CHAPTER II

SOURCES OF OTTO'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

2.1. Introductory

"In the long course of its history, religion has frequently known the experience of rediscovery. In this matter it has not been distinguished from the other spheres of human endeavour and achievement - the fluctuation of taste, the vicissitudes in creative endeavour in the arts and in the sciences."¹ Religion grows in a zigzag way. Its growth is hampered when it gets confused with the dogma and formulae and the 'inner change' of men is neglected. Rites and rituals are but the peripheries of religion - its centre is the heart of man. Religious experiences remodel the religious man. On the contrary, if religion works as a tool for hiding immoral activities, if superstitions pass in the name of religion, if religion is used as a means of calling some men as holy just because they mechanically perform certain so-called religious activities and some men as profane because they do not have opportunities for or willingness to doing them then there is general degeneration of religion. This is the time when new religious movements start. Spiritual degeneration leads to spiritual regeneration. Rise of Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Sikhism is due to the aforesaid reasons. Ramification of a particular religion into many sects, in some cases, can also be attributed to the same reasons.
Germany had witnessed an intense spiritual regeneration in the 16th century in the form of Reformation. It had snaked Christianity to its roots and had given Christianity a new outlook. Protestantism as a distinct and powerful movement had started and gradually established itself not only in Germany but also in many other countries of the world. The spiritual atmosphere of Germany got charged with profound sense of faith and purity of heart as the orux of religious experience. Christocentricity, justification by faith alone, priesthood of all believers prepared the ground for religious autonomy which was gradually worked out by theologians in the centuries to follow and became the fulcrum of Otto’s religious philosophy.

Sources of Otto’s religious philosophy lie in his theologico-philosophical background spanning more than a couple of centuries. His interpretation of religion gets its vitality from the spiritual atmosphere of Germany. His concept of religious autonomy is the culmination of closely knit theological development starting with the Protestantism of Luther and the Critical philosophy of Kant. To Otto’s interpretation of religion every significant movement in modern German theology has a contribution. "In his interpretation...... Otto draws together and formulates in original terms the cardinal insights of the great figures in modern German theology. Luther and Kant, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, Fries and Troeltsch, all contribute essential elements to his mature conception of religion.”

Germany of the 18th century and afterwards has been a stronghold of Romanticism no less than France where it was born.
The chief characteristic of Romanticism is proneness to emotionalism and antirationalism. Romanticism is "an impassioned return to natural instincts, to life, to freedom, to individual predilection, to the spontaneity of the creative fancy. It looked upon nature and man with eyes full of wonder, and pointed anew to the mystery of life."\(^5\) Romanticism was Protestant in its individualistic outlook and had immense success particularly in Protestant countries.\(^6\) And that is why not only German literature, but German philosophy and theology too were much influenced by this movement. Kant’s unique rationalism with thought limiting itself to phenomena only smacks romanticism. Otto’s feeling of the 'numinous’ which is neither moral nor rational has also a romantic tone. The general romantic atmosphere prevailing for a long time appears to have made Otto more and more emotive rather than rational in his outlook. But this does not mean that Otto was out and out a romantic, say, like Coleridge. The anti-moral, anti-social, anti-conventional and adventurous life-style was not Otto’s.

Yet another factor in Otto’s background that played a decisive role in shaping his thought was the vigorous naturalism of the 19th century. By naturalism we understand an explanation of the universe without taking recourse to any supernatural forces. In the beginning science and religion had no conflict. The germs of naturalism can be traced back to Copernican revolution in the field of astronomy. It was gradually developed by Kepler, Galeleo.
and was brought to its final snaps in the dynamics of Newton. But Newton was a religious man. He put God over natural laws. Till his time clash between science and religion was not prominent. But when the kind of scientific explanation of the world emerged in Darwin’s theory of evolution, there was a head-on collision between science and religion. The result was a growing tendency to look down upon religion as a bundle of superstitions and false-beliefs.

Impact of naturalism on Otto was negative. His defiance of naturalism was complete. He did not want a little berth for religion in the mechanical set up of the universe. He was an unwavering champion of spiritualism. In this sense his views are antithetical to the naturalistic views. Religious worldview must be able to convince people if it is to live. Religious convictions in regard to the world and human existence are possible and may be believed to be true. It can, perhaps, also be shown that a calm and unprejudiced study of nature, both physical and metaphysical reflection on things, will supplement the interpretations of religion, and will lend confirmation and corroboration to many of the articles of faith already assured to it.7

Now let us examine the relation of Otto with those thinkers whose impact on him was more than merely casual and whose thoughts supplied Otto with materials for his own religious philosophy.

2.2. Luther

As already noticed, “the Protestant Reformation of the
16th century Germany was a turning point in Christianity. One single person who at first stood firmly against religion as simple assent to dogmas and rituals, and asserted that ‘religion is a renewal of the whole man’ was Martin Luther (1483-1546). Theology developing out of his teachings goes by the name Lutheranism and is Christocentric. Scriptures are the “word of God”. Justification by faith and priesthood of all believers are its central tenets. Luther believed in God’s grace against human efforts in attaining salvation. Luther was himself a mystic and spoke from his own inner experiences and convictions.

