

An Address to Skeptics
and
Democracy's Religious Root

BY

EMANUEL RACK MAN

Rabbi of Congregation Shaaray Tefila
Far Rockaway, Long Island, N. Y.

and

LECTURER IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK

Reprinted from

The Menorah Journal

of Spring 1951 and Autumn 1951

(Vol. XXXIX, Xos. 1 & 2)

An Address to Skeptics

BY Emanuel Rackman

MOSES OUR TEACHER himself congratulated the people of Israel for refusing to validate God's appearance on Mount Sinai merely by the accompanying thunder and lightning.

For these nations that thou art to dispossess hearken unto soothsayers and unto diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee to do so. A prophet will the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou didst desire of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying: Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I not die. And the Lord said unto me: I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren. ... I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. But the prophet that shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.

And if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

Deuteronomy XVIII, 17f.—22

Thus did Moses admonish his followers to test all future claims to new truths by their intrinsic merit and coherence with fact. Moderns may justly regard it as an invitation to try new truths in the

light of mankind's collective experience. This places upon man the onus of verification. And that is why the first problem of religious philosophers, who would cope with a generation of agnostics, is to restore faith in knowledge—even before the attempt is made to restore faith in God.

Without meaning at all to be sacrilegious, one is tempted to say that God's fortunes rise and fall with man's faith in man. The ebb and flow of man's confidence in himself determine man's faith in God. Too often religious thinkers try, on the contrary, to predicate religious faith upon man's incompetence, his unworthiness, his utter dependence on some higher force. Such insistence has its pith and point; but no less important to any philosophy of religion is the emphasis on man's capacity for trustworthy knowledge, and on man's dependability as a medium for apprehending truth.

The Jewish tradition has been equally forceful with regard to both trends.

This tradition must now be revitalized.

To such an extent indeed have Jews held faith in man's capacity for knowledge that Saadiah Gaon, the great light of the tenth century, felt that even without Revelation man would have ultimately apprehended the existence and nature of God. He would have done so by reason alone. Revelation but hastened the process and acted as a guide during the quest. The peerless Maimonides, in the twelfth century, expressed the same thought. He said that the first two commandments of the Decalogue—those proclaiming God's existence and the vanity of idolatry—did not require the intervention of the prophet Moses for all Israel to know them. All men, Maimonides held, are capable of arriving at these precise truths without supernatural aid.

Hence, even Orthodox Jews cannot, with intellectual honesty, allow themselves to be authoritarian. There must be confidence in reason. There must be resort to naturalism.

II

IF we would revitalize faith in man's capacity for truth (without which even Revelation can have no validity), we shall find that modern naturalism is not a foe but rather an ally.

Philosophies of naturalism can be used to good advantage for religious faith. True, naturalistic philosophies gave birth to materialism and determinism. But these offspring suffer a fatal weakness. They are not thoroughly naturalistic; they are only partly so. As Professors Randall and Buchler once wrote: "The philosophy of materialism depends for much of its plausibility upon a process which only time has brought fully into the open—oversimplification. Half truths are magnified into truths because of a failure to make one or two important distinctions. The emphasis on the physical as the basis of all phenomena does not warrant the conclusion that all phenomena are physical_____The error of materialism is that it confuses the *dependence* of biological, social and psychological phenomena with the unreality of such phenomena. To say that they cannot exist unless physical conditions exist and that yet the latter may exist independently, does not mean that they are 'nothing but' physical. There cannot be thought without a brain, but from this truth the identity of the two does not follow. The physical may be a basis of all else, but it does not exhaust all."*

One interesting illustration of the materialist's incomplete naturalism is revelant to our theme. The English philosopher Joad once wrote: "Mathematics is a product of the mind's *a priori* reasoning in accordance with self-evident principles from self-evident premises; it owes little or nothing to experience. Yet when we come to experience the world, we find that it obeys the very laws which our reasoning has derived from the study of abstract principles. Now this is a very surprising fact."{

