THREE

The Religion of Maturity

A PERSON of twenty, thirty, or even seventy, years of age does not necessarily have an adult personality. In fact, chronological age is a comparatively poor measure of mental and emotional maturity, likewise of religious maturity. In emerging from childhood one gives up the egocentricism of his thought and feeling only under pressure, and ordinarily environmental pressure does not force a maturity of religious outlook upon the individual as inexorably as it does other forms of maturity. For the individual's religion is usually regarded by others as his own business and, so far as others care, can easily remain egocentric, magical, and wish-fulfilling. Hence, in probably no region of personality do we find so many residues of childhood as in the religious attitudes of adults.

Maturity in any sentiment comes about only when a growing intelligence somehow is animated by the desire that this sentiment shall not suffer arrested development, but shall keep pace with the intake of relevant experience. In many people, so far as the religious sentiment is concerned, this inner demand is absent. Finding their childhood religion to have comforting value and lacking outside pressure, they cling to an essentially juvenile formulation. Often they retain

it to preserve pleasant associations accumulated in childhood, or because conformity to the *status quo* insures present comfort and social position. They take over the ancestral religion much as they take over the family jewels. It would be awkward to bring it into too close a relationship with science, with suffering, and with criticism.

Nor shall we gauge the maturity of religion by a predetermined standard of belief or practice that we personally are pleased to approve. To say that your views or my views are mature, and to impose them as a test of maturity upon all other views would be impertinent. Discussions of religion are usually marked by the assumption that the beliefs of the writer are superior to all other varieties of belief.

The criteria of maturity should be more objective, drawn from a defensible theory of the nature of human personality. Elsewhere I have argued that the attributes of a mature personality are three in number.[1] First, a variety of psychogenic interests is required which concern themselves with ideal objects and values beyond the range of viscerogenic desire. Unless one escapes the level of immediate biological impulse, one's life is manifestly dwarfed and infantile. A second attribute is the ability to objectify oneself, to be reflective and insightful about one's own life. The individual with insight sees himself as others see him, and at certain moments glimpses himself in a kind of cosmic perspective. A developed sense of humor is an aspect of this second attribute. Finally, a mature personality always has some unifying philosophy of life, although not necessarily religious in type, nor articulated in words, nor entirely complete. But without the direction and coherence supplied by some dominant integrative pattern any life seems fragmented and aimless.

These three attributes of maturity are not selected in an

[1] G. W. Allport. *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1937, Chapter 8.

arbitrary manner. They are chosen because they represent the three primary avenues of development that are open to any human being in the course of his growth: the avenue of widening interests (the expanding self), the avenue of detachment and insight (self-objectification), and the avenue of integration (self-unification). I doubt that any scientifically supported criteria of maturity would differ substantially from these three.

Not every mature individual forms a religious sentiment. If he does not, it is because he has some other satisfactory philosophy of life, a mode of synthesis that is perhaps aesthetic, ethical, or philosophical in character. But whenever in a mature personality a mature religious sentiment does develop it has a heavy duty to perform, for it is charged with the task of accommodating every atom of experience that is referred to it. Other master sentiments are ordinarily less ambitious in their scope. A thoroughly aesthetic person, for example, may evolve what for him is an adequate style of life. With art and humor he makes out well enough, but he does so because he declares many of the moral and metaphysical puzzles of life to be of no great consequence to him. By contrast, the mature religious sentiment lays itself open to all facts, to all values, and disvalues, and claims to have the clue to their theoretical and practical inclusion in a frame of life. With such a task to perform it is impossible for this sentiment in a mature stage of development to remain disconnected from the mainstream of experience, relegated to a corner of the fantasy life where it provides an escape clause in one's contract with reality.

Most of the criticism of religion is directed to its immature forms. When immature it has not evolved beyond the level of impulsive self-gratification. Instead of dealing with psychogenic values it serves either a wish-fulfilling or soporific function for the self-centered interests. When immature it

does not entail self-objectification, but remains unreflective, failing to provide a context of meaning in which the individual can locate himself, and with perspective judge the quality of his conduct. Finally, the immature sentiment is not really unifying in its effect upon the personality. Excluding, as it does, whole regions of experience, it is spasmodic, segmented, and even when fanatic in intensity, it is but partially integrative of the personality.