As a Protestant Christian Otto is much influenced by Luther. He has made a serious study of Luther and has come out with the conclusion that in Luther’s interpretation of Christianity also different aspects of the numinous feelings are present. Otto has included a chapter on ‘The Numinous in Luther’ in The Idea of the Holy.

For Luther faith is an independent faculty of knowledge, it is a priori and receives and recognizes supra-sensible truth. It makes man ‘one cake’ with God. Davidson comments that Luther’s cardinal doctrine of salvation by faith exhibits the very features that distinguish Otto’s concept of religious autonomy.

“For God is a fire, that consumeth, devoureth, rageth…” “He is more terrible and frightful than the Devil.” 'If thou feelst it truly in the heart, it will be such a great pain to
Otto refers to these as examples of the numinous in Luther. The elements of awe and fascination are present in the God-experience described by Luther.

A question may be raised as to how Otto is influenced by Luther when he, after formulating his own views about religious experience as numinous-experience, brings in Luther in support of his views. But the other possibility that Otto was already read Luther thoroughly before finalising his views and is influenced by him in shaping his fundamental thesis even though he writes about Luther later is equally strong. In fact this possibility is stronger because Otto has read extensively about Christianity and other religions before formulating his own views.

The individualistic tone of Otto’s religious philosophy appears to have been got from Luther in particular and Protestantism in general. "Natural religion, in contrast to historical, does not exist, and still less does innate religion." He advocates an a priori religion. What is innate religion and what is a priori religion? Innate — everyone necessarily having; a priori — everyone capable of having but may not be actually having. Now this is a vital difference. We call it individualistic in line with Lutheranism because Otto takes much pains to show that it is the individual himself who is directly to have religious experience — external agents, can help to stir whatever is already there in him in dormant form. It cannot be taught
but evoked in others' minds. "There is only one way to help another to an understanding of it. He must be guided and led on by consideration and discussion of the matter through the ways of his own mind, until he reaches the point at which 'the numinous' in him perforce begins to stir, to start into life and into consciousness." This is what we call individualistic approach to religion and here Luther's influence on Otto is quite evident.

2.3. Kant

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) of Germany is one of the world's great thinkers. He has brought in a revolution in modern western philosophy by his epistemological theory that a number of categories are the first principles of our understanding. All Philosophy after Kant is directly or indirectly influenced by him.

Though as a philosopher Kant's eminence is unquestionable he could not make remarkable contribution to religion probably due to the inner restraints of his own system. Though himself a religious man, he could justify religion only on moral grounds.

In the Critique of Pure Reason he has thoroughly criticised the traditional arguments for the existence of God. He maintains that "all attempts of reason to establish a theology by the aid of speculation alone are fruitless, that the principles of reason as applied to nature do not conduct us to any theological truths, and consequently, that a rational theology is
impossible "unless it is founded upon the laws of morality". The
philosopher who is charmed by the starry heaven above and the
moral laws within holds steadfast to the view that religion is
based on morality and not vice-versa. Morality stands supreme.
"A system of Ethics, .......... needs no Religion, neither objectively
to aid man's Will, nor subjectively, as respects his ability
to aid his power; but stands, by force of pure practical reason,
self-sufficient and independent." He is so much obsessed by
the moral faculty of mankind that he develops a Moral Argument
for God's existence. God, freedom of the will and immortality of
the self are the postulates of morality. Moral laws have a priority,
absolute necessity and universality; they are categorical impera-
tives. Once we recognise the existence of the moral law and of
the object of our will, the *sumnum bonum*, which is perfect
happiness, it is necessary to accept the existence of God in
order to maintain the necessary relation between the moral law
and the *sumnum bonum*. Thus God is derived from the imperative
nature of moral laws. But such a God is theoretical possibility
only. The argument does not prove God's existence.

In the Transcendental Dialectic Kant makes God (along
with the Soul and the World) an Idea of Reason which guides the
understanding but transcends all possibility of experience. An
Idea of Reason is a necessary product of reason and is absolutely
confined to it, but "to which we, nevertheless, by an unavoidable illusion, ascribe objective reality." Any categorical assertion regarding an objectively existing God is lacking in Kant. He has assigned merely an instrumental function to God, without saying in clear terms that He actually exists. From the Fourth Antinomy of pure reason one can gather that theoretically it is possible to say both 'yes' and 'no' to God's existence - which is as good as not saying anything at all.

That is how Kant, in spite of all his services to philosophy, has become notorious for having given a second grade treatment to religion. Heine goes to the extent of accusing him as a killer of God. This is too strong an accusation but the implication is clear that Kant has not done justice to religion.

Kant took reason to its farthest extent and yet the best he could do to religion is to make it a handmaid to morality. Theologically speaking this is his weakest point. The method applied by Kant to answer Hume is applied by Otto to answer Kant. To take an example, causality as a necessary connexion is denied by Hume for it is not perceived; Kant retorts back that though not perceived, it is empirically valid because it is only with the help of causality as a category of understanding that the phenomena called cause and effect can be experienced. Kant denies the possibility of any knowledge of God - God being just a regulative Idea of Reason. Otto retorts back that human mind has the category of the Holy which guarantees the feeling, if not knowledge, of God as an objectively real being. Just as Kant has elaborated
a system of categories such as causality, with which we 'make sense of' the world of experience, so Otto posits the category of the holy as that which unifies what is given in numinous experience. This apprehension in the experience of the holy is the primary datum in religion, and theological ideas are secondary to it." 

