

Rudolph Otto Notes

Vocabulary Terms

1. Rudolph Otto is a Lutheran.
2. The “**numinous**” is the Holy (ie. God) minus its moral and rational aspects. It is the ineffable core of religion, and the experience of it cannot be described in terms of other experiences. It is an adjective describing the presence or power of a divinity. The numinous is felt as objective and outside the self.
3. “**Creature feeling**” is the feeling of dependence, yet it is more than that and in a sense cannot be fully explained because it is defined in itself. It is the personal feeling of insufficiency and impotence, a consciousness of being determined by circumstances and environment. It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures. The feeling is an immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self, and this object is the numinous. Therefore the creature feeling can only occur when accompanying the category of the numinous. This is based on the fact of being created.
4. **Mysterium Tremendum** is an emotion that can be almost a grisly horror or shuddering or it can be the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of a creature in the presence of that which is a mystery. This is meant to be something absolutely and intensely positive in religion. It is an emotion that is compared to “religious dread” or “daemonic dread”. It is a feeling that stirs in the presence of the uncanny, and is relative to shuddering, where the mysterious is already beginning to loom before the mind and touch the feeling. It is a superior form of terror that has nothing to do with intensity, but rather with the presence of the uncanny or the awful. It can also be described as the fear of the wrath of God.
 - a. There are three components to this: awfulness (sense of dread in response to the uncanny), overpoweringness (tremenda majestas), and energy.
5. **Tremenda Majestas** is also known as the “aweful majesty” where one feels as though they are but dust and ashes and nothingness in comparison to God. This is different from creature fear because it is based on the status of the creature, as opposed to the fact of simply being created by the numinous.
6. **Urgency or Energy** of the numinous object is a third element comprised in those of tremendum and majestas. This is the symbolic expression of the numinous, which serves to protect religion from being rationalized. This presents an impression of immense vigor.
7. **The Wholly Other** that which is mysterious and thereby fills the mind with blank wonder and astonishment when compared to the usual or intelligible.
8. **The Element of Fascination** an experience of the numinous which causes the subject to become enraptured by the mysterious or the uncanny in relation to the godly.