

## Guide to “The Truth...Proper to Religion” by Daniel Guerriere

### Quick Summary:

1. **Phenomenology as the preferred approach (versus speculative philosophy of religion)**
2. **Definition of religion:** Religion is the hope that an Other will remedy what we cannot, and allows us to be. **Salvation** is the term for this hoped for remedy, the power to cure our iniquity. **Philosophy** can only project this event and this Power as the solution to **the fundamentally existential problem**; philosophy cannot say whether the solution actually takes place (78). The philosopher is not in a position, as philosopher, to make such a judgment. Only from the standpoint of an experience of this salvational power can such a judgment be made. For others to judge this, is also not in their competence. This is not about a relation between two finite beings. But rather, a salvational experience of Love of/from an Absolute Other. For religion to be is: To acknowledge our condition of iniquity, our need for a salvational power and the hope for this. If this does appear in experience, to acknowledge it as what it is, to let it do its proper work, indeed to celebrate it. According to religions, this condition of iniquity (selfish, limited) is universal. To become a self, to act at all, to desire is to fall into sin (original sin), to take on karma, to set the condition for suffering. Any experience is an experience of the unity of subject and object. In religious experience, this unity of object and subject at its direct experiential core is **Love**. **Salvational Power** must have two characteristic: Must be personal and must be atemporal. Salvational Power is the power-of- Renewal... . God is that my past will not destroy me, the power of regeneration. God is that-love-will-not-fail.

### 3. TRUTH PROPER TO RELIGION

In what sense, if any, **is religion or a religion true?** Truth as **Aletheia**, unconcealment or manifestness in experience. Only prephilosophical experience can affirm a salvational Power...the so-called proofs for the existence of God actually presuppose an experience of the Power and **CANNOT** be the starting point of inquiry. This question can only be approached existentially, starting with the possible experience itself. This is not about an understanding of a relation between two finite beings. But rather, a salvational experience of Love of/from an Absolute Other whose possibility is revealed in symbols. Symbols have a double meaning. They reveal the sacred and hide it.

Understanding the truth proper to religion by contrast to its opposite, nontruth, and its contrary, untruth.

- A. **Truth and Nontruth: Religious truth** (aletheia or manifestness) happens within limits and degrees in its relation to nontruth. Nontruth of religion would be the profane, the overt, homogenous space as opposed to the sacred that is hidden, only manifest through symbols and in experience that is transformative.
- B. **Truth and Untruth:** Speculative arguments fail, agnosticism and antitheism fail (**See Part 4 below**)

**Conclusion:** The test of whether an experience is not true does not become evident by any a priori denial of a possible salvational Power. *It becomes evident in a critical reflection on experience according to the criterion for the truth proper to religion.* The untruth of a religious experience is not the conclusion of an atheistic speculation. But it may well be the conclusion of a rigorous examination of concrete experience. **Nontheism** neither affirms nor denies the truth of religion; it maintains a **modest silence**. Agnosticism which imputes this modesty to itself and antitheism, which would impose an aggressive silence, are uncritical and untenable. In the end, the **only tenable positions are theism and nontheism: critical experience and the lack of it.**

As a possibility for human decision, religion is the possibilization of man. That a salvational Power would advent to make the fulfillment of human beings possible beyond their condition of iniquity is the truth of religion. But does the Power indeed become manifest? Is religion true? Philosophy cannot decide and phenomenology maintains a modal (possibilistic) neutrality. (**As usual with philosophy, many insights are achieved in this article, inadequate views are undermined and eliminated, but we arrive at nothing beyond our insights, “a modal neutrality.”**)

A religion is an experience of salvation and of the implications of it (proclamation, etc). At its simplest, religion is—given interpretation of the relevant symbols—**the life lived as if love and not evil were invincible**. That is why those who profess a religion may be falsely religious and those who do not may be truthfully religious.

## LONGER SUMMARY

### Overview

In what sense are religions true? Key to this study is truth understood as “Aletheia.” Aletheia is a Greek word that literally means unconcealed. In this sense truth is understood as what is manifest or shows up, appears or is revealed in experience. So the question is what “manifestness” is proper to religion? To see why religion must be approached this way requires seeing what is most essential to religion. The answer is that it is a kind of experience. So we will need to look carefully at what kind of experience it is that distinguishes it.

### Four main issues:

Essence of religion that will provide the guideline for the question and order of the questions about the truth proper to religion.

Essence of religious truth

Truth and nontruth

Truth and untruth

Two approaches to philosophy of religion: speculative and phenomenological. The only **proper approach** to begin to understand an experience is to carefully examine the concrete experience rather than discuss abstractions about it. One can increasingly use abstraction afterwards to further elucidate the phenomenon and its features.