Kant is the philosophical master of Otto. If there were no Kant, there would hardly be an Otto: Otto is the Kant theologised. Otto has sometimes bodily lifted some of the Kantian terms but he has added new shades of meaning to them. Otto was not only claimed but tried to demonstrate in Kantian lines that Kant has neglected a special range of experience which may be called 'Numinous'. Truly, "Otto's theology provides an original and desirable development of the Kantian critical philosophy in which religion is accorded an autonomy comparable to that recognised by Kant in logical, moral and aesthetic judgment." The Kantian scholar H.J. Paton agreed that Otto's is the most plausible adaptation of Kant's philosophy to the explanation of religious experience.

The terms Idea, Category, a priori Schematism are straightway borrowed by Otto from Kant. An Idea of Reason and a Category of Understanding seem to have been interchangeably used by Otto, as pointed out by Paton. This is the first and major epistemological manoeuvre by Otto. Human beings have a 'faculty of divination' and this gives rise to the a priori
category of the Idea of the Holy or God. Kant’s concept of God is only subjective, but Otto’s category or the Idea of the Holy has an external reference. Men not only have an idea of God - but they are consciously aware of Him" as an operative reality, intervening actively in the phenomenal world. 27

Otto has borrowed the term schematism from Kant. Kant explains the possibility of subsumption of sensuous intuitions in intellectual categories, in spite of their heterogeneity, through the medium of different 'schema' which are temporal in nature. This is Kant’s schematism. Otto’s schematism, on the contrary, depends on the law of the association of feelings: that one feeling can arouse another feeling alike to it in the mind. Schematisation is responsible for making the complex category of the 'holy' out of numinous feelings. 28

A closer study of Kant and Otto shows that it is not only Kant’s epistemology that paves the way for Otto’s religious philosophy - but his religious ideas too, notwithstanding their evident agnosticism, can be meaningfully suggestive to Otto. They have the bones and flesh and sinews, Otto infuses life into them. Take for instance this passage from Kant: "In all religious forms of faith, we do, when searching narrowly into their interior texture, invariably arrive at somewhat MISTRESS, i.e. at something Holy, which may be indeed known by each single individual, but cannot BE MADE KNOWN by him to others, i.e. which does not admit of being perfectly communicated. As something Holy the object must be MORAL. It must consequently fall
under Reason, and be sufficiently cognisable for every practical purposes, while, at the same time, as somewhat HIDDEN, it is imperious to any theory of our speculative understanding, for were the case otherwise then it would be communicable to everyone, and admit of being imparted and made known, as well outwardly as publicly. Belief in what we consider to be a HOLY MYSTERY, may be regarded either as DIVINELY INFUSED or as A PURELY RATIONAL BELIEF. Unless, constrained by some urgent necessity to assume the former, we shall lay down the maxim of abiding singly by the latter. Feelings are not knowledge. Upon the same account they teach and indicate no mystery. Consequently, since this last stands immediately connected with reason, and is moreover incommunicable generally, it results that each person must search for this mystery (if perchance there be at all any such) within the circuit and extent of his own Reason."

It is gratifying to read the terms 'Holy, Mysterious, Incommunicable' in Kant. That is, about the 'incommunicability and holiness of the object of religious faith' both Otto and Kant appear to have agreement. But whereas Kant insists on the rationality of religion, Otto insists on its non-rationality. Kant and Otto fall out about the meaning of rational and non-rational. For Kant non-rational is below reason; for Otto above and beyond reason. Otto's chief complaint against Kant is his prodigiously one-sided rationalistic outlook, a fact which imports "indeed a serious menace to the life of deeper experience and especially to the religious life." For Otto the core of religious experience is the encounter with the Holy.
"If there be any single domain of human experience that presents us with something unmistakably specific and unique, peculiar to itself, assuredly it is that of the religious life." Kant would literally agree with Otto if the word 'religious' is replaced by 'moral'. Kant has a steadfastness bordering on weakness towards morality. Otto evinces the same towards religious feelings.

2.4. Fries

Jacob Friedrich Fries (1773-1843) who is an younger contemporary of Kant, advocates a Critical philosophy with Kant's rigour toned down. He has got inspiration from both Kant and Jacobi, another contemporary.

Fries talks of Knowledge, Faith and Presentiment (Wissen, Glauben, Ahndung). In Fries' view sensuous cognition gives us knowledge. Reason gives us ideas of which we have faith only. These ideas are reached through negation, by thinking away the limitations of empirical cognitions. Every idea expresses something absolute and unconditional. This leads to the dualism of faith and knowledge. This dualism is bridged over by feeling or presentiment (Ahndung) which teaches us the reconciliation of two realities, i.e. Idea and Phenomenon.

Fries forms a kind of bridge between Kant and Otto. Otto in one of his books - Philosophy of Religion based on Kant and Fries - gives a running commentary on, and a possible orientation
of, Kant and Fries. Most of the time he appears to be sympa-
tically inclined towards Fries, and the reasons are obvious.
According to Otto, Fries is an improvement on Kant. Take the
case of the deduction of the categories of Understanding. Mere deduc-
tion is a 'questio facti'. Kant is silent about the 'questio
juris' : are the categories valid? The question is first an-
swered by Fries. He proves that all nature-concepts are merely
the 'various forms of one fundamental idea of the reasoning
mind - the idea of universal unity and necessity, or, differently
expressed, that they are single and individual determinations
of the fundamental knowledge about the necessity and unity of
everything that is, in general, which rests on the foundation
of every single Reason as something most immediate and most
profound."