The materialist would explain this remarkable coincidence by pointing out "that the brain is a part of a living organism" and admitting "that living organisms have evolved in an environment which has imposed its characteristics upon them, as a mould will stamp its impress upon the fluid material submitted to it. Our brains, on this hypothesis, function in a manner which reflects the operations of the physical world, and the mental counterpart of this cerebral functioning is our apprehension of the laws of logic and mathematics." But, to be consistent, the materialist should apply

**Philosophy: An Introduction*, pages 196, 198.

J *Guide to Philosophy*, pages 147-148.

the same reasoning to man's *a priori* moral laws as well. Just as he posits a mathematical universe which impresses its characteristics upon the living organism called man, so too he must posit a moral universe which impresses its characteristics upon man. Yet the materialist does not do this. He finds nothing in objective reality that underlies man's moral nature.

A thoroughgoing naturalism, on the other hand, would start with the major premise that *any conception of nature which does not take account of whole man is incomplete*. And what is most significant for a philosophy of religion is the fact that *when the whole man is taken into account—and man is surely a part of nature—then all that is human is natural: all that man is, in fine, is a part of nature*. If man eats, he also thinks. If he breathes, he also perceives.

There is no more reason to deem man's categories of thought or his intuitions as unnatural, or beyond nature, than there is reason to deem his digestive processes as unnatural. Every valid philosophy of religion would thus do well to start with the fact that man is *within nature*—and not an alien *from without*.

This is the essential approach for a philosophy of religion which recognizes the existence of immutable principles of moral law. An agnostic may deny the validity of knowledge. But if he accepts the gift of life at all, he must be prepared to face all the implications of living; and that means he must regard his thinking as *natural*. To be sure, an agnostic has the alternative—which is also a part of nature—to destroy himself physically. So, too, he can retire from contact with other men and frustrate the basic urge for human fellowship. He can deny worth or validity to categories of thought which are natural in man. But if he finds the desire for life sufficiently impelling to restrain him from suicide, he has to take account of all that living implies; and thus he must reckon with the fact that nature, of which his life is a part and within which he moves and acts, endows him not only with the instinct for self-preservation but with all that constitutes his physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual life.

It is true that this all-inclusiveness of nature allows for error, evil, and all things that make life depressing and bewildering. But

natural too are canons of criticism, standards of evaluation, frames of reference. To make choices is natural; to conceive of purposefulness is natural; to idealize as well as to objectify is natural.

So in any philosophy of religion worthy of the name we must start with man. This is not to say that we are bound to have faith in the competence of human intelligence. One need only say that we must have faith in the fact that we are alive; with this recognition of the fact our very living furnishes us with the data we must explore; and these data are within nature and not exterior to it.

If a naturalistic philosophy underlies our approach, then the difference between the agnostic and the religious man pertains fundamentally to acceptance or rejection of life as a reality. The agnostic, though he professes not even to know he is alive, nonetheless lives. The religious man accepts life in nature and all its consequences. Living means not only eating and breathing, but also thinking and feeling, and evaluating and objectifying. And it even involves the objectification of the source of our religious and moral experience, which leads to faith in God and His ethic.

This conclusion we must now further explore.

III

SOME modern men with great faith in the data of human experience have lost their religious faith. But if, on a thoroughgoing naturalism, we hold that man's thinking processes are no less natural than his emotional and intuitive life, our philosophy must encompass the total experience of mankind. A conception of the universe which fails to explain much that constitutes human experience is inadequate; it is in fact myopic; and cannot satisfy our quest for the fullest understanding. Scientific method yields only limited conceptions.

Scientific method is indeed worthy of both our admiration and our loyalty. It has given us a greater mastery over our environment, and has opened up to us new vistas that enrich our religious, ethical and esthetic insights. But the limitations of scientific method are serious. To reject out of hand, as superstitious or illusory, what cannot be interpreted by scientific method because, forsooth, scientific method cannot cope with it, is to place enormous areas of human

experience beyond our ken—and this is most unscientific. For is it not of the essence of empiricism to take account of everything that man experiences—even those experiences which laboratory or statistical techniques cannot interpret? And to reject so much of what constitutes our intellectual and emotional life because a highly successful method in physics or chemistry and biology is not relevant to it—isn't that to commit a most serious fallacy?