**Phenomenology** in general reveals or is a recognition of the **basic feature of experience**: the mutual implication of subjectivity and objectivity. Consciousness is invariably consciousness of objects (understood as anything that shows up as distinguishable in experience), and objects are always for consciousness. There is a prior unity in which subjectivity and objectivity can arise, namely intentionality. **To express this basic feature of experience with regard to religious experience: a religious object (or other) appears as the ultimate, ambiguous something that evokes the deepest sense of value or worth and complete non dependence on anything. The subject as an identity or unity of consciousness for whom or to which this "other" appears in some interpretively determinate way. This other appears as the sovereign power of salvation and the subject appears as the quest-to-be who needs this other in order to be. (p. 76). This unity of object and subject at its direct experiential core is Love.**  
Onto-phenomenology (phenomenology with reference to Being)

#### PART 1:

##### Essence of Religion: Religion as Remedy, Remedy as a Salvational Power

Religion is a fact. What distinguishes this phenomenon from all others? Phenomenologically, what are the necessary features of the religious subject and of his correlative object or other?

What is religion's way of being that distinguishes it from other phenomena? Why does religion arise? What makes it possible and universal?? It is a response. A response to what?

Answer: A response to the question of the possibility of our being the self whom we have been given to be. Our endeavor and our desire is to be. Can we reach our selfhood, our Being? This is not a speculative question we pose about some object, but a fundamentally *existential* question that precedes all such speculative questions. A fundamental feature of experience is the *vulnerability to our non being*. **Evil** is whatever militates against our possibility to be, to become, to grow. It is whatever would destroy our nature, our aliveness, vitality: being, becoming, growing. **Suffering** militates against our possibility to grow, while **death** culminates suffering as the possibility of our impossibility. Suffering is also the test of our possibility to grow and death may be its final test. This is in the form of *evil* we undergo and evil we undertake, evil suffered and evil done. The evil we suffer culminates in death. If this openness to our nothingness could not kill us or kill our desire to live, whatever we suffer would be tolerable. It would be no fundamental threat to our Being.

Evil I suffer can be addressed by other means than religion (psychotherapy, medicine, politics). But **the evil I do** is the specific problem to which religion arises as the response (is also the Socratic problem). "the condition into which man puts himself by the evil that he does is impossible for man to remedy." (Buddhism?) To do evil is to act in such a way that the principle of one's own action (to be, to grow) is to make oneself or another not be. (77) Once we fail to be, we can no longer to that extent, be. To not be, to do evil, is to not be our Being. Once we have lost ourselves we can no longer be ourselves. Our past is now beyond our power. (versus Nietzsche). We are in a position we cannot remedy. According to religions, this condition of iniquity (selfish, limited) is universal. To become a self, to act at all, to desire is to fall into sin (original sin), to take on karma, to set the condition for suffering.

If being were merely being alive then death would be the end. To be dead would be to no longer be. But it is impossible to prove that selfhood reduces to organism. If selfhood does not reduce to aliveness, to organism, then one's self remains damaged fallen and death makes it impossible to recover, by dying the self will never reach his Being due to the evil he has done to himself and others (action that impedes our or others endeavor and desire to be, become, grow).

**Religion** is the hope that an Other will remedy what we cannot, and allows us to be. **Salvation** is the term for this hoped for remedy, the power to cure our iniquity. **Philosophy** can only project this event and this Power as the solution to **the fundamentally existential problem**; philosophy cannot say whether the solution actually takes place (78). The philosopher is not in a position, as philosopher, to make such a judgment. Only from the standpoint of an experience of this salvational power can such a judgment be made. For others to judge this, is also not in their competence. This is not about an understanding a relation between two finite beings. But rather, a salvational experience of Love of/from an Absolute Other.

A minimal philosophical definition of religion is made possible by the preceding investigation:

- 1) To acknowledge our condition of iniquity, our need for a salvational power and the hope for this
- 2) If this does appear in experience, to acknowledge it as what it is, to let it do its proper work, indeed to celebrate it

This definition excludes any particular features associated with historical religions but is not proper to religion, for example, a particular social structure or even a particular moral code. **The religious is the salvational** however it may appear concretely. (This is now an example of how we attempt to minimize abstractions and then only apply them after a phenomenological description. If done this way, it increases our understanding of the phenomenal experience, is existential. If abstraction either imported into the phenomena prematurely any more than necessary due to habits of language and interpretation or any attempt is made to reduce phenomena to objects of theoretical study, then the phenomenon itself will not emerge and abstractions will build on abstractions taking us further and further away from the experience. This may be appropriate in some contexts for example in science where the goal is precisely to distance oneself from an isolated identified object, regardless of subjectivity of lived experience, in order to explain and predict events (events are themselves abstracted from the flow of temporality as if they are discrete and fundamentally

measurable). When one is attempting to understand experience or a particular kind of experience, such a method is not just inappropriate but inhibits understanding in the attempt to explain (hence the recognition that explanation is only a species of understanding that is not always appropriate and can impede or prevent understanding). One must approach anything to be understood on its own terms so to speak. Any abstracted object or event is or can be amenable to theoretical explanation. Lived meaningful experience is not such an object. Human experience is fundamentally interpretive and it is the condition of any objectivity at all. It must be approached phenomenologically and hermeneutically on its own terms.

