and Christianity and Buddhism is that they provide, or can provide, us with the supra-personal perspective, and thus the humility, we human beings require to prevent us veering into and becoming subsumed with the error of hubris.

As it says in the Rule of Saint Benedict:

“The peak of our endeavour is to achieve profound humility...”
Chapter 7, *The Value of Humility*

As it says in the Quran:

“The ‘*Ibaad* of Ar-Rahman [Allah] are those who walk on earth in humility.” 25:63

As it says in the Dhammapada:

“Yo bâlo maññati bâlyaè paúóitovâpi tena so bâlo ca paúóitamânî sa ve bâloti vuccati.”

” Accepting of themselves, the simple person in their simplicity is wise, although if they pride themselves they are wise, they are simply full of pride. “

Furthermore, such Ways provide such a supra-personal perspective in a manner which is living – that is, these Ways are presented to us as something which has a historical genesis and which lives among us, in our own times, in and through those devoted to them in that dignified manner which makes such people living examples of those tenets, of those Ways. That is, the dignified people who follow such Ways – who are inspired by those Ways to practice humility in their own lives – thus manifest the numinous, the sacred, among us, and so can provide us with practical, and personal, guidance, and a sense of belonging.

Thus, in such Ways we, as individuals, can find a welcome, a type of identity beyond our own personal one, and certainly a place where we can often, in time, find a home: a place to dwell awhile between the problems and the passions and the foibles of our lives, and place where can feel, and come to know, the numinous.

Yet such conventional Ways also require a certain belief, a certain faith: an acceptance of their own abstractions, and often their own dogma. For example, Islam requires, among other things, an acceptance that the Quran is the literal word of Allah. Christianity requires, among other things, that one accepts Scripture – the Old and New Testaments – as authoritative guides, to be quoted, admired, and followed; as Christianity also requires a belief in Jesus as the resurrected Son of God. Buddhism requires, among other things, an acceptance of Siddhattha Gotama as *the* enlightened one, who left guidelines and means to be followed; Buddhism also requires that one accept such things – such abstractions – as nirvana, and re-birth.

But, is humility possible without recourse to such Ways? Does humility of necessity require a certain inclusion – of one becoming part of a living tradition or of some conventional Way with a multitude of adherents and members? Does humility, therefore, of necessity, depend on one accepting certain abstractions and having faith in certain dogma?

The Cosmic Perspective

In essence, the truth of our human nature is that we are simply one type of life which exists on one planet orbiting one star in a Galaxy composed of billions of stars in a Cosmos containing billions upon billions of other Galaxies.

That is, in Cosmic terms, we do not seem to be anything special, and are most probably – if not almost certainly – not unique. We only assume or like to believe that we are unique – an assumption, and a belief, an arrogance, that most conventional Ways (termed religions) accept as a fundamental premise. Thus, Christianity and Islam both speak of a supreme creator-Being providing us with revelation, by means of Prophets, and which revelation is a guide to how we might attain what is regarded as the aim of our mortal existence, which is an eternal after-life in Heaven or Jannah.

There is, thus, the notion of this supreme Being guiding us, interfering in our affairs, and having a direct concern for we human beings on this planet we have called Earth – hence, for example, the concept of prayer to this Being; forgiveness from this Being; hence the notion of Jesus being crucified for us; hence the notion, in Christianity, of redemption and Heaven through Jesus; hence the notion of, in Islam, Shariah and Adab as a means, a path, to Allah and thus as guides to attaining the after-life in Jannah promised to us by Allah.

Even in Buddhism there is the belief in enlightenment, which Siddhattha Gotama and his teachings can guide us to, even if this takes several re-births in this mortal world, on Earth. There is also the notions of nirvana, re-birth, and of the Sangha as an enlightened way to enlightenment.

In all of these Ways there is *us*: we human beings, on this planet, striving for a different non-mortal, non-causal, existence. There are human beings thus concentrating on their own salvation, their own enlightenment, as there is some supreme Being, or some Enlightened One, concerned with us, or guiding us.

Which leads us to certain important questions, if we suspend the human-centric presumption – for example, does the probable existence of sentient life elsewhere in the Cosmos mean that:

(1) the God of Christianity, the supreme Being, the creator and giver of life, has to provide revelation through Prophets on every planet containing sentient life; and for there to be another crucifixion of another Jesus or even the same Jesus? And, if not, why not – for does not all sentient life, being the creation of the supreme creator, require redemption and the chance of Heaven?