For our task is to interpret *all* experience. Science helps us to interpret *some* experiences. But it should not presume to say that what it cannot interpret is not experience at all. That would be substituting a method for the material to which the method is applicable. An illustration will perhaps help to clarify this. We can measure some merchandise by the yard; but we would hardly say that because wine cannot be measured in yards it is not saleable. Similarly of human experience. We can interpret much of it by scientific method; but because some of it cannot be thus interpreted, it doesn't follow that what cannot be thus interpreted must forever be unintelligible.

Philosophers of science have perceived this. More often it is the layman who equates truth with scientific theories. In his admiration for the remarkable achievements of science, the layman exaggerates the claims of the experts. Enamored of the rapid technological advances, he deifies science, making it omniscient and omnipotent. The extreme caution philosophers urge is not heeded; popular conversation on religion and science betrays almost universal misunderstanding.

But even philosophers are often none too fastidious. There are certain types of experience involving values—religious, moral and esthetic—which they are willing to consider only in part. Modern pragmatists, to be sure, insist on including within the scope of their inquiries all of human experience. But for them an idea is true only if “it has, *through action*, worked out the state of things which it contemplated or intended.”* To be deemed true, an idea must be capable of consequences. The consequences may be observed in the laboratory, in the social scene, in the political state, in artistic ex-

* John Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic*, pages 239—240.

pression. But since truth is "success in inquiry," the idea must lend itself to further verification in a tangible fashion.

This concept of "truth" is valuable from the point of view of communicability. If one can verify a statement by reference to its implied and foreseen consequences, one can communicate the "truth" to another convincingly. But what about values, or ideal ends? With regard to these Dewey says that their reality is vouched for by their "undeniable power in action." This is undoubtedly part of the picture, but it is not the whole picture. *If one takes account of the fullness of human experience, one must admit that the reality of ideal ends is vouched for by intuitive experiences which make them powerful in action.* And it is these intuitive experiences which a comprehensive philosophy must undertake to fit into its over-all conception of the universe. Man has experiences which are self-verifying: that is to say, man has experiences which carry with them their own assurances of certitude—experiences which are so strong that they exclude impugning by reference to other data. These are experiences that carry incontrovertible conviction: they are as self-validating as our experience of the sun.

It is this oversight of the pragmatist that impels him, in some instances, to deny truth to the claim that God exists, in spite of the abundance of mystical experiences fully described and authoritatively reported. The pragmatist, like other men, is overwhelmed by the evidence; nor does he impeach the credibility of the witnesses. But the pragmatist makes a distinction between "religious" and "religion." The religious experience he regards as real, for it has verifiable consequences; but the object of that experience—God—is not regarded as real. Thus John Dewey writes:

The actual religious quality in the experience described is the *effect* produced, the better adjustment in life and its conditions, not the manner and cause of its production.

. . . there are also changes in ourselves in relation to the world in which we live that are much more inclusive and deep-seated. They relate not to this and that want in relation to this and that condition of our surroundings, but pertain to our being in its entirety. Because of their scope, this modification of ourselves is enduring. It lasts through any amount of vicissitude

of circumstances, internal and external. There is a composing and harmonizing of the various elements of our being, such that, in spite of changes in the special conditions that surround us, these conditions are also arranged, settled, in relation to us.

This attitude includes a note of submission. But it is voluntary, not externally imposed; and as voluntary, it is something more than a mere Stoical resolution to endure unperturbed throughout the buffetings of fortune. It is more outgoing, ready and glad, than the latter attitude, and it is more active than the former. And in calling it voluntary, it is not meant that it depends upon a particular resolve or volition. It is a change *of* will conceived as the organic plenitude of our being, rather than any special change *in* will.*

This is the result of the *religious experience* which Dewey deems significant and valid. But *religion itself*,³ “the doctrinal or intellectual apparatus and the institutional accretions that grow up are, in a strict sense, adventitious to the intrinsic quality of such experiences.” The idea of God, of a Being with priority reality, Dewey rejects altogether.

