

TOPICS: Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, the sacred, the numinous, Kant's categories, the sublime, Alcoholics Anonymous and Bill Wilson's conversion, Jakob Friedrich Fries, ideogram, a mysterium and not a Begriff.

Common misspellings and variants of the name Glenn F. Chesnut: Glenn Chesnut / Glen F. Chesnut / Glen Chesnut / Glenn F. Chestnut / Glenn Chestnut / Glen F. Chestnut / Glen Chestnut / Glenn C., South Bend

Learning to See the Sacred Dimension of Reality

Rudolf Otto and the Idea of the Holy, Part 1

Glenn F. Chesnut

The holy as one of the categories of the human understanding

In this chapter we need to talk about yet another area in which *it does not work at all* when we try to explain what we know about God by giving a list of technical definitions: the idea of the holy or the sacred. This is a concept which plays a truly major role in our knowledge of God, which is radically different from anything we talked about in the first three chapters, because it is not the experience or perception of a particular individual thing. It is not like trying to describe an object like the maple tree in my front yard, or the experience of the taste of pineapple, or the specific flavor of a fine burgundy wine from a particular group of vineyards in a specific section of France.

In order to explain why we are dealing here with a totally different kind of knowledge, we will need to talk about what the philosopher Kant called the categories of the human understanding, which are the most basic ideas of all, which supply the framework and the tools for talking about everything else we know, and provide the epistemological basis for knowing anything about the world at all. The concept of efficient causality — that is, our human understanding of what we mean when we say that one event caused something else to happen — is one of the categories. The idea of

logical classes — that is, our understanding of what we mean when we say, for example, that four different birds swimming in a river are all “swans” and belong to that logical class, rather than being ducks or geese — is another of the fundamental categories. The categories cannot be explained in terms of anything simpler, because we must first understand them before we can talk about anything else.

Rudolf Otto, the Idea of the Holy

The holy was not on Kant’s list of the categories, but the philosophical theologian Rudolf Otto, who was one of the two greatest Christian theologians of the period right after the First World War, has shown powerful reasons why it should be included in that list. It is this category of the understanding which allows us to identify certain kinds of experiences as experiences of the holy and the sacred. In his theological masterpiece, *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto said that although the category in question was schematized by the human reason as “the holy” when we were talking about spirituality, it was also schematized by our minds in two other kinds of ways. When we were thinking about morality, we schematized it as “the good itself,” and when we were talking about art and beauty, we schematized it as the concept of what Kant (in his aesthetic theory) called “the sublime.”

Let us begin however by talking a little bit about what is meant by the “holy” or the “sacred” (the two words refer to the same thing), and what kinds of experiences this term refers to. We will not be able to explain why it must be regarded as one of the basic categories of the human understanding until we have a better idea of how and where this concept is used.

It is an extremely important category, because all of the human activities which we call “religion” are attempts to experience and deal with the holy and the sacred. This is what defines religion as such. Religion is not necessarily about God. There are human religions which have no gods. Nontheistic Buddhism, for example, rejects any kind of idea of a God or gods, and yet it is clear that this is a kind of religion. The Native American tribe who live in my area of the United States, the Potawatomi, have no God in the Jewish and Christian and Muslim sense. Instead, they worship what they call the Manitou. This word is sometimes translated as the “Great Spirit,” but this is highly misleading, because it does not refer to any kind of personal supernatural being at all.

The Manitou is the sacred and the holy itself, as we can experience it in the trees and mountains, the growing corn, and the deer and bears and eagles.

Rudolf Otto wrote his great masterpiece, *The Idea of the Holy*, in 1917, and scholars in the field of comparative religions quickly took up the idea and still use it as a fundamental concept in the study of world religions.¹ It was one of the most successful theological works of the twentieth century. It has never been out of print and is still available at bookstores around the world in twenty different languages. Anyone who is going to write about religion, and what religious language means, has to begin with this concept as the starting point. We cannot talk about how the human mind apprehends the presence of God, and why God is important, until we first understand what is meant by the holy.