The Nature of Sentiment

When I use the term sentiment, I might equally well for our purpose speak of *interest, outlook,* or *system of beliefs.* All these terms simply call attention to the fact that in the course of development relatively stable units of personality gradually emerge. Such units are always the product of the two central and vital functions of mental life: *motivation* and *organization.* Motivation refers to the "go" of mental life, organization to its patterning. It is regrettable, as I have previously said, that our psychological vocabulary inclines us to separate the two—the emotional forces from the cognitive or organizing forces. From the point of view of actual conduct the primary unit of mental life is *organized motive,* or, if you prefer, *motivated organization.* Whatever it is called, this unit is a system of readiness, a mainspring of conduct, preparing the person for adaptive behavior whenever the appropriate stimulus or associations are presented.

If a system of readiness is well ingrained and fairly specific, such as that involved in driving an automobile, we are likely to speak of a *habit.* If it represents a somewhat broader style of adapting without reference to specific stimulus, such as dispositions leading to politeness, aggressiveness, timidity in conduct, we speak of a *trait.* If it represents a tendency dis-

connected from the individual's socialized dispositions and warring with them, we are likely to speak of a *neurosis*. If it represents an organization of feeling and thought directed toward some definable object of value—a mother, a son, a keepsake, a neighborhood, a fatherland—we call the system *sentiment*. The object of a sentiment need not be as physically concrete as those just named. A sentiment may also deal with more abstract ideas of value, as in the devotion some people have to beauty, or to the sacredness of personality, or to the idea One World. Besides such positive sentiments, there are of course negative sentiments wherein aversion is felt to persons, objects, ideas that are regarded by the individual not as values but as disvalues. Thus an atheist may have a negative sentiment relating to all things commonly regarded as religious.

At the level of the more abstract sentiments we encounter difficulty in designating the precise object to which the individual is attached. Can we prescribe, for example, what the object or focus of the religious sentiment must be? I think not, for the sentiment is so broad that it constitutes a mere posture of the mind that persists while various objects and sub-values are successively brought into view. At one moment a certain aspect of the deity may engage the individual's attention; soon he finds himself thinking of the nature of evil, and then of the chances for immortality; a moment of adoration intervenes; and then another aspect of the deity is brought to mind, which perhaps fixes attention upon the significance of some sacrament, and this in turn arouses a special attitude toward some item in the creed. And so it goes endlessly, ardor rising and falling as different objects and sub-values of the sentiment are present in the mind. It is common to find people who are much alike in some component attitudes and very unlike in others.

The astonishing thing about the religious sentiment, and

to a less degree about any sentiment, is that, although it entails many component attitudes and objects of interest, it represents nonetheless a stable unit of mental life. The component attitudes are variable but all contribute to a single well-patterned system.

Shall we then define the mature religious sentiment as a *disposition, built up through experience, to respond favorably, and in certain habitual ways, to conceptual objects and principles that the individual regards as of ultimate importance in his own life, and as having to do with what he regards as permanent or central in the nature of things*? Thus defined, the religious sentiment allows wide variation both in the human race at large and during the course of any single individual's development.

Unless we are dealing with a religious genius—Christ being the example—we must not expect that the religious sentiment, even when mature, will be absolutely consistent. More than with other sentiments, its fashioning is always unfinished business. Such a heavy assignment, the synthesis of all facts and forces "central in the nature of things," calls for more than can be accomplished. A person with even a strongly developed religious sentiment still finds that his conduct does not issue as uniformly as he wishes from its directive control. Impulse often wins out, and many of the things he would not do he does; and much that he would do he leaves undone. If the religious sentiment were perfectly organized and in sole control there would be no discrepancy between profession and practice. But, excepting in a religious genius, such a degree of integrated direction of conduct is never achieved.

While we guard against overestimating the consistency and completeness of the mature religious sentiment, we may nonetheless list the attributes that mark it off from the immature sentiment. By comparison, the mature sentiment is (1) well differentiated; (2) dynamic in character in spite of

its derivative nature; (3) productive of a consistent morality; (4) comprehensive; (5) integral; and (6) fundamentally heuristic. It will be seen that these criteria are nothing else than special applications in the religious sphere of the tests for maturity of personality: a widened range of interests, insight into oneself, and the development of an adequately embracing philosophy of life.

Differentiation of the Mature Sentiment

When we say that mature religious sentiment is differentiated we are calling attention to its richness and complexity. In any single life this sentiment is almost certain to be more complex, more subtle, and more personal in flavor, than any single definition of religion can possibly suggest. According to Westermarck, religion is "a regardful attitude towards a supernatural being, on whom man feels himself dependent and to whom he makes an appeal in his worship." And so it often is. MacMurray introduces a social note, regarding the aim of religion as human perfection in relation with others, as a realization of fellowship. Religion often has this social emphasis. But Whitehead introduces the opposite note, defining religion as "what a man does with his solitariness" and as the "longing of the spirit that the facts of existence should find their justification in the nature of existence."[2] All of these, and many additional points of emphasis are valid; but it is sheer presumption to suppose that one formulation captures the completeness or precise emphasis of the sentiment as it exists in any single mature adult.