But here the philosopher is again overlooking an important part of the experience he would interpret and validate. From the pragmatic point of view, as we have seen, the experience is deemed valid because its consequences are verifiable in action. But the ex*perience itself almost invariably involves a preexisting Unity, which unifies the person’s self. Even if the religious experience could come without such a preexisting Unity, the fact that the experience does most often involve it should prompt us at least to consider that element of the experience. And, certainly, that is the nor*mal situation, not the accidental one. It is the Being of God that is always the unique feature of the religious experience.

Professor Albert C. Knudson has pointed out—in his *Validity of Religious Experience*—that Dewey errs in denying validity to the belief in God simply because that doctrine is *interpretive* of the *religious* experience. Belief in God is, first, the “distinctive element in religious experience.” Second, no experience is possible without interpretation. Knudson writes that “all experience is the result of

* *Common Faith*, pages 14, 16-17.

a creative activity on the part of the mind, that no object enters the mind either physically or metaphysically, that the mind builds up its own objects on the occasion of external stimuli and in accordance with principles immanent within itself, and that among these principles is an innate capacity to experience and think the infinite.” And just as we attribute reality to the objects of sense experience, and that reality is validated by our natural capacity to interpret sense experience, so we must attribute reality to the object of religious experience. For this reality also is validated by our natural capacity to interpret religious experience.

In any event, it would seem the pragmatist ignores that part of the religious experience which is intuitive and self-verifying—the belief in the existence of God. This is not in accord with a thoroughgoing naturalism that requires us to interpret *all* of our experience, including the object of the experience which is God.

If we should go along with the pragmatist and define truth in terms of consequences, ignoring all self-verifying experiences, might we not be led to some such pass as this: it is impossible to aver that one loves his young wife without waiting for the later vicissitudes of the marital state to prove it. Would not the pragmatist be impelled to say one thing or the other: *either* that future developments will prove the truth of your present experience of love; *or* that the assertion of your love is inconsequential to anyone else but yourself—its truth or lack of truth need not stir general attention. But neither of these alternatives is satisfactory. For neither gives one an understanding of a very basic experience whose meaning is vital to the lover *now*.

Nor can we say it is “true” that you love if you deport yourself as a lover, and we can verify that you love by observing your behavior. That could mean ignoring your subjective state altogether. And your subjective state is as much a part of nature as the flowers you give your beloved.

In short, to define “truth” in such a way that one cannot say, “It is true that I love,” while one can say, “It is true that the sun now shines,” is to bifurcate nature: it is to hold that truth is applicable to the senses but not to our intuitive life. Yet surely a lover knows that his experience of love is as real, as moving, as con-

vincing, as the sight of the sun. The mechanist may give us some insight into antecedents; the pragmatist may give us some insight into consequences. But both ignore the basic ineffable experience, and both would deprive it of the very value or quality of truth—the *vrai verite*.

Nor, again, do we solve the problem of interpreting the religious experience by substituting either nature or humanity as the object of that experience, instead of God. The totality of natural phenomena, the totality of humanity, are also objects whose reality is apprehended, not from sense experience, but rather from a self-validating experience which is akin to the religious experience, and is the unifying factor of faith in God. To sense nature as a unity, or to sense its infinity, is—let us admit it—impossible. To sense human society as a whole is equally impossible. One can only apprehend them as one intuitively apprehends God's existence—God as the object of our religious experiences.

It is true, as Dewey points out, that religious men experience different kinds of gods. But this is far from proving that there is no preexisting Reality which is the object experienced—only preconceived doctrines of institutional religion whose very validity is in question. What is proved from the fact that religious experiences are of different varieties is only that they cannot be accepted at face value, any more than sense experience can always be accepted at face value. In the words of Professor Knudson again, the religious experience “must be purged by criticism before its true significance can be brought out.” When they are carefully examined it is found that there is something universal in all such experiences—something that unifies the self of the experiencer, giving his life, and even his despair, a single direction.