The experience of the holy and the sacred

What do we mean by the experience of the holy or the sacred? Let us begin with some simple examples. People entering a church or synagogue or mosque — even if it is a place of worship belonging to a different religious group — show by the change in their tone of voice, and the expressions on their faces, that they have an awareness of some sort that they are entering the presence of something different from the everyday world. Some of the conversion experiences at Protestant revival meetings are best described as overwhelming encounters with the irresistible power of the sacred. In a much quieter way, a good Roman Catholic or Anglican praying before the various stations of the cross, or receiving the bread and wine at the eucharist, strives to use these occasions as a means to experience the holy within their hearts and minds at the deepest internal level. The reverent respect with which a good Jew handles the scroll of the Torah when preparing to read from it in a synagogue shows in like manner the awareness that here one encounters what to Judaism is the sacred; or as a pious Jew might put it, it is the Book of the Torah of “the *Holy One*, blessed be He.”

In an Eastern Orthodox church, the painted image on a flat wooden panel of one of the saints with candles flickering in front of it is a *hagia eikôn*, that is, a *holy icon*; the worshiper praying in front of it is using it as a crossover point, where the sacred realm (as Mircea Eliade calls it) comes into contact with the profane realm (the ordinary, everyday world), and where in prayer the believer can enter into living contact with the divine realm.²

This is also part of what is involved in the experience of the holy. In addition to the three dimensions which the natural scientists talk about, there is a “fourth dimension” if we wish to speak that way, a realm of sacred time and sacred space. Using Jean Piaget’s terminology, we could say that this realm of sacred time and sacred space is *in correspondence with* the this-worldly realm — sacred events take place in conjunction with this-worldly events in such a way that they are in certain respects isomorphic — but we must also say that the sacred realm is not *interdependent with* the this-worldly realm in such a way that sacred events are reducible to this-worldly events, where the sacred events can be totally explained in terms of cause and effect within the this-worldly realm.³

The story of Bill W., co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous

In the Big Book, the basic book which lies behind all the twelve step programs, Bill Wilson used this metaphor of a fourth dimension to describe the way in which he and the other early A.A. people had discovered the spiritual life: “We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.” Within that sacred realm of existence, that “fourth dimension,” they were “to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes.”⁴

In fact the experience of the holy lay at the very heart of the Big Book’s description of what spiritual experience was basically about. Bill W. illustrated this from his own life. In the first chapter of the book, which was him telling his own story, he began by talking (in his distinctively sparse and simple prose style) about how he, as a young army officer during the First World War, first landed in England. He had a moving experience of the sacred, which he immediately brushed aside, and then a warning of the fate towards which his drinking and his contempt for the spiritual life was going to lead him, which again he also immediately brushed aside.⁵

We landed in England. I visited Winchester Cathedral. Much moved, I wandered outside. My attention was caught by a doggerel on an old tombstone:

“Here lies a Hampshire Grenadier

Who caught his death
Drinking cold small beer.
A good soldier is ne'er forgot
Whether he dieth by musket
Or by pot."

Ominous warning — which I failed to heed.

Over a decade and a half later, Bill W. had hit bottom, and was in total despair, when one of his old drinking buddies, a man named Ebby, came to visit him. Ebby was not only sober, he seemed to glow with love and serenity and a deep inner confidence. He explained how the Oxford Group had helped him find a God who had healed his life and his spirit. Bill W. was reminded of his experience of the sacred in its medieval Catholic expression at Winchester Cathedral, and also in the way that it was expressed by the small-town New England Protestant preachers of his childhood⁶ — whom he had listened to only from a distance!

[Ebby] talked for hours. Childhood memories rose before me. I could almost hear the sound of the preacher's voice as I sat, on still Sundays, way over there on the hillside That war-time day in old Winchester Cathedral came back again.

I had always believed in a Power greater than myself How could there be so much of precise and immutable law [in the discoveries of the natural scientists] and no intelligence? I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, who knew neither time nor limitation. But that was as far as I got.

With ministers, and the world's religions, I parted right there. When they talked of a God personal to me, who was love, superhuman strength and direction, I became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such a theory

Despite the living example of my friend there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving His sway might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way.

My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, “*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”

That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last . . . Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

The real significance of my experience in the Cathedral burst upon me. For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God. There had been a humble willingness to have Him with me — and He came. But soon the sense of His presence had been blotted out by worldly clamors, mostly those from within myself. And so it had been ever since. How blind I had been.