'Anwendung' is inkling, presage, presentiment, premonition
or some such immediate awareness of the object of knowledge. Thus
where Kant ends with agnosticism and despair about the actual
state of things (the things-in-themselves), Fries has discovered
a faculty to 'reach' them. This concept is at the root of Otto's
'faculty of divination'.

Fries' views on religion must have gone a long way
in shaping those of Otto's. For Fries religion is the premoni-
tion of the divine teleology in the world. "No learning, no
science can bestow on a man a knowledge of God different from
and superior to that knowledge which comes through the first
simple religious feeling." The first simple awareness, with
its uniqueness, is the feeling of the numinous in Otto. In Fries it is the presage of divine teleology. Every religious man will concede, even if the terminology is not quite to his taste, "the truth of this statement: the feeling on which his faith is really based is the instinctive sensation of the Eternal in the Finite." This instinctive sensation of the Eternal may be one of the factors contributing to Otto's description of the numinous feelings.

"Religious convictions rest on the universal antithesis of the Eternal and the Finite." This is of course a central concept of any theistic religion. Eternal God and finite man or Holy God and unholy man stand in contrast in Otto too. That is why he has made man stand shivering in front of a mysterious and tremendous 'wholly other' Holy.

However we must not assume that Fries has risen much higher than Kant in the matter of religion so that Otto does not have to labour hard for his own specific views.

Otto has shown inclination towards Fries in the period of his 'Philosophy of Religion' no doubt - that is only a passing phase in the development of his thought. In fact, with all his theories of Ahndung etc. Fries is still a rationalist. Religious convictions, for him, "are from the beginning among the possessions of reason, and must exist with equal truth in every human intellect. Religious capacity is present a priori in all human beings for Otto also. But for him it is not a possession of human reason."
Otto is happy that "Fries sees in mental vision that Religion is not Ethics and vice versa". Neither does Fries try to draw religion from ethics. Yet Otto is conscious that Fries gives prominence to morality as possessing universality and necessity. Fries would hardly say the same thing about religion - a peculiarly Kantian Blick. This raises question as to whether Ahndung is a pure feeling or something bordering between feeling and reason. The latter is more probable. Davidson remarks that Otto comes to see that Fries, while presenting effectively the rational and moral foundation of religion, has missed the uniquely religious element therein. In The Idea of the Holy Otto has succeeded in replacing the rational a priori of Fries by an autonomous religious a priori.

2.5. Schleiermacher

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is the greatest Protestant theologian of the 19th century. He is Otto's theological guide even though there is a gap of a century between them. Next to Kant, it is Schleiermacher who has influenced Otto the most. In Davidson's opinion, 'Schleiermacher's Addresses (i.e. Addresses on Religion to its Cultured Despisers) published in 1799, stand out indeed as the Magna Charta of religious autonomy. Their classic presentation of the uniqueness and independence of the religious consciousness has provided the foundation for all subsequent discussion of the subject, and their appeal to Otto is easy to understand.
Schleiermacher is particularly famous for his view that feeling is the essence of religion. Schleiermacher and Otto wonderfully agree in this. Schleiermacher characteristically says that religion resigns "all claims on anything that belongs either to science or morality. Whether it is borrowed or bestowed it is now returned." Piety must be freed from all metaphysical and ethical encumbrances, and its own independent claim upon the human spirit revealed. It appears that it is Schleiermacher who has actually wrested religion out of morality and philosophy and has given it its due place.

Schleiermacher is a religious empiricist. Religion like art, he insists, is based on an inner experience and not on a scaffolding of theology and as such it is a natural phenomenon. Religion belongs to the sphere of pious feeling. Man's feeling is piety in so far as it is the result of the operation of God in him by means of the operation of the world. "This series is not made up either of perception or of objects of perception, either of works or operations or of different spheres of operation, but purely of sensations and the influence of all that lives and moves around, which accompanies them or conditions them. These feelings are exclusively the elements of religion and none are excluded." The same individualistic tone characteristic of Protestantism is found in Schleiermacher is present in Otto too. Religious experiences are extremely personal. They are difficult to be conveyed. "They must be indubitably your own feelings, and not mere stale descriptions of the feelings of others, which could at best issue in a wretched imitation."
In *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher develops his famous view that religion is the feeling of absolute dependence on God. The theologian who has once held that true religion is the sense and taste for the Infinite now describes religious emotion in a more categorical form.

For Schleiermacher religion is “the immediate appraisal of the universe as the one and the whole, transcending the mere parts which science may grasp, and at the same time the profound spiritual experience of its underlying ideal essence.” It sounds Spinozistic. And indeed he is influenced by Spinoza. From his conception of the universe follows his theory of dependence on God. Man feels, along with other things, dependent on God who is the correlative unity to the multiplicity that is the world.