Nor, once more, does it help sceptics to try to explain the religious experience in terms of factors that contribute to its rise. Here again they overlook one phase of the experience not contained in any of the elements which may have partially contributed to its existence. No one feels that an interpretation of color in terms of wave lengths is adequate to explain all that color is to the esthete. Similarly, no philosopher can interpret religious experience exclusively in terms either of its antecedents or its consequences. Fear,

wishful thinking, drugs, any number of factors, may contribute to the development of the religious state. Unified personality, moral direction, contentment may be its consequences. But that is not the whole story. Something there is in the experience itself that is not of the nature of any of the contributing factors. Naturalists will interpret the experience faultily if they ignore this added something. Men experience God, they experience new strength, they acquire a new altruism: these experiences are not contained in the causes, no matter how conducive the causes may be to the coming of the experiences.

Harold Hoffding expresses the same thought in another connection:

Consciousness and personality can as little be explained as the products of previously given elements as organic life can be explained as the product of unorganic elements. On the other hand, consciousness and personality, just like organic life, come into being through a perpetual synthesis of elements not originally begotten by themselves. It is this antinomy which makes the genesis of life and of personality so great a riddle.*

Just so, the religious experience cannot be explained in terms of only some of its elements. John Dewey errs in ignoring that Object which gives the experience its truly religious character—the reality of God.

IV

THAT many philosophers glibly ignore the essential cause, or basis, of the religious experience is even more apparent from their writings on the moral experience. If our desire for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness accounts for the emergence of certain social laws, a man's moral experience often involves a denial of those laws as appertaining to himself. A man accepts martyrdom, prison, poverty, because of his moral experience. That experience is something more than any contributing cause.

There are, then, experiences which are self-validating, whose emergence can be explained only in part by observable factors. In

* *Problems of Philosophy* (translation by G. M. Fisher), page 19.

overlooking them the pragmatist overlooks this palmary fact, that men, have spiritual experiences which impel them to reject ideas whose consequences "scientific method" may find desirable. And these spiritual experiences are as much a part of countless human beings as our experiences of sky or sun, or eating or dancing. Yet the pragmatist cannot call such experiences "real"!

It is not enough to say with Dewey that the reality of ideal ends as ideals is vouched for by their "undeniable power in action." That is putting the cart before the horse. The reality of the ends is vouched for by something which makes them powerful in action; and what makes the ends real is an intuitive experience which is self-validating. It does have consequences, very tangible ones; but the fact that the idea has redounded to the greater happiness of men is not the basis for deeming it true. For even when it detracts from the happiness of men, men will not cast it aside, nor deem the experience unreal or untrustworthy.

Bertrand Russell, for example, holds the "Rights of Man" to be philosophically indefensible. Stating the conception from a point of view a pragmatist would accept, he writes: "The general happiness is increased if a certain sphere is defined within which each individual is to be free to act as he chooses, without the interference of any external authority."*

Yet Russell admits a repugnance to certain suggestions which might be deemed necessary for the maintenance and increase of that general happiness. "I am informed by many people," he writes, "that the preservation of democracy . . . can only be secured by gassing immense numbers of children and doing a number of other horrible things ... I think I should refuse to use such means even if I were persuaded that they would secure the end and that no others would." Here he yields to the proposition that children have inviolable rights which, though indefensible philosophically, he cannot impugn. Therefore, it cannot be said that the idea of the sanctity of human life derives its validity from the assumption that it works well in human society. On the other hand, because we have that idea we achieve certain consequences and avoid others. Because we have

**Power*, page 115.

that idea we cherish democracy; but nonetheless we would not preserve democracy at the cost of gassing our children.

