CHAPTER - VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters we have surveyed the religious philosophy of Otto in detail. Only one task remains: to give our conclusions. But before this is done it will be appropriate to give a resume of the discussions of the previous chapters. So the first section of this chapter will be devoted to this and the second to our own conclusions.

8.1.1. Chapter I is introductory in nature and briefly indicates the 'problem' which Otto wants to solve in his religious philosophy. Otto is seriously concerned with the problem of God. He is aware of the impact of all forms of atheism and naturalism on religion in general and Christianity in particular. He takes upon himself the task of explaining religion in such a way that the onslaught of naturalism may be ineffective.

In this context he examines the different anthropological theories of the origin of religion. He is dissatisfied with such theories on the ground that they attribute abstract thought of self and supernatural power to the primitive mind. Conception
of supernatural power according to Otto is a later rationalization of the 'daemonic dread' which is the earliest manifestation of the a priori numinous experience.

It is further shown in this chapter how morality also cannot be taken as the source of religion. Purely religious concepts like sin, salvation, redemption, grace etc. cannot be derived or explained on the basis of moral laws.

Otto passionately insists on the autonomy of religion. Religion is not an outcome of non-religious something. Its source lies in the depth of human mind itself. In Otto's opinion our mind has a priori potentiality to have religious feelings when appropriate situations arise. Differences among religions are not a matter of kind, but of degree, for at the bottom of all religions, there are the same numinous feelings which are rationalised variously by different religions.

8.1.2. In Chapter II a brief survey of the sources of Otto's religious philosophy is given to explain how Otto is influenced by Luther, Kant, Schleiermacher, Fries, Hegel, Ritschl, Troeltsch, Soderblom and the Indian philosophers specially Sāmkara. It is also shown that Otto's eclecticism is not a loose limping together of various elements of thought gathered from many theologians and
philosophers. Otto's theology is an original synthesis of those elements.

8.3.3. In Chapter III the traditional Christian idea of God is given in outlines and the various arguments for God's existence are examined. It is shown why the arguments failed to achieve the end for which they were given.

The Cosmological, the Teleological, and the Moral arguments for the existence of God give at best an idea of God and not His existence. The Ontological argument tries to derive the existence of God from God-idea. But 'existence' not being a real predicate, this argument also fails to bridge the gap between thought and reality. The failure of these arguments guided Otto to steer clear of any purely 'rational' argument for God's existence. He has attempted to justify the Christian conception of God as a personal Being - a God of Love, basing on the numinous feelings.

8.1.4. In Chapter IV which is one of the core chapters religious consciousness is examined. According to Otto in religious consciousness there is an essential numinous element which is perfectly sui generis, elementary and indefinable. It is the apprehension of a transcendent reality.
Otto rests his religious philosophy on the distinction between the rational and the non-rational. The rational attributes of God are definite concepts. But they do not exhaust the idea of God. There is a non-rational over-plus, an excess over the rational concepts. (This is the Numinous).

The religious epistemology of Otto emphasises that (a) religious knowledge has an external reference, (b) that it is potentially universal (c) that in it rational and the non-rational elements are commingled and (d) that there is a validating principle in it.

Both the rational and the non-rational elements in religious experience are a priori in the sense that they are necessary and universal. Religious capacity is a priori in man. Owing to its slow awakening, many may not be conscious of it, but potentially it is there in everyone.

The rational and the non-rational elements in religious experience come together owing to the mediation of some feelings which are similar to both. Otto calls this schematization.

The faculty of divination is the capacity of men to recognise the signs of the divine. Men have numinous feelings,
but they have to be sure that they are having genuine numinous feelings and not illusions. Otto assigns two functions to the faculty of divination: it is the ground of the a priori numinous feelings and also the source of our recognising the holy. It is responsible for the origin and validation of the numinous feelings.

8.1.5. Chapter V is devoted to the analysis of the 'Numinous'. It is explained now the Idea of the Holy or God comes, the numinous feelings.

The numinous feelings are described with the help of the ideogram of 'mystérium tremendum et fascinans'. Tremendum is the adjective of the substantive mysterium. Tremendum, which is the terrifying aspect of the Numen, can be further analysed into awfulness, overpoweringness and urgency. Otto thinks that 'creature-feeling' is the first subjective reaction to numinous feelings: man feels himself submerged in the majesty of the Numen. Mysterium is the 'wholly other', the anyad, the dissimile, the alienum of the God-idea. Fascinans is the captivating quality of the Numen.