We need to note first of all one of the phrases which Bill W. used, in the next to last paragraph above, about scales falling from his eyes. To Americans of his generation, most of whom knew the Bible extremely well, this was an obvious reference to the story of the Apostle Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:18). Bill W. was trying to make it clear to us, in his use of this biblical reference, that this was his fundamental conversion experience that occurred at that point.

And then we need to note one phrase in the final paragraph: it was *the sense of the sacred presence* which he was able to focus on, coupled with Ebby’s suggestion that he stop worrying about traditional theological definitions and doctrines and dogmas. Bill W. suddenly realized that all the intellectual theories — about who or what this sacred presence was — were secondary, and should be disregarded if they kept one from feeling that presence. The force that could transform and heal the ailing spirit was encountered by learning to *feel* once again the primordial sense of the sacred. You could cast aside the entire complex world of ecclesiastical doctrines and dogmas and still cling to the foundational awareness of the holy and that alone, and be led by it out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and successfully make your way to the divine light which shone out from the peak of the Mountain of God.

The sense of the presence

The “sense of the presence” can be felt in other contexts as well. People entering a cemetery find themselves unconsciously muting their voices. A professor of comparative religions at a university near mine was frustrated by the difficulty he was encountering in

getting his cynical and worldly-wise undergraduates to take the concept of the holy seriously, until he came up with an interesting project for them. At the beginning of the semester, he required each student in the class to spend an entire night alone in a graveyard, with a pen and notebook, simply taking notes on what they *felt* as the night progressively wore on. He chuckled when he told me how well this worked at making even the most skeptical admit to feeling eventually some powerful awareness of the uncanny, or of the great mystery which lies beyond this world and this life and its concerns.

Being present at the birth of one's own child and actually seeing the infant born can make even many a hardened skeptic realize suddenly what the experience of the sacred is. The view of the planet earth from space had that effect on some of the first American astronauts: one of them, James Irwin, had such a profound spiritual experience that he afterwards founded a Christian ministry called High Flight, named after the famous poem by John Gillespie Magee, Jr. (the official poem of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Air Force, it is also required to be recited from memory by first-year cadets at the United States Air Force Academy):

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed . . .
Where never lark, or even eagle flew.
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Back in the ancient world, the Roman essayist and dramatist Seneca commented, in his little epistolary essay "On the God Within," on the way the experience of the holy can suddenly come upon a person deep within the shadows of a forest filled with ancient, overtowering trees: a cold chill down the back, or a sense of uneasiness, or of awe at a kind of nonhuman grandeur that makes one feel one's own smallness and the transitory character of one's passage through that place. Or, Seneca said, deep within the arches of an enormous subterranean cavern, the same awe-filled awareness may come upon the visitor, or it can steal upon a person while staring into the unfathomable depths of a cold, dark, volcanic lake high on a mist-covered mountain.⁷

In William James's classic book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, numerous examples were given of encounters with the sacred that were even more overpowering, quoted verbatim in the actual words of the various people who had had the experiences. One of these autobiographical narratives is frequently quoted in detail, because it pulls together so well, in condensed form, a range of motifs that appear over and over again in so many other of the first-hand accounts in James's book:⁸

I remember the night, and almost the very spot on the hill-top, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer. It was deep calling unto deep — the deep that my own struggle had opened up within being answered by the unfathomable deep without, reaching beyond the stars. I stood alone with Him who made me, and the beauty of the world, and love, and sorrow, and even temptation. I did not seek Him, but felt the perfect unison of my spirit with His.

The ordinary sense of things around me faded. For the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exultation remained. It is impossible fully to describe the experience The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more solemn silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that *He* was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two.

Then, if ever, I believe, I stood face to face with God, and was born anew of his spirit Since that time no discussion that I have heard of the proofs of God's existence has been able to shake my faith My most assuring evidence of his existence is deeply rooted in that hour of vision, . . . and in the conviction, gained from reading and reflection, that something the same has come to all who have found God.

Since this person came from a Christian background, when he was attempting to identify intellectually what he had confronted, he spoke in Judaeo-Christian terms of this experience as an encounter with *God*— but when he instead spoke simply about *feelings*, in phrases like “the darkness held a *presence* that was all the more felt because it was not seen,” any person who had had a profound encounter with the sacred, from any of the world's religious traditions, whether theistic or nontheistic, would have understood immediately what the feeling was that the writer was trying to describe.