Bertrand Russell himself must concede he has this spiritual experience with regard to the sanctity of human life. Yet, in another connection, he fails to see that. He conjectures how civilization developed filial piety in place of parricide. This development, he says, was “a device, however instinctive and unconscious, for prolonging parental power beyond the early years when children are helpless.”* Here Russell fails to recognize that the idea of the sanctity of human life may have determined the growth of filial piety, precisely as his own conviction regarding the life of children determined his attitude toward their extermination by gas. In his own attitude toward children, Russell cannot make a rationalization comparable to the one he uses for children’s attitude toward parents; therefore, it is a spiritual state or feeling or experience that becomes the sole arbiter of conduct. The idea is there; it is real; but its reality is not derived from its consequences. It even obstructs the application of means that *pragmatically* would advance social ends.

Even were the spiritual state verifiable in terms of its consequences for social action, the pragmatist’s test of truth would still not be valid. For it loses sight of the fact that Bertrand Russell feels the way he does about children irrespective of the consequences. His experience of affection, or respect for their lives, is final, ultimate. It is valid to him without regard to consequences. That is the way he experiences his affection. And to hold a theory of truth which ignores this type of experience is either to shun or to deny its reality, and the plain fact that it calls for interpretation.

Humanists, on the other hand, acknowledge the reality of the moral experience and also the reality of the religious experience; but as the object of these experiences they would substitute humanity for God. They recognize man’s experience of the sacred; but they would divorce it from any association with God, as a supernatural or metaphysical entity, and attach it to human society.

But the very idea of human society—of a oneness among men—is valid only because our moral experience makes it so.

* *Power*, pages 245—246.

It is in our moral experience that we conceive of the totality of human souls; in our moral experience we posit its reality. Humanists accept the self-validating moral experience of “human society” as a whole—a “human society” which exists only as the object of moral experience. Yet humanists insist on rejecting a Oneness in the Universe, which is the object in the religious experience.

To sum up. *First:* any adequate interpretation of the universe should explain *all* that we experience; an interpretation which does not take account of self-verifying experiences is incomplete. *Second:* religious and moral experiences involve *a priori* truths with regard to God and the sanctity of human life. *Third:* there is an illogical reluctance on the part of pragmatists and humanists to accept self-verifying religious experiences, and the existence of God thereby established, while at the same time they do regard moral experiences as self-verifying, thus establishing the reality of the oneness of humanity.

Democracy's Religious Root

BY Emanuel Rackman

IF the study, analysis, and synthesis of immediate self-verifying experiences are “musts” for the theologian, they are no less so for the political philosopher who would uphold the democratic faith. The extent to which the ideas and institutions of religion have impeded or advanced the development of democratic government is not the issue. The more fundamental problem is whether it is possible to validate the doctrines that are both explicit and implicit in our conception of democracy without relying upon our self-verifying experiences which prompt us to believe in God and the reality of a moral order in the Universe.

The fact is that every great thinker and writer on democracy has made assumptions which are based upon the reality of a moral order in the Universe. Yet many of them would resent the imputation that their thought is theological. Nonetheless, their ultimate rationale involves the validity of self-verifying experiences which underlie so much of modern theology; and it is intellectually dishonest to assume the existence of certain moral and esthetic values on the ground of self-verifying experiences while, at the same time, rejecting religious values which are validated by the same capacity of the human soul.

Bertrand Russell's admiration for democracy, for example, is based on his reverence for the life of the individual and its fulfillment. The highest value is placed thereon. He deems the totalitarian state most objectionable because it makes the welfare of the state, not the welfare of the individual, the end to be sought.

This is the essential difference between the Liberal outlook and that of the totalitarian State, that the former regards the welfare of the State as residing ultimately in the welfare of the individual, while the latter regards the State as the end and in-

This article is a sequel to Rabbi Rackman's "An Address to Skeptics" in our previous issue (Spring 1951).—ED.

dividuals merely as indispensable ingredients, whose welfare must be subordinated to a mystical totality which is a cloak for the interest of the rulers. . . . Liberalism, in valuing the individual, is carrying on the Christian tradition; its opponents are reviving certain pre-Christian doctrines. (*Power*, pages 302-303.)