The multiplicity of interests that fall within the religious

[2] Collections containing these and additional definitions may be found in H. A. Murray and C. D. Morgan. A clinical study of sentiments, II, *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 1945, pp. 32, 153–311; also in Edward Brightman. *Philosophy of Religion*, New York: Prentice Hall, 1940, pp. 13–18.

sentiment I designate as "differentiations" of this sentiment. It is better to do this than to regard them as myriads of separate sentiments: toward the church, toward the divine, toward world brotherhood, toward good and evil. For it is evident that these components, though discriminable, are woven into a pattern. There are dominant and subsidiary designs in this pattern characteristic of each individual's personal life.

Those who have not developed a differentiated sentiment often show a kind of uncritical abandon. They may say, "I don't know enough about it to be rational; I'm accepting my religion on purely emotional grounds," or, "I believe what I was taught, and that's good enough for me." There is here no reflective articulation of parts.

The distinction between the undifferentiated and the differentiated sentiment is illustrated by two students' descriptions of their fathers. One wrote, "Dad is a perfect father. He loves his family and his family loves him. . . . He is looked up to in all the town, highly admired. . . . He will help anyone. He is noted for his fairness and honesty. Fairness and honesty are Dad." This encomium betrays an undifferentiated sentiment. The father is just perfect, everything about him is right. The student's devotion to him is marked by such abandon that we suspect she has never made a close and analytic inspection of his character, and even that her lavish praise may cover some repressed animosity. Detailed study of this case shows this suspicion to be justified. Deep inside the girl dislikes many things about her father, though she denies this dislike even to herself. The sentiment therefore emerges as an oversimplified disposition, not well integrated with the deeper life of the subject.

Another daughter describes her father in the following way: "He is somewhat unsocial, but dramatic enough to be pleasing in company; irritable, but not at all ill-natured; conscien-

tious, hard-working, puritanical; timid in some things, dogged in others. His imagination is shown in his love of travel, but is not much in evidence otherwise." This daughter likewise approves of her father. Yet, unlike the first, she is observant, critical, not merely abandoned in her admiration. One suspects that the very *differentiation* of the sentiment in the second case prevents repressed criticisms and hostility from forming. Her view of her father, if more complex, is more realistic.[3]

Now evidence shows that the very subjects who accept religion unreflectively and uncritically tend to react in an equally unreflective way to their parents, to political issues, to social institutions. Their sentiments seem uniformly immature. They are found usually to have repressed conflicts. In them, hostility, anxiety, prejudice, are detectable by psychological methods. Recent investigations, for example, have uncovered the fact that among people with strong religious sentiments race prejudice is often marked. Closer analysis indicates that the religious sentiment in these cases is blindly institutional, exclusionist, and related to self-centered values. Among people with reflective and highly differentiated sentiments, race prejudice is rarely found.[4]

A differentiated sentiment is the outgrowth of many successive discriminations and continuous reorganization. Commencing in later childhood or adolescence the individual who is on the way to maturity probably will repudiate both the oversimplified product of his earlier egocentric thinking, and

[3] These cases, together with other evidence bearing upon our conclusions, are contained in a series of three papers by Vera V. French: The structure of sentiments, *Journal of Personality*, 1947, 15, 247–282; 1947, 16, 78–108; 1947, 16, 209–244.

[4] Cf. E. Frenkel-Brunswik and R. N. Sanford. Some personality factors in anti-Semitism, *Journal of Psychology*, 1945, 20, 271–291; also G. W. Allport and B. M. Kramer. Some roots of prejudice, *Journal of Psychology*, 1946, 22, 9–39.

blind conformity to institutional or parental views. He discovers that the literal-minded and second-hand faith that he previously held now needs emendation. He sees the evasions and escapist dangers of his original beliefs. He perceives the shortcomings of tradition even while he appreciates its virtues. Whole sections of humanity, he observes, have halted at the performance of empty ritual or at a belief in the supernatural which squares neither with science nor with experience. The authoritarianism and conceit of entrenched ecclesiasticism may revolt him. Religion, he now has to admit, is not necessarily a good thing. Religious wars, inquisitions, persecutions, and bigotry make a macabre spectacle. Perhaps he will decide to abstain from the activities of institutional religion, as did Abraham Lincoln, who found its bickerings boresome and irrelevant to the mature mood of aspiration and wonder. Or, just the opposite, he may find an approximately satisfactory expression of his own sentiment in some existing branch of the church, perhaps that of his own family tradition. Again, he may decide that his development requires submission of unruly impulses to strong discipline, and that on the whole the historic and sacramental church is the best to tie to. In any case, the precise ecclesiastical position of the individual is not an index of the maturity of his religious sentiment. Adherence to almost any church, or to none at all, may mark those who in their maturing personalities have fought through the issues of religion.