The holy as the experience of the “numinous”

Having given some examples of what is meant by the holy and the sacred (these two words are interchangeable in English), we need to start looking in more detail at this idea, and the obvious place to start is with the classic book on this topic, *The Idea of the Holy*, which as we have mentioned, was written in 1917 by the German theologian Rudolf Otto.⁹ He had made a systematic study of religions all around the world and through all periods of history, searching for how each religion described the *experience* of the sacred or holy. He had assumed when he began his researches (based on an important idea¹⁰ he had picked up from the German philosopher Jakob Friedrich Fries) that he was going to find a rather simple sense of awe in the face of “the infinite” lying at the heart of religion, but instead he came up with a surprisingly long list of elements which all religious feeling, all over the earth, seemed to have in common. It was a much fuller and richer kind of experience than he was expecting to discover when he first began his project. And he concluded that referring to it simply as a sense of the infinite was not good enough — in fact it was something which was actually quite different from what Fries had theorized about — so he decided to refer to it as “the holy.”

He began his book with a warning: there have been many religious systems where human beings experienced the sacred with no moral or ethical component attached to the experience at all. Now it is true that in many of the more developed religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam of course, the concept of the holy is given strong moral and ethical content. In fact, in modern popular Christianity, the adjective “holy” can even degenerate into nothing more than a term for a rigorous (even fanatical) obedience to a set of rigid moral rules.

But there have been and still are religions where no strong moral component is present in the idea of the holy. An Aztec Indian felt the immediate presence of the sacred as he stared in fascinated awe at the still throbbing heart of a human sacrificial victim, held aloft in the blood-drenched hands of the priest who had just ripped the victim’s chest open with a jagged flint knife. The Santería rituals carried out in Hispanic neighborhoods in some cities in the United States, where chickens and goats are sacrificed to a pantheon of Afro-Hispanic deities and powers, are sometimes concerned with quite selfish and non-moral purposes (love charms, the magical blessing of new building construction, hostile spells cast upon enemies, and so on). There were many stories in classical Greek mythology which were obviously grossly immoral: there was rape, castration,

homosexual child abuse, adultery, diabolical revenge, lying, defrauding, theft, envy, and a host of other despicable deeds.¹¹

Even in the more morally developed religions, there was always “something more” in the concept of the sacred than simply moral perfection — what Otto called an *Überschuss*, something surplus, something additional left over at the bottom of the balance sheet —and this “something more” was itself totally *ethically neutral*.¹²

From the Latin word *numen* (meaning the power of the divine) Otto coined the word “numinous” to refer to this ethically neutral component of the holy.¹³ It was seemingly the only element in some primitive religions, but was nevertheless also strongly present in the ritual language and spiritual experience even of heavily moral religions like Judaism and Christianity. This word numinous was so useful that it has become part of the standard working vocabulary of theologians ever since.

In all the religious traditions of the world, Otto observed, this numinous reality was regarded as being (at its deepest level) a *mysterium*, the ultimate Mystery of reality — something hidden, something inexpressible, something intensely private and non-public, something which could not be conceptualized and intellectualized (*nicht Begriffene und Verstandene*), something not a normal component of the everyday world, something which was not part of the familiar and well-known.¹⁴

Metaphors, analogies, and ideograms

If the sacred is a *mysterium* which cannot be turned into a precisely defined intellectual concept (*Begriff*) which can be described directly — using the sort of literalistic language we would expect in a book on physics or chemistry or biology — then how can we talk about it at all? Otto said that religions all around the world have dealt with this problem by resorting to the use of symbols, metaphors, images, and analogies in order to describe the experience of the sacred numinous. When Christians describe God as the rock of ages, for example, or as our shield against the stormy blast, these are obviously metaphors. When, in Hinduism, a god is portrayed as having many arms and legs and many mouths, this is likewise just a metaphor, in this case referring to the god’s ability to go many places and do many things all at the same time, and so on.