Mr. Russell acknowledges that the religious tradition has heightened, accentuated the value placed upon the individual human being. But on what basis shall this value become a conviction? Mr. Russell graciously applauds the saints and sages of the religious tradition. Yet he fails to see that they were able to achieve the idealism he cherishes because they felt it to be part of a divine order of things.

N'OR can a utilitarian philosophy preserve that idealism when all values become only functions of the general happiness. From the point of view of most men's happiness, a state that guarantees the majority food and shelter and some amusement, and relieves them of the burden of intelligent participation in government, is by far more desirable—even if some minorities and some freedoms are sacrificed upon its altars—than a state which imposes governmental responsibilities upon every citizen, and makes all citizens co-partners in the onerous task of self-government. Every fibre of Mr. Russell's free being would rebel against the former. Yet, according to the doctrines of utilitarianism, the craving for security and the necessities of life that prepossesses the vast majority is the criterion of good.

Should Mr. Russell argue further that, while the majority may prefer security now, in the future more men will come to resemble him and entertain his wishes, and therefore we should promote the cause of democracy in behalf of the future, then one can only ask why men should sacrifice their essential desires now for a hypothetical general happiness of unborn generations.

And, while we struggle to preserve democratic institutions, it would be the sheerest folly to believe that our adversaries have no "general happiness" which *they* want to conserve. The enemies of democracy derive very certain pleasure from the magnification of their states. That is the thing they seek. They cherish the thought

of dying for their fatherland on the field of battle. To be sure, their success and happiness would not contribute to the happiness of other peoples over the globe: far from it! There would not be universal happiness. But if they are firm in their faith that for a thousand years they can dominate the world, what makes their point of view wrong and ours right? If victory were theirs, their own happiness might have been unparalleled. If sixty million Germans could live on the slave labor of six hundred millions, what a paradise they would have wrought for themselves!

THE truth is that the basis for our faith in democracy is not that its achievement will make us happy. It is rather a self-verifying moral experience with regard to the sanctity of human life. We would rather lose our lives than violate the mandate of this moral experience. By our own intuition we sense the rightness or wrongness of a viewpoint regarding rights that inhere in man; and so strong do our convictions become that, for them, we do not hesitate to call upon our sons to make the supreme sacrifice.

It is interesting that Tom Paine, in his classic *Rights of Man*, uses Biblical texts to predicate his most unscientific assumption that all men are equal. You cannot establish human equality by sense perception. No visual or auditory tests will help you. From the point of view of the chemist, an obese man has greater chemical content than a thin man. From the point of view of the economist, men with different talents have different economic worth. Even our legal system recognizes that. Kill a pauper by automobile accidentally, and his next of kin will recover a mere pittance compared to what the next of kin of a banker would receive. So Tom Paine must needs resort to Biblical authority for his assumption.

Today we reach the same conclusion through man's self-verifying moral and religious experience. But to posit man's equality merely as a useful assumption does not do justice to human experience. For we regard man's equality as a real fact, even if that equality leads us to a course of conduct which may not be immediately advantageous to us. We prefer the democratic form of government, even when inefficient, to the most efficient and benevolent tyranny. To say that we exercise such preference because we have

the future in mind—the mortality of the despot and the possibility that he may be succeeded by one less benevolent—is to evade the fact that we abhor the paternalism of even the benevolent dictator, because it comes from one who would ignore his basic equality with all other men.

Professor E. M. Sait, in his book *Democracy* (New York, 1929), discusses many of the criticisms that have been leveled in recent years against the democratic state. His concluding defense of “government by the many” is a theological one, though very similar to Bertrand Russell’s in tone. For he too finds the ultimate reason for preferring democracy in “the dignity of human personality.”

WHAT, then, makes this item called “human personality” so important that we attribute to it dignity and sanctity? If our faith in democracy, and its *raison d’etre*, must derive validity from a conception of man as a sacred being, are we not relying upon a self-verifying moral experience no different in essence from the religious experience? The moral experience vests man with an ineffable sacred character, while the religious experience vests all the earth therewith.