Is the test of a differentiated sentiment, then, the presence of critical tendencies? Partly yes, for a sentiment would never become differentiated unless the original stage of simple childhood belief had given way to reflective examination and questioning. But differentiation implies more than criticism; it implies an articulation and ordering of parts. There are, as we have seen, many objects, many "cognitive poles," involved in the religious orientation. The deity is a matter of

concern; so too the nature of the soul, the ordering of values in life; the issues of freedom, sin, immortality; personal attitudes toward prayer, good works, creeds, tradition. The issues confronted by mature personalities are not the same in all cultures, nor in all individuals.

A differentiated organization will somehow fit all these objects into a pattern. Toward each item the individual will evolve an appropriate rational and emotional attitude, consistent with the value-structure of the sentiment. As a result the individual knows with precision his attitude toward the chief phases of theoretical doctrine and the principal issues in the moral sphere, while at the same time maintaining a genuine sense of wholeness into which the articulated parts fit.

At certain moments, those that are ordinarily called mystical, the sense of wholeness may be overwhelming. One of Freud's patients reported that for him religion was an "oceanic feeling." If the patient meant that it was always a vague gray surge and never anything else, he was describing an undifferentiated religious sentiment. In such sentiment the unconscious component is likely to be marked, and Freud would no doubt be justified in suspecting its origins to lie in a troubled sea of repression.

If, however, the patient was referring to occasional mystical states, customarily of short duration, he did well to characterize them as "oceanic." Mystical experiences yield a sense of immediacy devoid of interpretation. They are, James has said, transient, noetic, passive and ineffable.[5] One may perhaps question the attribute of ineffability in view of the ease with which some mystics have discussed the nature of these transfigured moments. A girl of fifteen tells of her first communion. During the service she had felt an increasing reverence and expectancy, and,

[5] W. James. *Op. cit.*, p. 371.

then came the holy moment in which my soul sank in the sea of love. . . . But I cannot describe in words the feeling which I then experienced. Words for it are only empty noise. There was in me such a great fullness of blessedness and of holy, pure joy. Every fiber of my feeling belonged to my Creator. At that moment I would have so liked to die. Diel O, it is no real death, it is only just the releasing of our poor body, in order that the soul thus freed may hasten back to the arms of its first Parent, its Creator.[6]

Such mystical moments differ from simple reverence in that the latter always entails some elements of interpretation. In reverence one *knows* that one is being devotional, and has an orderly and coherent chain of thoughts and feelings under voluntary control. Mysticism, on the other hand, is a benign dissociation of the stream of thought and feeling from the ordinary critical and self-conscious activities of the mind. Of course moments of reverence and moments of mysticism may be interlocked as they often are in the course of prayer.

Mystical experience is not in itself a token of a mature religious sentiment. On the other hand, it is by no means incompatible with such a sentiment. In several of its forms advanced religious thinking makes a prominent place for mystical states and invites their occurrence, sometimes regarding them as the highest attainment of religious striving. Neo-Platonism, the philosophy of Vedanta, as well as certain lines of Christian philosophy do so. They hold that the ordinary process of knowing, like desiring and valuing, requires the separation of the self (the subject) from the object of knowledge, desire or value. Such separation is inimical to the unity that religion affirms. Since the religious verity, whatever it may be, must encompass both subject and object, the distinction between them ought to be overcome. Approval is therefore given to mysticism which seeks, in complete

[6] O. Kupky. *Op. cit.*, p. 130. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

repose or rest in God, a state of fathomless unity, *Nirvikalpa*, able to annihilate the sense of duality and to silence the clamor of analytical interpretation. To attempt an analysis of such a state is regarded as futile and presumptuous. God is best conceived as a "nameless nothingness," the very negation of all things man can think or express. Although the cultivation of mystical states may thus be a reasonable consequence of a thoroughly mature religious outlook, or in some cases the initial cause that leads into the quest for maturity, few individuals succeed in overcoming for long the normal duality in knowing and desiring. Mysticism in its extreme form, therefore, is not an especially common form of religious functioning.