A point in which both Otto and Schleiermacher agree is the universality of religious experience. The feeling of absolute dependence, expressing itself as consciousness of God, is the highest grade of immediate self-consciousness and it is also an essential element of human nature. That is, man is by nature religious. For Otto, man has the Faculty of Divination and the numinous feelings. In some men they are latent, in some manifest. Schleiermacher too argues that there may be some communities in which religious feeling is not yet awakened but it does not mean it is not there in potential form.
Similarities notwithstanding, Otto and Sohleiermaouer have differences of opinion between them. Religion is essentially emotive, but, for Otto, it is not a feeling of absolute dependence on God but 'creature-feeling'…." The emotion of a creature submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures" is the basic religious awareness for Otto.

Kant's great influence apart, the most remarkable fact about other Germans (excluding Luther) treated so far is that they lived in an era dominated by Kant. At Kant's death, Jacobi was 61, Sohleiermaouer 36 and Fries 31. All these four thinkers lived contemporaneously for 31 years (1773 to 1804), i.e. from the birth of Fries, the youngest of them, to the death of Kant, the oldest of them.

2.6. Other influences on Otto

Different writers have traced out the influence of G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) and Nathan Soderblom (1866-1931) on Otto.

2.6.1 Hegel:

Dr S.P. Dubey appears to think that Hegel has influenced Otto in his conception of Christianity as the best religion. He writes: "Otto echoes the Hegelian voice at several places in his writings when he passes value judgements." But what Dr Dubey takes for an echo may be an independent, if not an original, sound.
Otto is in no need of Hegelian inspiration in upholding Christianity as the highest religion. This he would do in spite of Hegel. Otto was no illusions about Hegel's rationalism. "Hegel held Christianity to be the highest because the most truly spiritual (geistig) religion. But Hegel meant by 'spirit' the absolute reason." Even though Hegel and Otto reach the same conclusion about Christianity as the most perfect religion, they do it basing on different premises. There is a vast difference between Hegel and Otto - Hegel being an unswerving supporter of near omnipotence of reason. Hegel's influence on Otto, to our mind, is rather negative. A study of Hegel may have confirmed Otto that not in reason but elsewhere religion must seek its justification. A reason-dominated religion becomes only a second-grade philosophy.

2.6.2. Ritschl

Davidson is over-confident that Otto's idea of the Holy as an independent religious category of value "is based directly and unmistakably upon Ritschl's concept of the independent religious value judgment." Ritschlianism has been prominent in the last part of the nineteenth century, i.e. in the formative years of Otto's theology. As a trend of the time though Otto turns away from Ritschl and pays attention to Schleiermacher and Fries - he is not able to get rid of Ritsch altogether. A marked influence of Ritschl on Otto, is the line Otto draws between philosophy and religion. For Ritschl also, as for Schleiermacher, religion is wholly different from philosophy. It confronts one, "independently in its own right, with the consequence that it is impossible
to reach what faith designates as "God" by the simple expedient of pushing scientific or metaphysical explanation a little further.\textsuperscript{56} It is agreeable to Otto proved it is not just moral judgment of faith that gives the idea of God - but a direct feeling of Him. But that metaphysics falls short of reaching God-experience is true as much for Otto as for Ritschel.

Ritschlian principle of religious value-judgment was laid a permanent stamp on Otto. Thus materials drawn from Kant, Fries and Schleiermacher are synthesised with terms "unquestionably Ritschlian in character."\textsuperscript{57} Davidson's observations do not require further explanation. Yet one thing we cannot help pointing out that Ritschlian religious value-judgments are mere blood in need of a body with skin and bone and nerves and sinews. In Ritschlianism "God is not demonstrable by speculation, by evidence in nature, by feelings, by an \textit{a priori} nor by intuition or mystic experience. God is the necessary implication of the independent religious value-judgment."\textsuperscript{58} At this point we rather feel compelled to say that for all practical purposes there is no difference between a Ritschlian God implied by religious value-judgments and a Kantian God as an Idea of Reason. They both lack existence-content. And this aspect, with \textit{due} deference to Ritschel, has been pointed out by Pattison when he says: "There is much that is profoundly true in Ritschel's attempt to purge traditional doctrines of what he calls their 'metaphysical' accretions, .... But it is impossible to maintain, in the rigidity of its original formulation, the opposition between judgments of value and judgments of fact."\textsuperscript{59} So if the valuational aspect in Otto is
visible influence of Ritschl, the existential aspect so prominent in Otto is his improvement on Ritschl and a great improvement at that. To complete our own simile — Otto supplies Ritschlianism with a living body in which blood can circulate.

2.6.3. Troeltsch

Influence of Troeltsch — a disciple of Ritschl — on Otto is emphasised by many. Troeltsch is famous for his concept of the a priori. In the 19th century many German scholars have been "suggesting that there must be a specific religious a priori." 60 Troeltsch is the most eminent of them. As a theologian and as a social scientist he has a religious theory based on history as well as current observation of religion as a phenomenon. He derives religion from the so-called religious a priori as against Kant's attempt to base religion on a moral a priori. "His science of religion" in general, with its empirical approach, broad historical and cultural perspective, keen psychological insight and careful philosophical discrimination had wide influence upon European theology and greatly enhanced the prestige of the religio-historical movement. 61 Troeltsch's suggestion of religious a priori appears to have misled some students of Otto. Whereas it cannot be denied that there may be some influence of Troeltsch on Otto through his writings as well as personal contact (since they have been together at Gottingen for some time), it rather does not seem proper to conclude that Otto "largely" 62 derived his idea of religious autonomy and religious a priori from Troeltsch. Davidson.
opines that Otto might learn more from Troeltsch than he actually did. 63