Given the philosophical definition arrived at of religious or salvational experience that cannot be confirmed or denied by philosophy, nonetheless philosophy can articulate the necessary structures of any POSSIBLE salvational Power and of the experience of its work or effect.

**Salvational Power** must have two characteristics:

1. **Must be personal**, and basic to this, must be loving. For to save man would be to let him be, let him be himself, his Being. To-let-be is the very definition of love. Whatever else it is, love is the promotion of the active affirmation of the person. To love is to will the person (myself or another) according to his proper Possibility; it is to allow him to be what he already-is-but-not-yet; it is to realize the person in his uniqueness and communality; it is to let him be his own destiny.. Since love is proper to persons, the salvational power would be a personal power. (79)
2. Any possible salvational power would be **transcendent to time**. For, if he is to undo the human past, if he is to reconstitute man, then he must be such that the past of mankind is presently available to him, is present for him. He must be in such a way that past and present are one for his experience. To be in this way is to be **nontemporal**.

**Only prephilosophical experience can affirm a salvational Power...**the so-called proofs for the existence of God actually presuppose an experience of the Power and **CANNOT** be the starting point of inquiry.

#### **EXPERIENCE OF THE SALVATIONAL POWER**

**SYMBOLS:** (80-81) How does God enter into human experience? Since God is atemporal, to appear in time in concrete human experience God must appear as not-itself. That is precisely the structure of a symbol: the indirect appearance of something, the ambiguous presence of a phenomenon. A symbol is a double sense whose first overt sense both reveals and conceals the second covert sense. Salvational Power is only available this way. A symbol is an inseparable double sense, a phenomenon that presents itself as not itself. (versus an appearance) (80) Appearance is nothing more than what appears, a symbol is more than its appearance. The atemporal salvational power would appear in experience only symbolically but also personally. It would not appear as an object, something that can be appropriated, something definitely temporal. A person is not merely a body, an object for others or himself. An object submits or resists, a person solicits and respects both the other and himself. A person is himself to the extent that he allows other to be themselves. His presence is a co-presence. (see Russon) Hence I experience other persons to the extent that their presence is evocative and affirmative of mine and to the extent that my presence is evocative and affirmative of theirs. What does this import for the salvational power? Two Poles: What is at his disposal? What is at my disposal?

What is at **his disposal**: The experience of a salvational Power would be: Despite my finitude... I can become who I am. Despite the condition of iniquity, my future will not be simply determined by my past, my future is not wholly vulnerable to my failure to be myself and thus to do-be. (Russon) The experience of the salvational Power would be the realization that the process of my humanization need not end in failure. Definition of the salvational Power: that-my-future-need-not-be-my-frustration. It can be defined only as a presence that evokes and respects me. The co-project that I am flawed though it be, is not vain today for the utterly new is already here God is that my-tomorrow-can-ever-be-new: he is the power-of- Renewal... . God is that my past will not destroy me, the power of regeneration. God is that-love-will-not-fail: the power of love ever beside me. (82)

**A salvational Power is nothing if he does not "appear" as the power-of-our-better-Future... it may well be that we lack such an experience.** The lack is not the counter experience. God is: despair is a lie.

**\*\*What is at my disposal**: The exp of a salvational Power presupposes that I accept the need for such a Power. For one who does not, none can appear. Only if I experience the question does the possible answer make sense.

The experience of a salvational Power is conditional upon **interpretation**. Any symbol requires interpretation or decipherment. A radiant dawn may be a cosmic event but it may also, for interpretation, be the concealed presence of the Dawn, the power-of-the-New. (82)

What is at my disposal in the exp of the salvational Power is to admit my need, to freely interpret—then to admit whatever interpretation unveils.

**THE SACRED AS THE PRIMARY RELIGIOUS SYMBOL:** The exp of the salvational Power is a symbolic and personal experience that is temporal so historical. Symbols arise, flourish, and decline. The symbols of the salvational Power—the Power's presence, active presence, activity—will be called the *sacred*. This can be almost anything: for example, the sky is a common symbol, the earth (p83). The sacred is always a figure in the field of the profane. In the West the secular is the profane as autonomous.

**Secularization** is not an antireligious experience; rather it represents the achievement of the autonomy of religious interpretation...no longer an automatic cultural involuntary; it must rather be achieved by each person in an explicit option. (83)

The sacred is the primary religious symbol and philosophy can articulate the major derivative symbols.