Whether or not the religion of maturity includes periods of mysticism, the basic structure of its sentiment is well differentiated, comprising many subsidiary attitudes, critically arrived at, and flexibly maintained as the sphere of experience widens.

Derivative Yet Dynamic Nature of the Mature Sentiment

The second attribute of the mature religious sentiment is found in the autonomous character of its motivational power. The energy that sustains such a sentiment may be said to pertain to it alone. For, in only slight degree, if at all, is this energy drawn from the reservoir of organic drives—from the fears, hungers, desires of the body.

It is true, as I argued in the first chapter, that the *origins* of religious life do lie, in part, in these organic cravings which, when blocked, give rise to a displaced type of longing and to transposed goals that are expressed in the language of religion. Is it then consistent to maintain, as I am now doing, that a mature religious sentiment supplies its own driving

power, and becomes dynamic in its own right? Yes, I venture to assert that *the most important of all distinctions between the immature and the mature religious sentiment lies in this basic difference in their dynamic characters.*

Immature religion, whether in adult or child, is largely concerned with magical thinking, self-justification, and creature comfort. Thus it betrays its sustaining motives still to be the drives and desires of the body. By contrast, mature religion is less of a servant, and more of a master, in the economy of the life. No longer goaded and steered exclusively by impulse, fear, wish, it tends rather to control and to direct these motives toward a goal that is no longer determined by mere self-interest.

I reaffirm the point made in the first chapter, that the religious outlook is highly derivative in its origins. Born of organic unrest, of self-interested desire, of juvenile interpretation ("verbal realism"), it nonetheless undergoes extensive transformation. Like an oak tree in its growth it shatters and discards the acorn from which it originally drew nourishment. The vitality it acquires becomes authoritative over the motives from which it grew. Tracing its evolution from childhood onward, we clearly see that each stage is continuous with each other, and yet at the same time a definite emergence of new meaning and new motive is taking place.

A religious sentiment that has thus become largely independent of its origins, "functionally autonomous,"[7] cannot be regarded as a servant of other desires, even though its initial function may have been of this order. It behaves no longer like an iron filing, twisting to follow the magnet of self-centered motives; it behaves rather as a master-motive, a magnet in its own right by which other cravings are bidden to order their course. Having decided that the religious

[7] G. W. Allport. *Op. cit.*, Chapter 7.

sentiment is the best instrument for dealing with life, the self, as it were, hands over to it the task of interpreting all that comes within its view, and of providing motive power to live in accordance with an adequate frame of value and meaning, and to enlarge and energize this frame.

The power of religion to transform lives—assuming that we are dealing with genuine transformations and not with ephemeral conversions—is a consequence of the functional autonomy that marks the mature religious sentiment. Whenever this sentiment takes a prominent and active role in the personality its influence is strikingly pervasive. Many events bring it into play (the beauties of nature, the acts of men, signs of value and disvalue in everyday life), and the person's resultant response to these events is to a greater or less degree steered and determined by the religious sentiment. Perceptions and interpretations, thoughts and conduct can be thoroughly saturated by this sentiment. We know, in fact, that some stubborn and injurious forms of behavior, alcoholism for example, can hardly be transformed by anything excepting a strong, autonomous, religious sentiment.

Though the mature sentiment thus has authentic motivational character of its own, and may constitute the mainspring of life, yet it is neither fanatic nor compulsive. Fanaticism is fed by immature urgencies arising from unconscious forces that, as we have noted, enter into an uncritical, undifferentiated sentiment. Rather than admit criticism that would require the arduous process of differentiation, such a sentiment stiffens and fights intolerantly all attempts to broaden it. In compulsive religion there is a defensive ruling-out of disturbing evidence.

The absence of fanaticism in mature religion will, to some, seem a weakness. "Do not developed minds," they ask, "in the process of becoming critical and reflective, lose their glow and zeal? Does not ardor degenerate into a mere belief that

certain formulas are probably true, and passion decay into an intellectualistic philosophy of religion?" Often, of course, such an entropy does occur. Sentiment may fade into nothingness. But when this happens we can be certain that religion was never a central feature of the personality. When the religious sentiment is central it characteristically keeps its ardor, and maintains throughout life an enthusiastic espousal of its objects, and an insatiable thirst for God. The degree of dynamism in the mature religious sentiment depends upon how central it is among all the various psychophysical systems that compose the personality.

The Mature Sentiment Is Consistently Directive

A third earmark of the mature sentiment lies in the consistency of its moral consequences. We have just remarked the obvious fact that, when intense, religious belief is able to transform character. While an immature sentiment is very likely to raise moral storms, and sporadically alter conduct, it lacks the steady, persistent influence of the seasoned religious outlook.