(2) the Allah of Islam, the supreme Being, the creator and giver of life, has to reveal another Quran on every planet containing sentient life through other Messengers akin to Muhammad?

(3) a sentient being such as Siddhattha Gotama has to become enlightened to guide other sentient beings on every planet bearing sentient life?

Further questions arise, such as, if Heaven and Jannah exist will they become the abode of all the other non-human sentient life from other worlds who have been judged fitting to be there – or will other non-human sentient life have their realms, their own after-lives, and if so why if there is only one supreme God, one Allah, for the whole of the Cosmos as the ontology and theology of Christianity and Islam require? Would God, or Allah, operate a kind of apartheid policy to keep humans and non-humans separate in their after-lives?

Would there be an alien, a non-human, equivalent of the Catholic Pope on some other, extra-terrestrial worlds, somewhere in our Galaxy or in other Galaxies? Would there be a type of Shia or Sunni divide on another world, or on other worlds? And so on.

The easy answer to such questions is to continue with the human-centric perspective; with the assumption, the belief, that we human beings are, if not unique in the Cosmos in being sentient beings, then are somehow in some manner special, or favoured, by God, by Allah, or even by the nature of what Siddhattha Gotama taught was the impermanence of existence.

But if one asks such questions about the Cosmic nature of life, then it is easy to see that a non-revealed Way (or philosophies) such as Buddhism, and Taoism, can be adapted or expanded to answer most of them, whereas

revealed Ways such as Christianity and Islam have quite major problems, in terms of ontology, ethics, theology, eschatology, and so on.

Which then leads us to the simple question as to why there is no mention of the Cosmic perspective - of non-human sentient beings on other worlds in the Cosmos, requiring enlightenment, redemption, and so on - (1) if Siddhattha Gotama was the enlightened one, who perceived the true nature of existence, which existence is as vast as the Cosmos; (2) if the supreme Being of Islam and Christianity, as posited is the all-knower, the creator of all life, everywhere.

Of course, conventional Ways have easy - if ultimately unsatisfying - answers to such questions, which are *either* the canard that we humans are indeed special, chosen, and have some "sacred duty" to take our Earth-given revelations, the enlightenment of Siddhattha Gotama, out to other sentient life in the Cosmos, *or* that Siddhattha Gotama, God, Allah, were concerned with guiding us, we human beings, and deemed such questions about the Cosmos and other life would or might "only confuse us..." and what was important was our salvation, our enlightenment. Thus, we are treated like children, who cannot be told, or trusted with, the whole truth.

Such answers are unsatisfying because they require either a continuation of our arrogance, or an act of faith; they require that we limit our curiosity, limit our expectations; and accept that God, Allah, Siddhattha Gotama know or knew what is best for us, and it is right that they regard us as and treat us as children.

Such answers are unsatisfying because, to the rational, the doubting, human being it seems as if the revelations from God, from Allah, are somehow in some way deficient, as it seems as if Siddhattha Gotama may not have been as fully enlightened as Buddhists seem to accept or to believe.

In truth, our human appreciation of the vastness of the Cosmos, of the probability of other sentient life existing elsewhere, our faculty of reason, should move us toward the conclusion that most if not all conventional Ways are incomplete at best, or at worst are just other examples of our human-centric perspective, of our lack of empathy with all life, with all existence, in the Cosmos.

Humility and Empathy

The Cosmic perspective of The Numinous Way points us toward a possible answer in respect of the initial question asked regarding humility, for it seems that the essence of genuine humility lies in this Cosmic perspective and in the empathy which enables us to appreciate other life in the Cosmos.

That is, what we call humility - with its human-making quality, its distillation of an essential part of our humanity - does not necessarily depend on God, or Allah, or one some revelation, or on some enlightened human being such as Siddhattha Gotama. Rather, it has become or it can become inherent in us by virtue of our slow human process of *πάθει μάθος*, of us learning from our experiences, and thus growing in consciousness and empathy, which consciousness and which empathy provide us with both a knowledge, an understanding, of suffering and its causes, and with a means of ceasing to cause or to contribute such suffering.

Thus, humility is, like personal honour, an essential practical manifestation of empathy itself and of us acquiring a Cosmic perspective - because humility disposes us toward acting in such a manner that we try and avoid causing suffering to other beings, and removes from us that arrogance, that pride, which arises when we are subsumed with ourselves, our desires, and a human-centric perspective. For, by and through humility, we do what we do not because we expect some reward, or some forgiveness, given by some supra-personal supreme Being, or have some idealized duty to such a Being or to some abstraction (such as some nation, some State) but because it is in our very nature to do an act of compassion, a deed of honour: to do something which is noble and selfless.