1. The place or condition of Salvation: For Example, Heaven as a symbol of freedom from iniquity versus
2. our present condition in the symbol of enslavement
3. Symbols of origin
  - A) Symbols of the origin of the Cosmos
  - B) symbols of the power that gave rise to it and effects the Cosmos (that also is the Salvational Power)
  - C) Symbols of the origin of evil & iniquity
  - D) Symbols of the end and reoriginative Power, power to consummate or restore wholeness to humanity (the Salvational Power)

Examples of how historical religions can be categorized in terms of these symbols:

**Compact Religion:** Does not distinguish between the origin of the cosmos and the origin of evil

**Incomplete Religion:** No symbol of Cosmogonic Power

**Both Compact & Incomplete:**

These distinctions can serve as a criterion in two kinds of judgment on religions: Their position in the process of differentiation of human experience and their explicitness as religions.

**Science of religion:** orders what it finds and finds what it orders. **Philosophy of Religion:** May explicate the criteria for judgment. Neither may institute a judgment. (84)

Such criteria provide a way to avoid sterile controversies such as can there be atheistic religion, such as Confucianism? No. Rather, Confucianism is an incomplete religion because it is a way of salvation, which implies a salvational Power, but without a symbol for this Power.

**Definition of Religion:** A double acknowledgment of the human need for a salvational Power and of the Power's work. More concretely: Religion is both 1) a tradition of a symbolic whole founded upon an **experience** of salvational Power, and 2) a tradition of praxis that **witnesses** to the experience.

**Primary Symbol:** Symbols of presence, action, or efficacy of the Power as salvational. The salvational Power, salvational condition, the present human condition, the origin of humankind and of evil, the origin of the cosmos, and the originative Power may all be symbolized **simply** or in **narrative/myth** form, or **quasi conceptual** (e.g., original sin) and may be **gestural or linguistic** form: ritual. Symbols can also be expressed in **artistic** form.

The complex of myth, rite and artwork is the focus of religiosity as witnessing as opposed to the founding experience. Such founding experience is elaborated in the political, economic and social dimensions in a culture.

1. **A religion is always cultural, a tradition of a symbolic whole founded upon an experience of salvation.**
2. Directive expectation of a way of life with an ideal of behavior. This religious praxis is the morality of that religion. **Moral codes** are the guidelines a person gives himself in his **quest for consummation**, while **religions** are the human response to the evil that **renders this consummation impossible**.

**Definition of Religion:** (86) A witnessing to and a practical articulation of a specific experience of salvation, and thus of a salvational Power in effective presence.

## PART 2: HOW IS RELIGION TRUE?

Does a salvational Power exist? Is any affirmation justifiable? Does this power appear in experience in a personal and symbolic way? Is the experience genuine? Is the nonexperience of this Power genuine? (86)

Is there a standard for the interpretation of symbols? Are the primary and derivative symbols genuine or illusory? Are the traditions, the praxis true? How? What does it mean to say a particular religion is true? Can one religion be more true than another? Is religion as a whole true?

All these questions are united in the question of the truth proper to religion. What could religious truth be? What is the essence of religious truth? How does it arise? In what way is anything religious true at all? If there is truth at all, what is proper to religious truth?

**A phenomenological Response: Aletheia**, not propositional truth in relation to an object, not coherence of a discourse. Aletheia is manifestness, what shows itself in experience, objects for an in the experience of a subject that makes the subject manifest in its unity with its objectivity, manifestness as is experience with the felt need/want to articulate it. (Experience is ontologically prior, not propositions and theories, not propositional/logical correctness or incorrectness. This always comes afterward, is not ontologically prior.

Truth is primarily the process of beings coming to manifestness, their unconcealing, the Being-process itself. Secondly, truth is the stable acquisition of what manifests in experience, in a sense, the aftermath or congealment of what happens in the moment of unconcealment. (87)

### **Primary Truth**

(p. 88): So the truth fundamental to religion would be the manifestation of the salvational Power. If such salvational Power is manifest correlative to a human intention (the basic feature of subjectivity or consciousness), then truth has taken place. Any religion is true to the extent that this Power is manifest in it. The greater the manifestation, the greater the truth. Since this manifestation must be personal, the manifestation of the sun as sacred or salvational, is less true than the self-manifestation of this Power as and through a person. The original and continuing manifestation that founds a religion is the fundamental truth of any religion. Truth is manifestation, and the fundamental religious truth is the manifestation of a Power that would resolve the **fundamental existential problem** (see above and Guerriere p. 78)

Experience is a prior unity and correlation of subjectivity and objectivity that are differentiated from this prior unity. I know myself from my objects (Russon: objects are not there in themselves, they are co-creative meanings that arise from the interpretive embodiment that the experiencing subject is. Such division into subject and object is an abstraction from the unity of experience but is not found IN experience).