The relationship between personal religion and morality is admittedly complex. One study of contemporary college youth brings to light a striking degree of independence between the two. Many students outstanding for their sense of decency and consideration for others report that they feel no need of religion in their lives.[8] At the same time, some say that their standards of conduct, unsupported by their theological beliefs, would collapse. But on the whole, in dealing with individual cases, one is more impressed by the apparent separation of moral standards from religion than by their dependence upon it.

[8] C. W. Heath, *et al. What People Are*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945, pp. 42 ff.

One thinks here of the situation that came to light during the recent war. It was found that bravery, clear-headedness, emotional stability were encountered frequently among individuals brought up in religious homes but who had drifted away from the faith of their fathers. The mental and emotional stability of such "passive religionists" is high, though they now embrace no religion. Apparently what has happened is that the steadying influence of the family tradition, the discipline imposed by the parents, stemming in most cases from their own faith, combined to produce well-balanced sons. The sons are as sound as their parents or grandparents, but with a difference. They have lost faith that the standards according to which they live possess objective validity. Because of the momentum in their family tradition these young men are still in the process of "becoming," but have lost their guide in "being." Through how many generations, one may ask with Renan, can we continue to live on "the perfume of an empty vase"? Ethical standards are difficult to sustain without idealism; and idealism is difficult to sustain without a myth of Being. We often hear it said that the increase in war and crime and divorce can be traced to the decline in religious faith. And in respect to democracy itself the question has been asked: "As a form of idealism and as a standard of conduct can democracy sustain its vitality unless it is reset within the wider context of a religious sentiment that passionately affirms democracy's derivation from the Christian order?" Finally, we hear it said that the popularity of social activities in American churches is the secular residue of a religious conviction that has been lost. The vigor of the "myth in the grand style," as Oswald Spengler called it, is gone. Remaining is a mere twitch of humanitarian activity at the end of the heroic cycle.

This ominous course of reasoning cannot lightly be dismissed. At the same time it can badly exaggerate the situation

that prevails. So far as social service is concerned, we are by no means justified in regarding it as a mere hollow vestige of religion. To translate the private world of thought and feeling into action is not to weaken conviction but to strengthen it. Belief in the doctrine of the person, for example, can remain firm *only* if it leads the individual to act in behalf of social betterment. So far as democracy is concerned, we cannot yet say whether its healthy growth requires metaphysical and religious support. In many lives, of course, the ideals of democracy are related to the religious sentiment. In others, this is not the case.

The principal error of the prophets of disaster is their assumption that no longer do religious sentiments generate high and consistent standards of action. This assumption is unproved. Even though in these transitional times the faith of our ancestors is not often maintained intact, yet the moral power of the religious sentiments that are formed anew in each generation is considerable. We cannot yet conclude that we are merely squandering the capital accumulated by our parents and grandparents. New religious sentiments are maturing all the time, producing fresh moral zeal, and engendering consistency upon men's purposes.

The Comprehensive Character of the Mature Sentiment

The mature mind, as we have said, demands a comprehensive philosophy of life. The hurly-burly of the world must be brought into some kind of order. And the facts calling for order are not only material; they include emotions, values, and man's strange propensity to seek his own perfection.

Casting about, the individual sees various possibilities. First of all, in this day and age he encounters humanism. Does it, he asks, succeed in binding the many-sided universe? It offers itself, in the terms of one of its advocates, as "a religion in

harmony with facts as now known, recognizing nature as impersonal and inexorable, fostering cooperation under the realization that man has but himself and his fellow men upon whom to rely."[9] But humanism, he suspects, is something like science—acceptable so far as it goes, but quite uncurious regarding its own presuppositions. He doubts that the motive power for humanism is more than the lingering breeze of the powerful dynamic of Christian faith. So far as science is concerned, he knows well that his own religious faith is unlikely to rival it in clarity nor, in all points, equal it in validity; but it shall—and this is his point of insistence—it shall surpass it in *adequacy*. Religion, like philosophy, must answer questions that science dares not frame but, unlike philosophy, it must also infuse all of life with motive.

The question whether humanism may properly be called a religion is much like the question whether Communism, or any reformism, is or is not religious. Certain earmarks are identical. A cause or sincere belief of any sort, ardently embraced, performs an integrative function. It confers intelligibility and direction upon conduct, prescribes rights and duties; is highly motivational; is satisfying; and may cover all those aspects of existence that really matter to the individual. All strongly ideal interests confer unity to the mind, and provide significance and enlargement to the lives of those who possess them.