And there was another way that language about the sacred could be symbolic, Otto said. Ordinary words in the language, which were used to talk about everyday things, could be used as “ideograms.”¹⁵

Let us explain what he meant by the term ideogram, because this is apt to be an unfamiliar concept to most people in the western world today. Most writing systems used in the modern world employ an *alphabet* for writing (the Roman alphabet, the Russian alphabet, the Arabic alphabet, and so on) where there is a small set of twenty to forty letters (each one standing for a different short sound) which are used to represent phonetically all the words in the language. But there are other writing systems, like the one still used in China, which require the memorization of hundreds and hundreds of separate symbols (called ideograms), where each symbol stands for an entire word. In the ancient world, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform were written in this same kind of way, where each symbol represented an entire word.

To keep the list of ideograms from becoming impossibly huge (tens of thousands of symbols at the very least), it is the regular practice in languages which use this form of writing to use each picture or stylized symbol to represent several different words. Each symbol can be used, for instance, to first represent the word for some concrete, common object, but then used also to represent various transferred meanings which the common object might suggest. In ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, the ideogram which represented the Egyptian word for musical instrument (a little picture of a musical instrument) also meant, by extension, the word for music, and even the word for joy.

In reading a language that is written in ideograms, the reader must therefore first decide what level of meaning is being used in the passage. Sometimes the pictures or stylized symbols are meant to be taken literally, but at other times, trying to read them in this fashion would produce nonsense.

A skilled writer however can write a series of ideograms which can be read at several different levels, where the sentence means something different at each level, but where all of these possible meanings make sense. This is part of the technique of writing poetry in Chinese (and is also the reason why it is impossible to truly translate Chinese poetry into English). In Chinese Taoist philosophy, even a short passage can often be translated “correctly” in two or three or more different ways, depending on the level at which one chooses to read the Chinese characters. Quite often, *all* the readings may be regarded as true within the Taoist philosophy of the world and life. Anyone who doubts this should obtain several different English translations of a Taoist philosophical work and compare

them against one another, and notice how the same sentence says something totally different in each of the English translations. The odd feature here is that all of the different English translations are correct in so far as they go.

The main point here however, is that all languages which are written in ideograms use characters which represent simple, concrete things to stand for things which are not concrete objects or actions. In one version of ancient Mesopotamian hieroglyphics, the symbol for the word mouth can also stand for the verb that means to speak and the verb that means to eat. It can also stand for the noun that means hunger, or the noun which means a speech which someone gives, depending on the context.

Otto brought up this topic, because he discovered that traditional religious language all over the world used metaphors and terms which sometimes could appear extremely naive or even foolish if read at their simplest literal level. Those who scoffed at religion could use this phenomenon to make fun of religious people, and portray them as simpletons. This was not fair, Otto said, because these scoffers were not reading the words correctly. One could easily make a Chinese Taoist philosophical text appear like the work of a childish and stupid author if one insisted on going through the work and translating each Chinese character at its lowest level of meaning.

In order to understand religious language properly, the reader had to learn how to read its words as “ideograms” referring to higher or more subtle feelings or awarenesses. That was the only way their real meaning could begin to emerge. This was true not only for obvious metaphors, such as referring to God as the Rock of Ages or as our shield against the stormy blast, but also for apparently simple terms like *fear*, *happiness*, *mercy*, and *love*. Even words like these functioned in the language of spiritual experience as ideograms, as metaphors or symbols, and did not mean the same thing that they did in their ordinary everyday usage.

This-worldly fear, for example, is what I would feel if I were in a jungle and a tiger suddenly appeared, charging towards me with his fangs bared, or what I would feel if I woke up in the middle of the night and discovered a burglar standing over my bed with a gun in his hand. When we say however in religious language that “the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom,” this is referring to a quite different feeling, where the everyday meaning of the word fear is only being used metaphorically. “Fearing God” is an ultimate existential dread and an awe in the face of infinitely overwhelming power which strikes us at a completely different level of our souls.