**FIRST:** It is not the case that experiencing (subject) occurs on the one side and the experienced (object) on the other. Rather, my-experiencing-of-it IS its-being-experienced-by-me. There is only the experiencing-of-the-experienced: the ONE occurrence. In other words, experience is primordial. And it has two poles: experiencing-experienced. Religious experience is the human experiencing of a salvational Power experienced: One phenomenon that polarizes itself as self and Other.

**SECOND:** This ONE phenomenon may be circumscribed as sense or meaning (Husserl's Sinn). A complete subjective act is a double act, an empty and partially fulfilled intentionality. An act of consciousness intends an object through a sense; it projects toward a referent through projecting a meaning; it refers to an object through a sense that would be fulfilled by the presence of the object; it means a referent. The correlate of the complete act is the meant-object. The object, in turn, presents itself to the act as the sense that the act intends; as the meaning that fulfills the empty intention; as the fulfillment of the sense the act projects. Meaning is the mode of presentation of the object or referent. Meaning, then, is both the act of projecting (itself) and the referent presenting (itself). The acting "means" toward an object, and an object "means" for an acting. The sense, therefore, is the "synthesis" of a act and object, of intuition and evidence, of sense-giving act and sense-presenting referent. In other words, sense is that in and as which subject and object are ONE; it is the unity of projection and referent. Religious sense of meaning is the subjective projection of a salvational presence: one phenomenon with two poles. (89)

**THIRD:** This primordial phenomenon may be understood as TEMPORALITY (the living present of Husserl, or "authentic time" of Heidegger, or the kairos of St. Paul)... The subject is a fundamentally temporal process and the object is one as well. Temporality polarizes itself into correlative process: subjectivity-objectivity. Concrete time, the temporal event is not an objective event on the one side and a subjective event on the other; rather, it is a oneness that dualizes itself. Duality is not ontologically fundamental, the unity of consciousness as the reciprocal unity of subject-object. The religious **event** is the one personal process of man-and-God, the one time of the human acknowledgement of a salvational manifestation.

The threefold prior unity of subjectivity and objectivity is **the "there" of religion, as it is of everything else... there is no truth outside meaningful temporal experience.** (89)

The archaic manifestation----... (89)

### **Derivative Truths**

Based on these phenomenological features of experience and in particular, religious experience, philosophy may elaborate the major a priori propositional truths proper to religion:

1. **ORIGINAL ANNOUNCEMENT: Truth of religious proclamation:** The manifestive power of the original announcement or proclamation of the salvational experience. The experience announces itself for the sake of its own reactivation. The announcement may be more or less true, more or less adequate to the archaic or original experience. If the proclamation reactivates the original experience, then it is true to the degree that a religion genuinely does this. Since all experience is already linguistic but not reducible to language, the announcement that is religion is itself experiential/linguistic but not reducible to language. The proclamation that makes the experience manifest is a way of life that gives itself words or reversely, a discourse that communicates a way of life. **Its manifestive power is its truth.** (Hence, to pose the question of religious truth as first of all a question of religious language (as analytic philosophy of religion does) is existentially

naïve.(90) Historically, proclamation is first speech, then only afterwards scripture as the final announcement for an audience beyond the immediate one. Hence, scripture is not a separable derivative truth.

2. **TRADITION:** Manifestive Power of Tradition: The original founding experience of salvation when it become proclamation continues to activate itself as a tradition. To the extent that the proclamation is effective, a tradition arises: and the experience, announcing itself, reactivates itself. Religion is both a *tradition of a symbolic whole that communicates or proclaims the archaic or original salvational experience and a tradition of praxis that witnesses to this salvational experience*. That the tradition makes manifest the archaic experience is the “truth” of tradition. It may well have degrees of truth. The sacraments or reenactments of the sacred in myths and rituals insofar as they manifest the archaic experience and thus bring to manifestness the work of the salvational Power, are true. To do this it must have a norm which is basically the original symbols. If a religion has a scripture, this scripture serves as the norm. Scripture is the original announcement as it becomes normative tradition. So the truth proper to religious tradition has a measure.
3. **THEOLOGY:** The Manifestive Power of Theological Reflection: Tradition clarifies itself and gives itself new forms in the work of theology. Theology’s ultimate aim is to make salvational Power accessible, to renew the archaic experience. That it allows the archaic experience to become manifest—to become a meaningful temporal event in experience—is the “truth” of theology. Theology may appropriate every type of science, art criticism and philosophy in the service of its task.