It was his perception of this fact, I believe, that led William James to circumscribe his definition of subjective religion. For him religion means "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."[10] By thus requiring the religious sentiment to direct itself toward some conception of divinity,

[9] H. R. Rafton. Letter in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, 1947, 49, p. 330.

[10] W. James. *Op. cit.*, p. 31 f.

we would probably disqualify most causes however ardently embraced. True, some zealous Communists deify Lenin, and some fanatic Nazis deify Hitler. When so, we would have, by James's definition, a true instance of religion. Whitehead's definition of religion, on the other hand, does not require a conception of the divine. For him religion is "the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things."[11] For James, Communism and like causes would be disqualified because they postulate no divinity; for Whitehead, because they deal only partially, if at all, with "what is permanent in the nature of things."

Approaching the matter psychologically we are bound to admit that in many lives whole-hearted zealousness for a cause acts like a religious sentiment. Such lives seem to need no other religion, for in their economy they have discovered its equivalent. Yet, even from the psychological point of view, we see that the ground covered by any secular interest, however vital, falls short of the range that characterizes a mature religious sentiment which seems never satisfied unless it is dealing with matters central to all existence. A cause may be absorbing, but it seldom includes the whole of a mature individual's horizon. Residues are left over which only religion can absorb.

The demand that one's religious sentiment be comprehensive makes for tolerance. One knows that one's life alone does not contain all possible values or all facets of meaning. Other people too have their stake in truth. The religion of maturity makes the affirmation "God is," but only the religion of immaturity will insist, "God is precisely what I say He is." The Hindu Vedas were speaking mature language when they asserted, "Truth is one; men call it by many names."

[11] A. N. Whitehead. *Religion in the Making*, New York: Macmillan, 1926, p. 16.

Integral Nature of the Mature Sentiment

Closely allied to the demand for comprehensiveness is the mature individual's insistence that his religious sentiment compose a homogeneous pattern. Not only must its coverage be great but its design must be harmonious. Like a tapestry weaver he is forced to work behind the design he creates. Holding the threads singly and inserting them with care he can only hope that the pattern he fashions will be whole when seen from the front. From behind the loom the complexity of strands appears baffling. To fashion an integral pattern is the task of a lifetime—and more.

A modern man, brought up in the Hebraic-Christian tradition, finds that the theology and ethics of this tradition were written down in an era that was pre-scientific and pre-technological. Bucolic parables belong to a mode of life remote from our own. Commandments and codes formulated in an age of shepherds and petty kings seem difficult to implement in an age of giant industry, instant communication, and atomic energy. Since we cannot and will not turn our backs on the modern world, then the religion we embrace cannot be pre-scientific; nor anti-scientific; it must be co-scientific. But science alone produces none of the integrity, the direction, or the zeal, that are needed in order to assure the benefits of its own achievements. It is up to modern man, the weaver, to take the strands of science and bind them with values and purpose. No threads may be rejected, perhaps least of all those that come from modern psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis. For to apply the prophetic teachings of past ages to a technical age requires special assistance from the sciences that deal with personality and with human relations.

To be truly integral a religious sentiment must admit the disturbing fact that human conduct, to a large degree, is

determined. To ascribe more freedom of will to man than he possesses is to hold to an anachronism and to destroy the hope for a proper integration of science and religion. Yet an adroit mind will readily perceive that the degree and type of freedom a man has depends in part upon what he believes. If he thinks he is hopelessly bound he will not exert himself, and if he fails to exert himself he will not improve his lot. If, on the contrary, he believes that there are doors that may be opened and that lead to a fuller realization of values, he will explore, discover, enter. A well-differentiated religious sentiment engenders freedom simply because the possessor of such a sentiment finds that obdurate though nature and habit may be, still there are regions where aspiration, effort, and prayer are efficacious. A person believing he is free uses what equipment he has more flexibly and successfully than does the person who is convinced he dwells in chains.

An integral sentiment will have difficulty in accommodating the problem of evil. It is upon this rock, and upon the reefs of determinism, that most religious sentiments are wrecked in their quest for maturity. I shall not attempt to review all the solutions to the problem of evil that struggle for a place in the mature mind. A solution acceptable to one individual may be unacceptable to another. One holds that the only way out is to regard God himself as a finite Being, suffering from dark spots in His own nature and unable to control the tides of natural law and of man's perverseness. Another, while professing inability to solve the issue, holds fast to the conviction that religion, effectively applied, would eliminate at least the evil that stems from human ignorance and misconduct. Another says that our understanding is inadequate, that what we call evil is a stage in development. Were the veil of Maya destroyed the essential virtue of all things would appear. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my way, saith the Lord." However

the problem is handled, the suffering of innocent persons is for most people the hardest of all facts to integrate into a religious sentiment. Yet the issue has to be faced and fought through; otherwise, the sentiment cannot become mature.