Troeltsch's suggestion of a religious a priori is credible, even though it is an adaptation of Kant's other a priori in the secular sphere. But the plain fact remains that Troeltsch's complete religious philosophy is not agreeable to Otto - for its tilt towards morality. As for simple a priori - there is enough in Kant and that Otto could adapt in religion as much as Troeltsch. 64 Moreover, it is difficult for Otto to take Troeltsch's fondness of morality. Troeltsch accepts Kantian primacy and inderivative character of morality. He argues that the moral is basic to the human constitution and that it is only during the course of historical development that morality and religion become connected and interdependent. 65 In the researches in methodology and in philosophy of religion he admits that the more he has studied modern problems the more he has found that "the balance leaned to the side of ethics." 66 Now, a philosopher with the view that morality is more fundamental than religion can hardly inspire Otto. Kant's case is different - because his epistemology was enough in it which could be adaptated in religious philosophy. We, however, do not mean to say that Troeltsch has not absolutely influenced Otto. There is similarity between them and this is largely because both of them are influenced by Kant. Even then Troeltsch may have been of some help to Otto while formulating his religious philosophy. But his influence on Otto cannot be so deep-rooted as some want us to believe.
Of the group of philosophers being considered, Nathan Soderblom's influence on Otto is claimed to be more significant. Serious study of religion started only in the 19th century and attempts have been made to isolate the essence of religion. This essence or the primary stuff of religions — the so often called 'inner unity' of religions — has been differently understood by different writers. Soderblom's views regarding this come close to those of Otto. According to Soderblom, "Holiness is the greatest word in religion; it is even more essential than the notion of God. Real religion may exist without a definite conception of divinity, but there is no real religion without a distinction between holy and profane. The attaching of undue importance to the conception of divinity has often led to the exclusion from the realm of religion of (1) phenomena at the primitive stage, as being magic, although they are characteristically religious; and (2) Buddhism and other aigher forms of salvation and piety which do not involve a belief in God. The only sure test is holiness. From the first, holiness constitutes the most essential feature of the divine in a religious sense. The idea of God without the conception of the holy is not religion. Not the mere existence of the divinity but its mana, its power, its holiness is what religion involves." And he adds that the holy inspires awe (religio).

To Soderblom religious or pious man is "one to whom something is holy". That is why Joannim wach observes that the
"Swedish scholar anticipates .... Rudolf Otto's central concept of the experience of the holy."^69

Indeed, Soderblom's view that 'holy' is the central aspect of all religions is great in itself. But to overestimate his influence on Otto just because he also writes about holiness in the same way calls for some restraint. Both Soderblom and Otto speak of holy as the unity of all religions, but whereas Soderblom stops there Otto penetrates still further. He analyses the idea of the holy and discovers an overplus in it, viz. the Numinous. So finally Soderblom stays a rationalist with his concept of holiness and Otto turns out to be a non-nationalist with his feelings of the Numinous.

Religion for Soderblom, must exist in man's words and deeds, customs and institutions, but for Otto it is enough if there is stirring of the a priori 'numinous' feelings in a man.

2.7. Indian Influence

There is a notable thing about Otto. He enjoys unique popularity among Indian religious thinkers in spite of the fact that there are other theological stalwarts in Germany and elsewhere. This is a pointer to there being something predominantly Indian in his theology.

Otto's love of India and Indians and Indian philosophies and religions is well-known. He visited India two times, in 1910-11, and 1927-28. He has dedicated his Vishnu Narayana to Rabindranath
Thakār has dedicated his 'The Original Gita' to Richard Garbe with the citation 'smarapārtham' (in Sanskrit, meaning 'in memorium'). All his works in general and some in particular relate to Indian theme. Temperamentally he is Indian, reciting the Vedas at home everyday. That is why he is referred to as 'Rsi Otto'.

We suggest that Otto has not only been influenced by Indian thought but also that the central points in his theology are borrowed from India. This, again, will explain for his popularity among Indian thinkers.

However, when we discuss Indian influence on Otto, one controversial point forces itself on us. Apparently both Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara can claim to have influenced Otto. Otto has written the summary of Rāmānuja's Śrībhāṣya in Siddhanta des Ramanuja in 1917, 7 years before delivering his Huskell Lectures on Śaṅkara and Eckhart which are later published as Mysticism and. Otto appears to be equally appreciative of Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara, for him is the classic teacher and interpreter of 'Advaita' in its most strict and subtle form and is the greatest representative of which is understood by Eastern Mysticism. On Rāmānuja he writes, "...... He builds up his doctrine, which certainly has a warm tone of mysticism about it, a mysticism of a personal nature". This "mysticism of personal nature" is certainly more to Otto's liking. In the later part of his career he has shown remarkable liking for
Rāmānuja as against Śaṅkara.

So Otto is a devoted student of both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. And there are Indian elements in his theology. Now the question is, between Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja who might have influenced Otto?