**CRITERION FOR GENUINE TRUTH:** Can only be Experience see (p 82). Truth of religious experience is: something becomes unconcealed, manifest. Anything that frustrates the achievement of this manifestation is not truthful. That manifestation is: The experience of a salvational Power would be the realization that the process of my humanization need not end in failure... definition of the salvational Power: that-my-future-need-not-be-my-frustration. It can be defined only as a presence that evokes and respects me. The co-project that I am... is not vain today for the utterly new is already here God is that my-tomorrow—can-ever-be-new: he is the power-of- Renewal... . God is that my past will not destroy me, the power of regeneration. God is that-love-will-not-fail: the power of love ever beside me. (82) A salvational Power is nothing if he does not “appear” as the power-of-our-better-Future... it may well be that we lack such an experience. The lack is not the counter experience. God is: despair is a lie.

The true makes it possible to continue the dialogue. Leads somewhere opens a future eliminates frustrations and inconsistencies. Truth can be distinguished from untruth by its **fruitfulness** (92). A continuation of the original experiential dialectic. **Human existence is made new by salvational presence.**

#### CLARIFICATION OF THE TRUTH PROPER TO RELIGION BY CONTRAST TO ITS OPPOSITE, NONTRUTH, AND ITS CONTRARY, UNTRUTH

##### Part 3: Truth and Nontruth

**Religious truth (aletheia or manifestness) happens within limits and degrees in its relation to nontruth.**

**The finitude of truth makes possible the degrees of religious truth. Philosophy can explicate these possibilities; only self-critical experience can investigate the concrete religions be the basis for the judgment of its degrees of truth.**

**Philosophical reflection can also abstract or project the highest degree of religious truth, its most intense degree of manifestation of power for salvation: 1) It would be ecumenical or universal and inexhaustible, that in principle may subsume all other and at once remain open for an indefinite development in depth (and manifestation). 2) It would be personal in some way, perhaps even a single person. 3. It would be unique, stands out most from its background. Has the highest sacred, the greatest degree of religious truth, ever become concrete in history? Philosophy can only explicate the criteria for judgment; it cannot render that judgment.**

The original manifestation of the salvational Power is finite in three ways:

1. Any symbol of the sacred is only in *contrast to the profane* that surrounds it. The truth of the salvational experience is revealed only in this finite context.
2. Every symbol is a symbol only as the manifestation of a **covert** Power *in* it. It is manifest *as and through* the **overt** phenomenon (symbol of the cross, Star of David, regenerating sun, etc). The manifestation is the *overt image* in contrast to the *covert or hidden original*. Hierophany is the appearance of the sacred Power, *in/as/through* the manifestation as finite. It is known only by its power, the work and effect of renewal that this power brings or evokes. The mere overt phenomenon has no power of renewal in itself, nor does the experiencing subject (person) of such renewal on his own. Example: the symbol of the cosmic sun is the nontruth that camouflages the reliable power-of-Regeneration.
3. Every symbol is a symbol only as the manifestation of a Power that is hidden: **lethe**. The truth, **aletheia**, is the truth of the nontruth, **lethe**. The truth for man is always determinate (see Russon) and thus finite. But the Lethe, as the concealed, is indeterminate. As determinate, as opposed to the Lethe/indeterminate or nontruth, truth is finite; and the hiddenness of the Power, the Lethe, is the nontruth of determinate truth (93).  
The truth, aletheia, is the finite determinate truth of the nontruth, the Lethe/hidden/indeterminate.

The truth of religion happens within the nontruth, as the nontruth, and out of the nontruth. For example, the religious truth of Christianity is NOT the cross. The cross is a profane, ordinary, image that can be captured in its definition: two intersecting perpendicular lines. It is simply a cross that is manifest. It manifests nothing but itself. Nothing is manifest in/as/through it. However, **as evocative symbol**, it has a double meaning. The cross is the hierophany, the appearance of the sacred, the aletheia of the salvational Power that is revealed in finite determinate presence in/as/through the image of cross. Remember that ANYTHING can be or become an evocative symbol of the sacred, of evil, of origin.

The threefold nontruth proper to religion—the profane, the overt, and the Lethe—is the condition for the possibility of **degrees of truth**:

1. The power that remains hidden or concealed is more powerful than any particular manifestation. The fact that it remains hidden indicates that its fullness is never present in human experience. On that basis, one archaic manifestation may be more manifestive, more true, than another. Manifestness may have degrees of adequacy to what is hidden (Lethe). We cannot claim to have exhausted the resources of this Power; but we may make judgments about comparative adequacy and about the nonfinality of the manifestation that serves as the standard for the comparison.
2. The image, the overt phenomenon that presents the covert power, may be more or less appropriate to what is to be manifest. If the salvational Power be personal, then a non personal image is less appropriate than a personal one. [Images or symbols of Jesus, the Buddha, Krishna are more appropriate?]
3. The more a symbolic image differentiates itself from the profane, the more truthful [examples?]

#### Part 4 Truth and Untruth

Contrary of religious truth is religious falsity.

Given truth and non truth, philosophy may a priori distinguish three kinds of untruth.