Heuristic Character of the Mature Sentiment

The final attribute of mature religion is its essentially heuristic character. An heuristic belief is one that is held tentatively until it can be confirmed or until it helps us discover a more valid belief. For example, the individual fashions his creed and conceives his deity as best he can. Perhaps he accepts the authority of some revelation. If so, he does it not because he can demonstrate its final validity by events occurring in time and space, but because that which he accepts helps him find out better and fuller answers to the questions that perplex him. His faith is his working hypothesis. He knows perfectly well that doubt concerning it is still theoretically possible.

It is characteristic of the mature mind that it can act whole-heartedly even without absolute certainty. It can be sure without being cocksure. We are not positive that we shall be alive tomorrow but it is a good hypothesis to proceed on. We are not certain that the social agencies of our big cities are decreasing the margin of suffering and evil in our midst, but it seems like a probability worth backing. It is still less demonstrable that you and I will succeed in the goals we have respectively set for ourselves; but it is the mere chance of success that nerves us for sustained and eager endeavor. The odds of success do not have to be large in order to keep us going. Writers as diverse in stripe as Descartes, Pascal, Newman, James, have made the point. Faith is a risk, but everyone in some way or other is bound to take it.

Probabilities always guide our lives. Sometimes the degree of statitsical probability can be ascertained; more often, as in the area of religion, it cannot. It is not necessary to know how probable a probability is in order to embrace it. In religion, according to Cardinal Newman:

> It is faith and love which give to probability a force which it has not in itself. Faith and love are directed toward an object; in the vision of that object they live; it is that object, received in faith and love, which renders it reasonable to take probability as sufficient for internal conviction.[12]

Newman goes on to say that though *certainty* is impossible, the commitment one makes—a fusion of probability, faith and love—engenders sufficient *certitude* for the guidance of one's life.

Such a commitment, even when it is tentatively held, has important consequences. For all accomplishment results from taking risks in advance of certainties. Chronic skepticism, inhibitory and depressive thoughts, are incompatible with everything excepting vegetative existence. The optimistic bias toward life is a necessary condition for life. Only by having expectations of consequences beyond the limits of certainty do we make these consequences more likely to occur. Faith engenders the energy which when applied to the task in hand enhances the probability of success.

What many unbelievers do not realize is that the mature believer's eyes are wide open. The latter knows that he is finally uncertain of his ground. But he feels, reasonably enough, that in a world where optimistic bias and faith are largely responsible for human accomplishment, it would be silly for him to lapse into unproductive skepticism, so long as he has a chance of being correct. The believer is often closer to the agnostic than we think. Both, with equal candor,

[12] J. H. Newman. *Apologia pro Vita sua*, New York: E. P. Dutton (Everyman's Library), 1912, p. 43.

may concede that the nature of Being cannot be known; but the believer, banking on a probability, slight though he may deem it to be, finds that the energy engendered and the values conserved prove the superiority of affirmation over indecisiveness.

We may then say that the mature religious sentiment is ordinarily fashioned in the workshop of doubt. Though it has known intimately "the dark night of the soul," it has decided that theoretical skepticism is not incompatible with practical absolutism. While it knows all the grounds for skepticism, it serenely affirms its wager. In so doing, it finds that the successive acts of commitment, with their beneficent consequences, slowly strengthen the faith and cause the moments of doubt gradually to disappear.

Some people, of course, say they are unable to entertain religious propositions with less than full certainty—even though these same people commit themselves gladly to the probabilities of everyday life. They seem to fear that unless one has certainty one will lose the vital force to proceed. Their dilemma is like that stated by opponents of liberal education: How, they ask, can we allow full play to analysis and criticism, and still expect our youth to develop firm purpose, strong character, and devotion to a right cause? There are others, Renan and Eugene O'Neill among them, who go further and insist that belief in an *illusion* is necessary in order to sustain purpose. I think we need not worry unduly about the matter. To the genuinely mature personality a full-faced view of reality in its grimmest aspects is not incompatible with an heuristic-commitment that has the power to turn desperation into active purpose. An heuristic-commitment is not a matter of illusion, at least until such a time as the probabilities upon which it is based are proved to be absolutely groundless. And if one cannot prove the religious commitment to rest on certainties, neither can one prove it to be groundless.