When people are first being introduced to the spiritual life, summoning up the courage to deal with the fear of God in that sense is one of the biggest hurdles which they have to get past. In C. S. Lewis' children's story, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the figure of Aslan, the mighty lion, represents the power of God and the sacred realm penetrating into our ordinary material world. When the children who are the central figures in the story see Aslan for the first time, one of them, in terror, asks one of the villagers, "Is he safe?" The villager, who is one of the good and truly spiritual people in the story, smiles and says, "Of course not. But he is good." That is what newcomers to the spiritual life have to learn. Because God and those whom he sends have a goodness which includes compassion, kindness, forgiveness, and mercy, we can approach the throne of God to ask for help, with a full trust that this help will be given. This is what the word faith *means*. But God is not "safe" in the sense in which the child was asking, and neither are the ones whom God sends into the world as the channels of his grace.

Can you see here how we are using stories, symbols, metaphors, and ideograms to talk about real things and true knowledge? Aslan the lion is obviously a symbol, and the story of the children's encounter with him, and the way they come to understand the meaning of sacrifice and salvation and the way that good triumphs over evil, is obviously a metaphor. Children cannot really walk through the back of a wardrobe and enter a fairytale land, and ordinary lions in Africa do not act at all like Aslan. But let us not be misled: the words "safe" and "good" are not being given their ordinary meaning either. They are being used here as ideograms, which also stand for something beyond their literal everyday meaning.

© Copyright 2008 by Glenn F. Chesnut. Taken from Chapter Four of *God and Spirituality: Philosophical Essays* (2008). From the Hindsfoot Foundation website at <http://hindsfoot.org/>. This material may be copied and reproduced by others subject to the restrictions given at <http://hindsfoot.org/copyright.html>

**For more essays by Glenn F. Chesnut,
see <http://hindsfoot.org/spiritu.html>**

NOTES

1. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 2nd ed., trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950). Quotes from the German original are from *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, 11th ed. (Stuttgart: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1923).

2. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959) is a classic work on this subject.

3. John H. Flavell, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand, 1963), p. 260. “Physics-chemistry relates to biology by interdependence; one causal system (biology) can be ‘reduced’ to another, more general and elementary one (physics-chemistry).” On the other hand, “logic-mathematics relates to physics-chemistry by correspondence — a deductive series of implications isomorphic to an empirical system of causes.” The relationship between the sacred realm and the ordinary, everyday world is not exactly that kind of correspondence, but it is better described as a correspondence than as an interdependence, because events in the sacred realm cannot be “reduced” to a scientific analysis of the sequence of causal factors operating within the this-worldly realm.

4. *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1976), pp. 25 and 8.

5. *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1976), p. 1.

6. *Alcoholics Anonymous* pp. 10–13.

7. Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, ed. and trans. Richard M. Gummere, 3 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1917–25), ep. 41.

8. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Gifford Lectures (Univ. of Edinburgh) for 1901–2 (New York: Modern Library, 1994), from Lecture III, “The Reality of the Unseen,” pp. 76–7. See also Glenn F. Chesnut, *Images of Christ: An Introduction to Christology* (Seabury Press/Harper & Row, 1984), ch. 4, “The Vision of God,” pp. 50–67.

9. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 2nd ed., trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950). Quotes from the German original are from *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, 11th ed. (Stuttgart: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1923).

10. Rudolf Otto, *The Philosophy of Religion Based on Kant and Fries*, trans. E. B. Dicker (London: Williams & Norgate, 1931).

11. Apollo was attempting to commit violent rape upon the young woman Daphne when she was turned into a laurel tree, Kronos castrated his own father Uranus with a jagged flint sickle, Zeus took the form of an eagle to carry off the little boy Ganymede in order to perform homosexual acts upon him, Hephaestus the blacksmith of the gods discovered his wife Aphrodite (the goddess of love) in bed with the war god Ares in yet another myth, Apollo defeated a mortal named Marsyas in a musical contest and then skinned him alive for revenge, and so on.

12. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 5–6 (Ger. 5–6): *gegen das Ethische . . . gleichgültig*.

13. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 6–7 (Ger. 6–7).

14. Otto, *The Holy*, p. 13 (Ger. 13): the numinous as mysterium was something that dwelt *im unsagbaren Geheimnis*; it was *das Verborgene*, the *nicht Offenkundige*, *nicht Begriffene und Verstandene*, *nicht Alltägliche*, *nicht Vertraute*.

15. Otto, *The Holy*, pp. 19 (Ger. 19), 60 (Ger. 72); see also p. 34 (Ger. 41).