Falsity for religion: degrees of truth/manifestness

Falsity in religion: function of the limitation or finitude of manifestness

Falsity of religion: a function of the possibility of manifestness itself

In each case as with truth, falsity is a matter of EXPERIENCE, manifestness, aletheia. Religious falsity arises from an inadequate human approach to the correlative objective presence. It arises in uncritical experience: experiencing that is unaware of its own limits correlative to the experienced with regard to the degrees of manifestness, the finitude of manifestness and the possible manifestness itself.

- 1. Falsity for Religion:** The threefold *nontruth* proper to religion (the profane, the overt, and the lethe) is the condition for the possibility of degrees of truth. (95)
  - A. One may be uncritical with regard to the ***distinction of the sacred and the profane***.
    - 1) ***Fetishism***: takes the profane as if it were the sacred.
    - 2). ***Infidelity or paganism*** when the response is uncritical in that it does not find the sacred at issue within the profane.
  - B. One may be uncritical in regard to the ***appropriateness of the overt to the covert***.
    - 1) ***Overinterpretation***: Takes the overt to be more revelatory than it is and to that extent **substitutes** the overt for the covert. Religious experience then becomes ***idolatry***.
    - 2) ***Underinterpretation***: Takes the overt to be less revelatory than it is and to that extent ignores the covert; religious experience then becomes ***impiety***.
  - C. Adequacy of the manifestation of the Lethe.
    - 1) ***Gnosticism or presumption***: takes the manifestation to be more expressive of the Lethe than it is
    - 2) ***Meiosis or laxity***: takes the manifestation to be less expressive

Thus for religion truth is not easy to secure (95) It always lies between fetishism and infidelity, between idolatry and impiety, and between presumption and laxity.

- 2. Falsity in Religion:** Arises in function of the finitude of truth (the arrogance of finitude). In the estimation that a particular religion has of itself, untruth is the failure to recognize the limits of truth. Falsity may lie in the archaic experience itself, in the proclamation of the experience, in the tradition of the proclamation, or in the theology of the tradition. In religion,
  - A.** the falsity proper to the ***archaic experience*** is ***enthusiasm***, religious experience that takes itself to be more full-of-God than it is. It does not recognize its own limitation and hence authenticity; **IT IS TRUTH FORGETFUL OF ITS FINITUDE.**
  - B.** the falsity proper to ***proclamation*** is ***disloyalty***, proclamation that differs from and does not recognize its source, the archaic experience, and thus its own limitation; **IT IS TRUTH DEFIANT OF ITS FINITUDE.**
  - C.** the falsity proper to ***tradition*** is ***heterodoxy***, tradition that presents itself in one instance or another as more proclamatory than the rest of itself—does not fit right with the acceptances (*doxai*) that define the tradition as a whole, does not recognize the extent of orthodoxy and thus its own limitation: **IT IS TRUTH IMPATIENT OF ITS FINITUDE.**
  - D.** the falsity proper to ***theology*** is ***ideology***, theology that presumes itself to be more comprehensive than it is, that does not recognize the other theologies that show the limitation of its own truth; **IT IS TRUTH PROUD OF ITS FINITUDE.**

Thus in religion truth is no easy to secure. Truth in a particular religion would be authenticity in experience, loyalty in proclamation, orthodoxy in tradition, and criticism in theology. It is always to be achieved NEGATIVELY, through suspicion about enthusiasm, denunciation of disloyalty, definition of orthodoxy, and vigilance against ideology. POSITIVELY, truth in religion is always to be achieved by total attention (meditation or even mysticism) in archaic experience, constant reversion to the source of proclamation, preventive patience in tradition, and modesty in theology.

**3.Falsity of Religion (see Taliafero):** Religion in general may be untrue.; the manifestness proper to religion may be a pseudo manifestness, a *pure subjective projective* (e.g., Hume, Feuerbach, Marx, Freud, Russell, Rorty, etc.) (Nietzsche? Buddhism? Confucianism? Taoism?). In that case,

- A. the archaic experience of salvation would be illusion;
- B. proclamation would be fraud
- C. tradition would be superstition
- D. Theology would be mystification

(For and in religion these would be respectively: unbelief, skepticism, secularism, and indifference).  
Is religion true or false? In speculative terms: Does god exist?

p. 97: **The crux is whether there is an experience of salvational. The truth or falsity of religion is a question of experience.** It is not a question of argumentation that starts with non-God and concludes to God. After all, arguments are arguments about experience; they begin with it, clarify it, and end for the sake of it. That is to say, the speculative arguments for the existence of God presuppose religious experience and only subsequently clarify it (in terms of Being of some equivalent thereof.) **Experience alone counts.**

Syllogism:

Major Premise: Being (Good, Form, the One, the eternal, infinite, etc)

Minor premise: Being if and only if God (problematic)

Conclusion: God

Being and the salvational Power are identical in that they are both eternal, and eternity can only be one.