That is, we act, not out of duty, not out of a desire for Heaven or Jannah, or enlightenment or some other "thing" we have posited - not from any emotion, desire or motive, not because some scripture or some revelation or some Buddha says we should - but because we have lost the illusion of our self-contained, personal, identity, lost our Earth-centric, human-centric, perspective, lost even the causal desire to be strive to something different, and instead just *are*: that is, we are just one microcosmic living mortal connexion between all life, on Earth, and in the Cosmos. For our very nature, as human beings, is a Cosmic nature - a natural part of the unfolding, of the naturally and numinously changing, Cosmos.

Evolution and Change

One objection to our human *πάθει μάθος* - to our evolution toward sentience and cosmic empathy and thus humility - might be that such evolution is itself an abstraction, a theory, or some ideal.

However, by such evolution is meant only change, only a natural unfolding - *φύσις*; only that slow interior iteration whereby we are changed through experience, through learning, through culture, through art, through those many and varied presencings of the numinous which contain and which express, and which have expressed for several millennia, the quintessence of

our human *πάθει μάθος*.

Such a change is numinous, and distinct from that change - that disruptive, un-numinous, profane, change - which abstractions cause or which are the genesis of suffering.

For the change that is our numinous *φύσις* is essentially and at first an interior, a personal, one, imbued with the very acausality of the numen; whereas the vapid change of abstractions is the change of the causal, of cause-and-effect, arising from the pursuit of, or the desire for, outer change, of attempting to mould life, especially human life and Nature, to some abstraction or some ideal, which we believe in, assume, or hold onto.

Furthermore, empathy with life, with the Cosmos, disposes toward an understanding, a knowing, of the Cosmos itself as a natural unfolding, a natural, and numinous, changing, just as Nature is such, here on Earth: one particular, one finite, presencing of the very living of the Cosmos.

Conclusion

Hence, we arrive at the simple conclusion that for us human beings, humility is a natural and necessary and numinous development; an expression of our humanity, of the potential that we possess to evolve, to change, ourselves in a numinous manner consistent with the Cosmic nature of our own being, and consistent with the nature of the Cosmos itself.

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Three

The Nature of Religion and The Nature of The Numinous Way

A distinction should be made between a religion, and a Way (a specific Way of Life) - for the term religion often now denotes what may be termed the religious attitude, which is [1] reliance upon and/or veneration of texts, and the emergence of schisms due to such texts; and because, in its origin, a Way mostly does not possess such reliance on or veneration of such texts, or involve such schisms.

For the essence of a particular Way is that it is a numinous, and it is this numinosity which not only serves to distinguish a Way from a particular philosophy (academic or otherwise), but which also provides the adherent or believer in a particular Way with a personal awareness or manifestation of The Numen, and which presents them with an understanding or intuition of - or which can lead them toward knowing - the distinction that exists between the sacred and the profane.

That is, the individual regards some things as sacred; for example, as worthy of veneration, and/or as special (beyond the mundane) and - if a place or area - as requiring a certain mode or manner of dress (and a reverent attitude) and/or as requiring a certain ritual purification before entering. In addition, and importantly, there is an awareness, often unspoken - that is, not defined through strict dogma - of the necessary limits of personal behaviour, based on a feeling for natural balance, for *Φύσις*: on the desire not to commit *ὑβρις*, to not overstep the mark and thus to avoid transgressing, or trampling on, the sacred; to show respect for the sacred [2].

In the philosophical terminology of The Numinous Way [3], this sacredness is a presencing of the acausal, and thus what is perceived or felt as numinous, as sacred, is that-which in some manner embodies or manifests acausality - that is, some-thing which does not possess the quality of mundane causality, of a simple and linear cause-and-effect; some-thing, instead, redolent of the eternal, the timeless, the supra-personal, nature of the acausal, and which is beyond the power or the ability of all mortals to control.

Furthermore, it is this presencing of the acausal which the religious attitude tends to conceal, and which concealment often leads, over time, to reform or renaissance movements when some or many adherents or believers feel has been lost or obscured.

Why this tendency to conceal? Because the religious attitude is basically a manifestation of causal reductionism, where there is an attempt to explain or understand the numinous either by reference to some text, or by means of some causal abstraction, as being the effect of some posited cause.