The numinous can be directly aroused in us when we are in contact with holy objects and situations. Or, it can be indirectly aroused by fearful objects, miracles, some unintelligible religious words, art, architecture, music etc.
The numinous feelings develop into a rich and complex idea of God due to the schematisation of the non-rational feelings by the rational concepts. The tremendum develops into the holy wrath of God. The mysterium is schematised by absoluteness of rational qualities attributed to God. The fascinans develops into the grace of God. So God is considered as having all the holy attributes in absolute degrees. However, at the root of this God idea, is the numinous feeling. So the Numen and the Holy denote the same reality considered from two standpoints: non-rational and the rational. For Otto, Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of the Holy upon the earth. He is not just a religious prophet, but the Son of God.

8.1.6 In Chapter VI Otto's view on mysticism is examined. Otto is not a mystic in the traditional sense of the term. But according to his own definition of mysticism, he can be taken to be a mystic. According to Otto mysticism, while sharing the nature of religion shows a preponderance of its non-rational elements and an overstressing of them in respect to the over-abounding aspect of the numen.

For Otto, in mysticism the 'union with God' is not essential. It is a life lived in the knowledge of God with the non-rational aspect of the God-knowledge emphasised.
Otto's comparison of Śāṅkara and Eckhart as mystics is also examined here. He has found similarities in their conceptions of the Reality as Existence, the distinction between Godhead and God, the emphasis on Salvation etc. He has found differences in the dynamic or static conceptions of the deity and the presence or absence of the ethical content in the mysticisms of Śāṅkara and Eckhart. Otto happily admires the conformities between the two mystics; but in the case of differences, he sides with the mysticism of Eckhart. This shows his natural bias towards Christianity. His notion of a good mystic is that of a Christian mystic.

8.1.7 In Chapter VII a brief account of Otto's conception of man, predestination, sin, grace, salvation etc. are examined.

Christianity teaches that man was created free by God. The difficulties in this conception are examined. There is a conflict between God's omniscience and human freedom. Otto explains the conception of predestination as an outcome of 'creature-feeling'. It is due to the overpowering nature of the numen that the creature with all his thoughts, powers, plans and resolves recedes to nothing and the Will of the Numen is done. Predestination for Otto, is intensified creature-feeling in conceptual terms.
Otto thinks that sin is a religious and not a moral concept. The feeling of sin is *sui generis* and it cannot be reduced to moral-consciousness. The question of sin comes when the subject has the numinous feelings. In contrast to the sacredness of the numen, the subject feels his own profanity. In the circumstance, the ideal attitude should have been one of humility, but man behaves otherwise. Sin is the name of the pride and selfishness of man towards God. Salvation is the liberation of man from sinfulness. For Otto, it can come only through the mediation of Jesus Christ who works as a mediator between the holy God and the unholy man. The performance of Christ in salvation is one of 'atonning' the sinfulness of man, to make him fit for his meeting the Holy.

We have examined in this chapter Otto’s comparison between Christianity and Viśiṣṭādvaīta of Rāmānuja. We have shown that some of the Christian tenets are hard to accept.

The aim of Otto’s religious philosophy is to justify the Christian conception of a personal God and His incarnation as Jesus Christ. He thinks that Christianity is superior to any other religion of the world - not in the sense that truth is superior to falsity but in the sense that Plato is superior to Aristotle. But we have contended that it is difficult to decide in favour of any religion as the best religion.
We have recapitulated in brief our study of Otto's religious philosophy. The next section will be devoted to our concluding observations.

3.2.1. Otto's religious philosophy is a grand synthesis of the ideas taken from the east and the west. More than two centuries of religious thought of Germany culminated in Otto. Our study has shown that the sources of his thought go beyond Germany. Otto's doctrine of the numinous feelings is influenced by Indian thought. It has an unerasable mark of Śāṅkara's views of Brahmānubhava. In spite of the difference in tradition and culture between the east and the west — Otto was not only made a patient study of Indian philosophies and religions but has wrought a synthesis between his own tradition with the best that India (and for that matter the east) could offer. So in his theology the west has come to a meaningful dialogue with the east.