We understand that emotionally Rāmānuja and Otto are closer than Śaṅkara and Otto. Their systems of theology are close. Rāmānuja's concept of Nārāyaṇa with all the auspicious qualities (kalyāṇā-guṇas) resembles Otto's idea of the Holy. In Otto's own finding there is remarkable similarity between Rāmānuja's theism (India's Religion of Grace) and Christianity. But emotional affinity and personal liking need not be deciding factors so far the question of influence is concerned. In spite of Otto's criticism of Kant, Schleiermacher, Ritschl or Fries, one can hardly deny their influence on him. Similarly, in spite of his approval of Rāmānuja and criticism of Śaṅkara, we feel that the central points in Otto's theology are not borrowed from Rāmānuja.

The kind of non-rational awareness (a priori numinous feelings) which is the central and distinctive mark of Otto's theology is not there in Rāmānuja, but is there in Śaṅkara. The two-tier system of deity, deity at the experience level and conceptual level, non-rational level and rational level, Numen and Holy, are there in Śaṅkara as Brahman and Īśvara. But Rāmānuja has nothing to offer like this.
As completed theologies, Otto's and Ramanuja's thoughts are similar but for the non-rational basis of his idea of the Holy, Otto is probably indebted to Śaṅkara.

2.7.1. Śaṅkara

What is that singularly distinguishes Otto from his fellow theologians? It is not his attempt to explain religion on the basis of feelings, for it is there in Schleiermacher also. It is not his a priorism in religion - for it is there is Troeltsch also. It is not his insistence on Holy as a religious category, for Soderblom also does this. It is Otto's insistence on religious autonomy based on the bifurcation of religious experience into rational and non-rational, into holy and numinous - that singularly distinguishes him from others. And this, to our mind, is a view in coming to which Otto has been influenced by Śaṅkara of India.

There is a close parallel of thought between Śaṅkara and Otto regarding religious phenomena. Four points are prominent: (a) stress on experience, (b) stress on non-rationality, (c) otherness of the deity and (d) two-tier scheme of the deity. All these points stem from the view of the distinction between the rational and the non-rational and in that sense are closely interlinked. We take the first two points together.

Both Śaṅkara and Otto emphasize experience of God as certitude of his being. Rational entities are real, but from this
it does not follow that whatever is real has to be rational in the sense of being intelligible. In fact a bulk of our experience falls beyond the ken of rational thought. And yet many of our feelings, experiences, are no less real than our thoughts.

The infrastructure of our idea of God is pure feeling, and not just ideas. In it we do certainly have rational concepts as attributed to some being, but the being as such "in its deeper essence is not, nor indeed can be, comprehended in terms which rather requires comprehension of a different kind." It is the numinous feeling of a present - God over and above the person having the feelings. Thus the possibility of mere subjectivity of this feeling is ruled out. The feelings are not mere imaginations, but real and those of a being out there. The numinous feeling is absolutely non-rational. It is pure individual experience defying all sorts of communication. But it is not just subjective imagination. It is a feeling of something objectively given and anybody can have it.

In the Western theological literature we do not see a proper parallel to Otto's theory. But the sort of non-rational religious feeling described by Otto is there in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedanta. It is the Anubhava. Dr Radankrishnan writes about Anubhava: "What we aim at is not thinking but seeing. It is a change of being, a rebornness. The sphere of logical thought is exceeded by that of the mind's possible experience of reality, anubhava or interior awareness. It is an experience which is
a blend of wonder ecstasy and awe at what is too great to be realised by intellect. It is none of these but something beyond them all and has an element of quite inexpressible strangeness."

This comes quite close to Otto's description of the non-rational numinous feelings. We can know about Brahman from scriptures, but this remains as a mere message until we realise Brahmān for ourselves. Knowledge of Brahman must culminate in Brahmān-experience. Brahmān-experience is the supra-rational consciousness of the Reality, consciousness beyond discursive reasoning. It is non-rational insofar as, it is beyond ordinary rationality. The sphere of ordinary thoughts and words is below the sphere of Brahmānubhava. "Those in whom Brahmān-experience becomes mature attain to Brahmān, not those who deal with words alone." Thus there is a remarkable emphasis on experience and non-rationality in matters concerning God both in Otto as well as Śaṅkara.

A significant feature of Otto's theology is his concept of the alienation of the deity. He has analysed the non-rational numinous feelings into *mysterium-tremendum et fascinans*. Tremendum is sub-divided into awfulness, majesty and urgency. Hence Otto's concept of God is that of a "mysterious Numen that is awful, majestic, wrathful and yet fascinating."