Thus, the religious attitude removes the individual from - or has a tendency to remove the individual from - the immediacy of the numinous moment; from a personal, direct, and most importantly wordless, experience of The Numen, imposing as this attitude does some causal structure on such numinous moments, and which structure depends on collocations of words, with such

words denoting only that-which is causal. This imposition is most evident in attempts to explain and to reform or to replace those ritual observances which have evolved naturally from such immediate numinous moments as become shared by small communities of adherents of a particular Way.

A good illustration of this process is the Latin Tridentine Mass of the Catholic Church. This Mass evolved over a certain period of causal time, and became, for many Catholics, the main ritual, or rite, which imbued their ordinary lives with a certain numinosity - a certain awareness of the sacred, with attendance at this rite involving certain customs, such as modest and clean dress, and women covering their heads with a veil. This rite was, in essence, a *Mysterium* - that is, it embodied not only something holy and somewhat mysterious (such as the Consecration and Communion) but also was wordlessly un-mundane and so re-presented to most of those attending the rite, almost another world, with this re-presentation aided by such things as the use of incense, the ringing of the Sanctus bell, and the genuflexions. In addition, and importantly, the language of this rite was not that of everyday speech, and was not even, any longer, a living changing language, but rather had in many ways become the sacred language of that particular Way.

The Catholic rite endured for centuries and, indeed, to attend this particular rite marked, affirmed and re-affirmed one as a Catholic, as a particular follower of a particular Way, and a Way quite distinct from the schism that became Protestantism [4], a fact which explained, for instance, the decision, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First of England, to punish by fine or imprisonment those who attended this rite, and to persecute, accuse of treason, and often execute, those who performed this rite.

However, the reforms imposed by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican replaced this numinous rite, this *Mysterium*, with rites and practices redolent of un-numinous Protestantism. Why? Most probably because those involved in such planning and producing and implementing such reforms were swayed by the causal abstractions of "progress" and "relevancy" - desiring as they did and do to be in accord with the causal, material, *Zeitgeist* of the modern West where numbers of adherents, and conformity to trendy ideas and theories, are regarded as more important than presencing The Numen in a numinous manner. When, that is, some profane causal abstractions come to be regarded as more relevant than experiencing and manifesting the sacred as the sacred.

Yet this does not mean that Catholicism, before the reforms imposed by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, was or remained a Way, *per se*. Only that, of all the variants of what are now termed Christianity, it retained a

certain numinosity expressed by the original Way; that, through its Mysteries such as the Tridentine Mass, it still presented something of The Numen; and that it managed to avoid the worst excesses of the religious attitude, maintaining as it did a monasticism which by its own particular way of life encouraged the cultivation of a genuine, non-dogmatic, humility.

For the truth is that all conventional Ways, through becoming organized, and through their expansion, devolve to being religious attitudes - that is, they lose the immediacy of the numinous moment in their reliance on and reverence for texts, and allow causal abstractions to blur the distinction between sacred and profane, especially in relation to the personal behaviour - the standards - of individuals.

This is so because a causal organization (such as a central or centralized authority and the hierarchy that goes with it) by its very nature depends on abstractions, such as dogma, the codification of standards, the promulgation of edicts dealing with such matters as personal behaviour and personal goals, and the setting forth of penalties for failure to obey such authority. For instance, justification has to be found for such authority, and for the creation and maintenance of such hierarchy as are necessary for the commands of such authority to be promulgated and executed. And it is in such matters that texts, and their interpretation, their exegesis, become of great importance.

Expansion requires that such authority be maintained, and encompass those expanded to, as such expansion naturally leads to schism, given the past and the current nature of human beings. For it is and has been in the nature of human beings to place pursuit of causal things before a desire to not commit *ὑβρις*. And it is this desire not to commit *ὑβρις* that is perhaps the foremost manifestation, in human beings, of the immediacy of the numinous moment, and which Mysteries presence, thus enabling individuals to re-connect with, to feel, the numinous when they partake in and of such Mysteries.

Furthermore, it this understanding of the necessity of avoiding *ὑβρις* - the need to cultivate a natural, a human, balance - that is and has been the essence of all Ways, of all presencings of The Numen.

Hubris, Humility, and The Avoidance of Abstractions

As outlined elsewhere [5] the avoidance of *ὑβρις* is manifest in humility, and which humility is a dignified and balanced way of living which has its genesis in that supra-personal perspective which awareness of the numinous provides,

and which awareness of The Numen *πάθει μάθος* often produces.

However, as succinctly expressed in an ancient Greek saying attributed to Heraclitus - *Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ* [6]. That is, there is a natural tendency for the balance that is *Φύσις* to become concealed, again, and again.