However, as far as we see it, Otto's being the first attempt to weave a religious philosophy basing on elements drawn from Indian religious tradition and Christian theology, it could not completely succeed because Otto did not develop his religious philosophy to its logical conclusions. A proper unfoldment of the ontological status of the Numen and the subject, that is man who has the numinous feelings -
would have made Otto’s religious philosophy pantælistic. Constrained from the beginning by the basic tenet of the ultimate difference between God and man as taught by Christianity, Otto has failed to realise that the gap between the Numen and man has been left uncovered by his theology. In spite of the force it has in claiming that the numinous feelings are not subjective but are of the numen praesens, Otto cannot remove the doubts of a hard-headed sceptic. Not arguing with the sceptic is one way of avoiding the problem, but it is not the best way. And as long as there is distinction between Numen and man, man cannot be sure of his numinous feelings, notwithstanding the presence in man of what Otto calls the Faculty of Divination. In the last analysis his position verges on agnosticism as far as the ‘Wholly Other’ is concerned. That being the ‘substantive’ Numen, Numen-in-Itself, an element of doubt can always linger as to the genuineness of the numinous feelings. Final doubts can be removed only by accepting the identity of the Numen and man. Man has numinous feelings because he is essentially the Numen. His ‘faculty of divination’ is the capacity for self-awareness. Now this is a point where one has to leave behind religion and enter into metaphysics. Acceptance of the metaphysical identity of man and the Ultimate Reality will not lower down the status of religion. It will acquire a new meaning.
But Otto has all along been working within the framework of Christianity, so he could not rise above its central teachings. However, it must be granted that he has made a great contribution towards the ideologically syntheses of the East and the West. There was a time when, even in the philosophical field, talk of an impersonal substance led to the burning of Bruno alive or excommunication of Spinoza. The fact that Otto, has talked of the non-rational 'Wholly Other' Numen as the basis of our idea of God and people have listened to him attentively shows that, the West has realised the significance of this principle. So the platform Otto has constructed by his efforts for the understanding of the essential basis of religions could in the long run, pave the way for the unity of all religions. This could directly and indirectly help the cause of world peace because much of the tension among the people of the world has a basis in the supposed antagonism among religions.

8.2.2. Otto has displayed remarkable originality in adapting Kant's epistemology to his own religious philosophy. With the deft and acumen of a religious psychologist he has analysed the religious experience into rational and non-rational elements. But the explanation for the coming together of the two, as they do in our religious consciousness, requires a deeper insight into the problem. Analysis of the religious
experience is the job of a psychologist; but the exploration of the process of the synthesis of the various bits of consciousness needs the acumen of an epistemologist. Otto has fully utilised Kant's principle of schematism here. Sometimes he is criticised for having changed the meaning of the principle of schematism. But seeing that Kant's and Otto's problems are different - we can hardly deny the significance of Otto's utilization of the principle.

Otto's analysis of religious experience is original, illuminating and instructive. The fact that even after years of their publication Otto's views are popular among theologians, religious philosophers and students of religion speaks volumes for itself.

8.2.3. Otto's interpretation of God-experience which can be called a transcendental argument for the existence of God is the best that a theologian could do while still remaining within the Christian tradition. The numinous feelings, for Otto, are a priori, but empirical in a deeper sense. Were they a priori only, they would at best be Kantian Idea of Reason. Were they empirical only like ordinary experience they would be liable to doubt and denial. By explaining numinous experience as a priori, Otto has argued for its necessity, universality and objectivity. We feel that this is a strong argument for God's existence, an argument based on the
experience of God. This we like to call a Transcendental Argument due to the transcendental reference of all our experience. All our ideas are based on some experience, and all our experience begins with mind but does not originate there. Excepting probably hallucinations, all our experience was some external reference. Even illusions are misinterpretations of some real experience. Now, we must either dismiss religious experience as a grand universal hallucination or accept its genuineness. It is difficult to accept that a hallucination should be so thoroughly universal and people should continue to have it even after they are told about it. Hence the hypothesis that religion is hallucinatory is itself worthy of dismissal. Religious feelings are genuine. To that extent they point to 'Something' which stirs them in man. That 'Something' may be given any name. Otto calls the 'Something' the Numen and the first inchoate feelings of it 'numinous feelings'. When our intellect interprets these feelings, and rationalizes them, they become the idea of holiness or God. Thus, following the trail of the development of the idea of God, Otto reaches the numinous experience and finally shows how it refers to what we call 'God' - but which has various names in different religions.

8.2.4. Otto's contribution to comparative study of religions is immense. With the help of his view of the numinous feelings we can explain the essential unity of all religions. It is not
that we are applying his religious philosophy to comparative religion, in fact he himself has brought to bear on his religious philosophy views from Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and even the proto-religions like Animism, Manaism etc...his sympathetic understanding of the various religions of the world is worthy of emulation.