**Main problem with such speculative arguments:** Presuppose something quite tenuous: religious experience. An argument for God that starts outside experience can never conclude to its content (God). Only an experiencing can reach, in a factual way, an experienced. It is in the experience that we have the conclusion God exists that makes the argument unnecessary. However, some people challenge the experience. Hence the experience demands a reflection that defends it and even confirms it. This reflection may be called either fundamental theology or religious philosophy. (98)

Is the experience illusory?

Speculative arguments about theism or atheism **obscure** the relevant argumentation. They start with non-God then try to argue to the conclusion of theism or atheism. Genuine argumentation with regard to the salvational Power begins with an announced experience, this is challenged, and is followed by the attempt to defend or confirm. It begins with Theism (affirmation of the salvational Power). Then the challenge progresses from nontheism to agnosticism to antitheism.

**ONLY TWO POSSIBLE POSITIONS:** THEISM: from an experience. NONTHEISM: from lack of an experience

**Theism:** affirms an experiential God. **Nontheism** indicates lack of an experience thus absence of an affirmation.

98: Most of us are nontheists most of the time; even those highly conscious of their religious commitments do not usually experience salvational Power.. To interpret the sacred in the profane is an uncommon act. So the lack of an experience is unobjectionable. But the lack of an experience is not the same as the experience of a lack. Some nontheists, however, go beyond nontheism and interpret their lack of an experience as either agnosticism or antitheism.

**Agnosticism** is the interpretive claim by one who lacks an experience of the salvational Power that NOBODY CAN experience what he does not. This is the universalization of one lack of experience. "It is impossible to know if there is God or not." The refutation is the report that someone else **has** the experience or even **could** have it. The agnostic has two choices: Acknowledge that his one lack of experience is not normative and hence he must revert to nontheism.

**Antitheism:** is the interpretive claim by one who lacks an experience of the salvational Power that everyone must experience a lack, the categorical denial of any power for salvation and of any experiencing of it. "God does not exist." Critique: antitheism is nontheism become militant (New Atheists). The refutation is the report that someone else **has** the experience or even **could** have it. The challenge is that the theist has an illusion.

The antitheist argument is built as it must be on an experience. One experiential content must be judged illusory only on the basis of another that is judged to be incompatible with the first. Standard arguments use the experience of **EVIL** or of **FREEDOM**. How is it possible for an all good God to allow evil? How is it possible that I could have freedom if God is all powerful and all knowing?

As a syllogism:

Evil/Freedom exist (are experienced).

God is incompatible with evil/freedom

Therefore, God is non-existent

THEISM: from an experience. NONTHEISM: from lack of an experience (explain why: p. 97-100) So this starts with experience. But antitheist must deny EXACTLY what the theist affirms. Problem is that he does not. Rather, he only denies a God who is incompatible with evil/freedom. The theist agrees this argument is valid. But the theist does not claim that God is compatible with evil. As authentically religious he knows that no system of God and evil or freedom is possible. His salvational Power is neither compatible nor incompatible with evil or freedom; and he must maintain a **modest silence**.

The antitheist argument presupposes a complete knowledge of "God" and of evil in order to deny one on the basis of the other, to know they are definitively incompatible. However, God who is completely knowable is not LETHE, whom the theist affirms. Furthermore, the claim to totally comprehend evil is presumptuous in the extreme: nobody understands evil completely. Ironically, in denying the divine, the antitheist must claim for himself a kind of "divine omniscience." Hence, the antitheist argument fails.

What remains is experience.

What about illusion? That is determined according to the criterion for truth: **fruitfulness**. If a salvational presence makes itself effective for a person who thereby deepens in personhood, then the religion founded upon and continued in this manifestation is, to that extent true. The test of whether an experience is not true does not become evident by any a priori denial of a possible salvational Power. *It becomes evident in a critical reflection on experience according to the criterion for the truth proper to religion.* The untruth of a religious experience is not the conclusion of an atheistic speculation. But it may well be the conclusion of a rigorous examination of concrete experience. **Nontheism** neither affirms nor denies the truth of religion; it maintains a **modest silence**. Agnosticism which imputes this modesty to itself and antitheism, which would impose an aggressive silence, are uncritical and untenable. In the end, the only tenable positions are theism and nontheism: critical experience and the lack of it.

As a possibility for human decision, religion is the possibilization of man. That a salvational Power would advent to make the fulfillment of human beings possible beyond their condition of iniquity is the truth of religion.

But does the Power indeed become manifest? Is religion true? Philosophy as such, cannot decide: phenomenology maintains a modal (possibilistic) neutrality.

A religion is an experience of salvation and of the implications of it (proclamation, etc). At its simplest, religion is—given interpretation of the relevant symbols—***the life lived as if love and not evil were invincible***. That is why those who profess a religion may be falsely religious and those who do not may be truthfully religions.

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