In the *mysterium-tremendum*, tremendum is the adjective of the noun mysterium, God is the very mystery itself. This mystery that is God is the "wholly other" for Otto. The wholly-other is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar.
Incomprehensibility is a characteristic of Brahman in Advaita Vedanta. While supporting his view of the wholly-otherness of the Numen, Otto has referred to the concepts of alienum, dissimile, anyad, etc., both in the Indian and Western theological tradition. Though Otto quotes Augustine also in this respect, the real sense of alienum cannot be the same as from the truly Christian tradition as God the Father in Heaven cannot be entirely dissimilar to man whom He created in His own image. Thus the sense of dissimilarity or otherness Otto wants 'mysterium' to convey is more truly there in the Upanisadic tradition,79 the major foundation of Śaṅkara-Vedanta. Śaṅkara's view on the incomprehensibility and the consequent negative description (wholly other) is grounded on the Upanisadic teachings. Śaṅkara's idea of Brahman is thus of a Reality completely beyond conception and description. Even the terms Brahman, Ātman, Existence etc. are drawn from the phenomenal sphere and are not competent in any way to describe it. It is beyond names and form. The terms commonly used to denote the Reality are, to use Otto's terms, ideograms or signposts to point at the feeling which represent the Reality. Brahman can be more properly described negatively and such descriptions are intended to draw our attention to the non-phenomenal character of Brahman.80 Just as in Śaṅkara, so in Otto, the Reality, though incomprehensible, is positively felt as well as it positively exists. "It is the 'Wholly Other' but not non-being. Though the words used are negative, what is meant is intensely positives."81 Thus we see a clear parallel between Otto's and Śaṅkara's negative description of the Reality.
And finally, regarding the use of the nomenclature 'rational' 'non-rational' Reality also, Otto and Śāmkara are very close, even though the names they have used are not of the same meaning. Our point is that their approaches are similar insofar as they give two names to the same deity at two planes. Reality at the non-rational plane is the Numen for Otto and Brahma for Śāmkara. When conceptualised, Numen is thought of as the Holy and Brahma as Īśvara. It is the same Reality at two levels, not two realities. When the non-rational numinous feelings are enrobed with rational and moral concepts, they constitute the idea of a personal God.

But this dual approach to Reality through feeling and thought is handled by Otto and Śāmkara in different ways. Whereas for Otto rationalisation of the numinous is a definite enrichment on the original feeling, for Śāmkara it is a kind of corruption of it. Hence, Otto has a psychological interest in the Numen and his whole theological interest is in the Holy, God or better still "God the Father in Heaven". But for Śāmkara Īśvara is real from the phenomenal or vyāvahārika standpoint only. And again, Otto's distinction between man and God is final, that stays always. But for Śāmkara, at the ultimate level, the 'wholly-other' is wholly-me. Atman and Brahma are identical, Otto does not go beyond God and for Śāmkara God is not the actual ultimate reality. God (Īśvara) is objective, but Brahma is neither objective nor subjective. Nothing like this can be said about it.
Whereas Otto stays at the God-experience level as the fundamental, final and basic religious experience, for Śaṅkara it is one step below the supreme experience of Brahman in which there is no distinction between the experiencer, the experience, and the experienced. It is a supra-conscious experience of pure self-illumination. It is the real self and the ultimate Reality. 32

Now, though Otto does not rise to the metaphysical height of Śaṅkara, for various reasons, his views are similar to those of Śaṅkara to a great extent. We can hardly take it as a mere coincidence, although this possibility cannot be ruled out. When, however, we accept that Otto is influenced by Kant, Fries, Jacobi etc. there should be no hesitation when it comes to accepting Śaṅkara's influence on him, especially when Otto is an ardent student of Śaṅkara. We agree that there is qualitative difference between Śaṅkara's Brahmānubhava and Otto's numinous feelings: That the former is feeling of oneness with the ultimate Reality, it is of the nature of bliss and the latter is a kind of trepidation before the mysterious and permanently other than me; that in the former one feels elevated to the Reality and in the latter one is sharply confronted with it and a sense of cowering down before it as a 'creature' prevails. But the difference in the feeling contents does not forestall possibility of the former's being adapted to Christian context. Otto has taken the form and has refilled the contents. Such adaptation of others' views to suit his own theory is not rare in his theology.
One historical objection can be raised against our hypothesis by pointing at the dates of Otto's best work and his work on Śaṅkara. Whereas The Idea of the Holy, containing his final theological views, has come out in 1917 (in German original)—Mysticism East and West, a comparison of Eckhart and Śaṅkara as mystics, has come out in 1926 (in German original), so that Otto has been preoccupied with Śaṅkara only after forming and publicising his final theological thoughts. To this objection we can answer that Otto has all along been in the know of Advaita Vedānta and has utilised this knowledge in formulating his theory of the numinous even though he has written about Śaṅkara much afterwards. After publishing two of his major books 'Naturalism and Religion' and 'Philosophy of Religion' in 1904 it has taken Otto 13 long years to come out with The Idea of the Holy. In the middle of these meditative years Otto has visited India in 1910 - 11. John Harvey has commented that this and other visits to India and other countries deepened Otto's study of the common and unique elements in all religions. The one unique religious experience that Otto has been searching for he has readily got in the Brahmanubhava of Śaṅkara.

While concluding this survey of Otto's intellectual background we have to say that Otto's eclecticism must not be taken for mere gathering together of divergent views loosely connected with one another. All the views - Protestant Christian, Kantian, Anti-Kantian, Vedantio - are drawn due to their efficacy in giving religion a significantly autonomous character. The
going together of eclecticism and creativity in Otto is beautifully described by Davidson when he says, "The genius of Otto's interpretation of religion lies not merely ... in his ability to draw together the more significant insights of a century and a half of German theology. It is rather the creative synthesis of the best elements in his religious heritage in a new and profound insight of his own that reveals the originality and penetration of his thought. In his mature concept of the autonomy of religion one finds the vital faith of Luther, the romantic piety of Schleiermacher, the value-theology of Ritschl, the noumena of Kant, the presentiments of Fries and the Anubhava of Śāṅkara fused in a kind of "critique of the religious consciousness" proposed by Troeltsch. International currents of thought have met, and not blended and merged in Otto's religious philosophy.

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