Now to deem moral and religious experiences real because they are “powerful in action,” and yet not to deem the objects of these experiences as real, is to deny reality to a basic element in all of such experiences. Be the object God, or the Oneness of the Universe, or the Oneness of Humanity, these objects are real—as real as the experience itself. And if one regards the objects of sense experience as real—the sun, the moon, a chair and a table—because the predication of reality to these things is a natural process of thought, so too must one predicate reality to the objects of our moral and religious experience—God, the soul, humanity, and the totality of the Universe.

Professor A. C. Knudson writes:

. . . there is a psychological “immediacy” in objective experience that carries conviction with it. This immediacy cannot be explained away as illusory in the case of religious experience and accepted as valid in the case of sense experience. If it has epistemological value in the latter case, there is no necessary reason why it should not have it in the former. Suggestion and

expectation, it is true, play a larger part in religious than in sense experience; but they do not create the objective reference of religious experience. At the most they determine to some extent the particular psychological forms that the experience takes. The objective reference is as original and immediate in religious as in sense experience. And the assurance that the apparent immediacy of the religious object carries with it has the right to be treated in the same way as the corresponding assurance in sense experience. (*The Validity of Religious Experience*, pages 99-100.)

THIS type of naturalism in religion, it may be added, does away with the ancient dichotomies of naturalism and supernaturalism, relativism and absolutism.

In moral and religious experiences, supernatural objects and absolutes are the things experienced. But, insofar as they are a part of man's natural experiences, they too are natural. If man believes in the reality of the world he experiences, and its intelligibility to his natural self, then he must accept the reality of those absolutes of which he catches but a glimpse. And man's capacity for moral and religious experience is part of the permanent texture of nature, not an illusory or transitory phase of his existence. With this capacity he comes to know God and the moral law. With it he grasps the Infinite and eternal values.

Furthermore, such an approach makes not only for the reality of good in our conception of the Universe but also for the reality of its purpose, because our capacity for religious and moral experience involves the use of certain categories of thought. In sense experience the categories are space and time. In religious and moral experience the categories are value and purpose. They are just as real as the spatio-temporal categories by which we behold and interpret the objects of sense experience.

These spatio-temporal categories have received the attention of many philosophers in recent years. But what requires more reiteration is the preeminence of the *a priori* in both religious and moral experience. As Dr. Jacob B. Agus puts it, "There is indeed vouchsafed to man, albeit admittedly at rare moments only, an intuition of the eternal validity and of the extra-human source of

ethical values.” The values, however, are not ethical alone. They involve a perspective with regard to all that constitutes the realm of nature.

THUS one arrives at certain ideas that are fundamental in Judaism’s philosophy of religion.

The first conviction is that the idea of God does not grow of itself in the human mind, “owing nothing to God’s self-disclosing action.” God is real and reveals Himself in the religious experience. Israel’s teachers have differed in their interpretation of the account of revelation in the Bible. But all are agreed that there is direct communication between God and man.

Second, the coincidence of moral and religious experiences has always been the rule in Jewish tradition, rather than the exception. The prophets enjoyed self-verifying experiences not only of God but also of His will. His commands and exhortations of justice, peace and human brotherhood were as certain as His reality. Not all Christian philosophers would deem morality and religion inseparable; but Rudolph Otto, in his book *The Idea of the Holy*, asserts an *a priori* relation between the two. That is unequivocally the Jewish point of view.

Third, the conviction that God exists and constantly reveals Himself to man in religious experiences, which are almost invariably moral experiences also, makes Judaism a religious tradition with very few dogmas and with a primarily this-worldly emphasis. Since man’s capacity for religious experience and his interpretation thereof vary constantly, Judaism makes no attempt to formulate for all times its basic beliefs. Nor does it attempt to visualize the world beyond, a world beyond physical experience, while it does seek to alter the present world through our moral experience.

Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism all subscribe to these premises.

And it is by our insistence upon the validity of man’s experience of God, and the simultaneity of religious and moral experiences, that we establish the validity of those aims and ideals which prompt us to preserve our democratic institutions.