How, then, to avoid such a concealment, to avoid a return to abstractions, a return to that causal, mundane, perspective of profane and linear cause-and-effect? Or, expressed somewhat differently, is it possible for a Way to remain a Way and thus to continue to presence The Numen without devolving to become a religious attitude?

I believe it is, were such a Way to be founded upon the personal, the numinous, the individual, authority of *πάθει μάθος* and not upon the thinking or the revelation or the authority (real or assumed) of some individual, and were such a Way as well to make a personal knowing and awareness of the numinous the essence of apprehending The Numen.

It is my contention that such a Way as this is may be incipiently manifest in what I have termed The Numinous Way; that is, in what is otherwise called the Esoteric Philosophy of The Numen. For, in The Numinous Way, the essence of apprehending The Numen is the individual, the personal, faculty of empathy, as well as an acknowledgement of the numinous authority of *πάθει μάθος* [7].

Furthermore, such a Way as this cannot devolve into a religious attitude - into a conventional religion - for two quite simple reasons.

First, because the essence of *πάθει μάθος* is that

"... knowledge - and thus learning, based on such knowledge - is personal, direct, acquired in the immediacy of a living, a lived-through, moment of one's own mortal life. For the religious way, knowledge - and thus learning, based on such knowledge - can be and has been contained in something other-than-ourselves which we have to or which we can learn from: something impersonal, some abstraction, such as a book, a dogma, a creed, some Institution, some teacher or master..." [8]

Second, because empathy by its very nature cannot ever be abstracted out

from the immediacy-of-the-moment, from the realness of a personal a direct, interaction between individuals. This is because empathy is living, and thus already possessed of the acausal, and, being a natural faculty, empathy arises only in and through - is present in - such a direct, personal contact with another living being. Thus, it cannot be expressed in any causal abstraction; it cannot, being living, be contained in any book or books; it cannot be described or contained within any dogma or creed. It can only be experienced, and known, and cultivated, by each and every individual, directly, and always remains a part of them, a part of their life, of their living.

For there are, in this simple Numinous Way, no texts; no appeals to authority; no dogma; not even any need or requirement for supra-personal authority or supra-personal organization. Instead, there is the immediacy-of-the-numinous-moment, brought by the faculty of empathy and its development, and thence the avoidance of ὕβρις by the cultivation of compassion and personal honour, virtues which arise naturally, unaffectedly, from such empathy. Or rather, virtues which are the practical and natural manifestations of such empathy.

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Notes:

[1] See, for example, my essay *Exegesis, and The Discovery of Wisdom*, above.

[2]

ὡς ἔπραξεν ὡς ἔκρανεν. οὐκ ἔφα τις
θεοῦς βροτῶν ἀξιοῦσθαι μέλειν
ἔσοις ἀθίκτων χάρις
πατοῖθ': ὁ δ' οὐκ εὐσεβής
Aesch. Ag 369-373

"Someone denied that the gods deem it worthy to concern themselves with mortals who trample upon what, being untouchable, brings delight. But such persons show no proper respect."

[3] Also known as The Philosophy of The Numen, and as The Esoteric Philosophy of The Numen. The Numen is the source of all being, and which being is both causal and acausal. Thus, there are causal beings, acausal beings, and beings possessed of, or manifesting, both causal and acausal

being. See, for example, *Acausality, Phainomenon, and The Appearance of Causality*, and also *Life and The Nature of the Acausal*.

[4] Catholicism (before the reforms imposed by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican) represented, in my view, the original Way known as Christianity, and was - at least before those reforms - quite distinct from those schisms which are now known as Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, distinct enough - until those reforms - to be considered a different Way of Life, a Way evident, for example, in Catholic rites (such as the Tridentine Mass), in monasticism, in Papal authority, in the use of Latin, and in the reverence accorded The Blessed Virgin Mary.

Furthermore, it is my view that the schism now termed Protestantism was a classic example of the religious attitude predominating over numinosity - and thus that it is and was redolent of attempts to reduce The Numen to linear causal abstractions. Thus, Mysteriums such as the Tridentine Mass became replaced with recitation of Scripture in the vernacular and with attempts to rationally explain - according to some abstract causal theory - the mystery of the consecration.

[5] In *Humility, Abstractions, and Belief*.

[6] I have tried to elucidate the correct meaning of this often mis-understood fragment, attributed to Heraclitus, in my essay *Physis, Nature, Concealment, and Natural Change*.

[7] For example, see my *From Aeschylus To The Numinous Way - The Numinous Authority of πάθει μάθος*

[8] op.cit