8.2.5. Otto's contribution to religious terminology is worth mentioning. Most of the criticisms against spiritual and parapsychnological phenomena are due to the misunderstanding of them which in turn is due to the imprecise use of terms in describing them. The language used in our day to day conversation is not fit for describing spiritual entities and spiritual experience.

Otto has done well to give specific names to specific religious experiences and principles of religious knowledge. 'Holy', 'Numen', 'a priori' 'rational', 'non-rational', 'mysterium, tremendum et fascinans', 'wholly other', 'creature-feeling', 'schematism', 'faculty of divination' etc. Have acquired new significance in religious universe of discourse. If we can further improve upon what Otto has done we hope that religion can get rid of many of its criticisms which are due to the failure on the part of the critics to catch the spirit of the age.
of religion. The misunderstandings of religious phenomena are largely due to the use of 'secular' words in describing them. Religion must have its own language, just as logic, mathematics, physics etc. have theirs.

8.2.6. To our mind, whatever flaws are there in Otto's religious philosophy could be removed by accepting intuition as a means of knowledge. Intuition is immediate experience of Reality in the sense of 'turiya' of Indian philosophy. Had Otto seriously examined the problem of the relationship between God and man — he would have noticed that from the ultimate standpoint man cannot be different from God. And this knowledge or experience can come from intuition alone. Otto's 'numinous feelings' have to be raised only one rung above to the status where the numen and man are undifferentiated existence—consciousness—bliss (saoccidânandâ). His ideograms - mysterium - tremendum et fascinans come remarkably close to it: Mysterium is the universal substantive the highest, the commonest element shared by everything, 'Existence'; Tremendum is the Big, the Cosmic, the first awareness of the 'Existent' and in that sense consciousness; Fascinans is the rapturous nature of the consciousness in its union with the 'Existent' — it is bliss. Our interpretation may appear far-fetched. It is only to show that there is potentiality in Otto's theology itself to develop further in the direction of more self-consistency. All this can happen once intuition is accepted as a means of immediate experience.
If so done: (i) Otto will be able to get rid of the essential difference between man and God - a teistic biik which is more accepted on faith than tested by logic or experience. So the ofeature-consciousness and sinfulness of man with which he begins can be left behind and he can start with the principle of identity of the Infinite and the finite, Absolute and the relative. In fact all these terms, including Holiness and profanity, sin and salvation etc. will be true at the empirical level. They will lack ultimate ontological status. Only one self-effulgent Reality, and nothing more, will be the conclusion.

(ii) Mysticism, as Otto explains to be just a knowing of God with non-rationality stressed - will mean identity-experience of man with the Numen. This position is more logical than the simple statement that in mysticism union experience is secondary - as maintained by Otto. However union-experience has to be identity-experience in order to be metaphysically self-consistent.

(iii) Otto's rather dogmatic stand as to why there is only 'One' Jesus and not more can be supplemented by the belief in the potential Christhood of everyman. Only a few persons like Jesus know their identity with God and they are
revered by the rest of mankind as the incarnations of God. So the humility and profanity of man can be done away with and everyman can be thought of as self-forgotten God. Such a position restores the ancient glory of man lost due to Adam's Fall. In fact the Fall is symbolic of the Universal Ignorance (Máya). Once one rises above it, Paradise is not a past loss, nor a future regain; it is an Eternal Experience readily available for the person who steadfastly shun the course of ignorance, establish themselves in the experience of the Divine, know their own Divinity. The Life Divine is ours for the striving. Only we have to distinguish between the ephemeral and the real, ignorance and wisdom, bondage and liberation, and strive for our own Divinity through all the snares that the world, a product of the inscrutable Illusion has spread around us.

Finally: In spite of whatever we have said which only means the direction in which Otto's religious philosophy could be developed, we can say with certainty that what Otto has done is in itself a great achievement. As the days will pass, there will be further sallies of ideas between the East and the West, each influencing the other and a rich universal religion, a rich universal theology, a rich universal philosophy will emerge. Such a union of philosophy and theology may be able to negotiate with science and may be, we shall have a great 'unity'
of human wisdom which will be acceptable to all, East as well as West, scientists, philosophers, theologians and all who are interested in knowing the Truth of the universe. Otto's philosophy of religion justifies the possibility of the union of East and West as against Rudyard Kipling's view that the twain shall never meet. This is a supremely significant thing for the humanity as a whole.