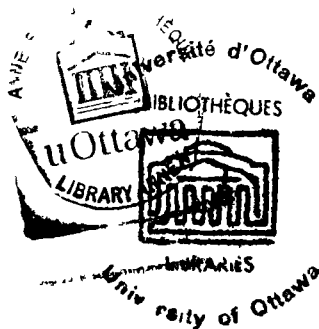


A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
BASED ON THE CRITERION OF EMPIRICAL CONFERENCE
AS ELABORATED IN EDGAR SHEFFIELD BRIGHTMAN'S PERSONALISM

by

Armand Quintal, o. m. i.

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INTRODUCTION

The present dissertation seeks to answer the question: what is involved in a Philosophy of Religion that attempts to interpret religion in a radically empirical way? What becomes of religion when it is interpreted concretely and related to the whole of experience? It proposes to examine the methodology, the starting point, the description of religious experience but especially the role of philosophical reason in a philosophy of religion that seeks to remain closed to experience. One such empirical philosophy of religion is that of Edgar Sheffield Brightman whose lifetime efforts at Boston University to elaborate a methodology of concrete experience makes his particular philosophy of religion an exciting stimulus to ask the right questions on this problem of the interpretation of religion in a radically empirical way.

The importance of a study of this kind consists principally in uncovering the requirements for a philosophy adequate to the interpretation of religion in our own times. There are two particularly important issues that need close attention in the study of religion today: one is the almost exclusive use of experience as a criterion for meaning and the other is the need to relate the many facets of life and the other is the need to rest upon the exigencies of reason, a position that involves certain consequences for religious

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thought into some kind of coherent whole. On both of these issues Brightman's Empirical Philosophy of Religion is very revealing. William Ernest Hocking said of him that he emphasized two points in his philosophy: the concrete and the need for rational understanding.¹ In striving to be concrete Brightman examined religion as it appeared in human experience of the person but at the same time he sought for coherence and so attempted to avoid abstract and partial positions. A study then of his Philosophy of Religion especially in the light of the shift of emphasis from the abstract to the concrete can be helpful in evaluating the requirements of a philosophical interpretation of religion in our times.

Edgar Sheffield Brightman was born in Holbrook, Massachusetts, the son of a New England Methodist parson; as a boy "he was subjected to unceasing religious influences from the start".² He later studied at Brown University where he received his B.A. and M.A. degrees; at Brown under the influence of Alexander Meiklejohn he became a determinist but

¹William Ernest HOCKING, "Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Friend and Colleague," The Personalist, 34 (1953), p.363.

²Edgar Sheffield BRIGHTMAN, 'Religion as Truth,' Virgilius Ferm, Contemporary American Theology, N. Y.: The Round Table Press, 1932, p.61.

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his first philosophical allegiance was to Royce's absolutism which he accepted as a whole for two or three years, "until in my graduate days, James's Pragmatism appeared and swept me off my feet".³ Although the errors of pragmatism were quickly brought to his attention leaving him permanently critical of that side of James, Brightman was influenced by William James as our study will show. He continued his studies at Boston University where he received a theological degree in 1910 and the doctorate in philosophy in 1912. The strong interplay and cross-fertilization of religious and philosophical influences continued at Boston University's School of Theology which could boast not only of its well known religious fervor and activity in Methodist circles but also of a first rate philosopher in the person of Borden Parker Bowne as its dean. Under his guidance and his influence Brightman studied Personalism "which seemed to me to combine the truth that there was in Royce and James with a criticism of the errors of each."⁴ As a disciple of Bowne, Brightman went on to teach philosophy at Nebraska Wesleyan University and Wesleyan Univ. in Connecticut; in 1919 he succeeded Borden P. Bowne in ..

³IBID., p.57.

⁴IBID., p.57.

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philosophy at Boston University where he stayed until his death in 1953.⁵

Since the purpose of this study is to define what is meant by an empirical philosophy of religion, we will restrict our introductory definitions to the above biographical notes except to point out that if the Philosophy of Religion of Bowne is basically Kantian, that of Brightman's is clearly that of Hegel's. Reason considered as concrete, inclusive, and evolutionary in the interpretation of religion constitutes the core of his Philosophy of Religion. As we shall see his empiricism is based on Hegel's methodology.⁶

In the light of James Collin's statement that "the only intrinsically satisfactory critique of a philosophy of religion is one which keeps in sight the relationship between the specific position taken on religion and the foundational conception of method and human reality"⁷, the focus of this study will be on the starting point and basic methodology of Brightman's empirical philosophy of religion.

⁵Jannette E. NEWHALL, "Edgar Sheffield Brightman, A Biographical Sketch", The Philosophical Forum, 12 (1954), p. 9-21.

⁶Edgar S. BRIGHTMAN, A Philosophy of Religion, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940, p.26.

⁷James Collins, The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1967, p.431.

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The first chapter will deal with his method of radical empiricism while the second chapter will examine his specific position on religion both as an experience in itself and as related to the whole of experience. The third chapter will treat of the self as a metaphysical principle in as much as Brightman's conception of the self is foundational to his entire philosophy of religion. In the final chapter an attempt will be made to draw out the implications and consequences for religious truth when subjected to an empirical type interpretation.

As regards the general background and previous work done upon this problem the general position of Personalism is known well enough. A. C. Knudson for example, in addition to his volume: The Philosophy of Personalism, which clearly shows the theistic position of Bowne, attempts to show in his other volume: Present Tendencies in Religious Thought that religion is a kind of apriori value "that refuses to admit that there is an external rational standard by means of which the truth of religion can be judged".⁸ In this view the foundations of religion rest upon the exigencies of the practical reason and as such are independent of theoretical reason either scientific or philosophical. Where this is clearly a position derived from Kant, Brightman's position

⁸ Albert C. KNUDSON, Present Tendencies in Religious Thought, New York: the Abington Press, 1924, p.185.

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is derived from Hegel; the examination of the explicit differences between these two approaches is precisely where work remains to be done. Studies on Brightman's Philosophy of Religion began shortly after he made public his theory of a Finite God back in the 1930's. A considerable number of dissertations, periodical articles, and monographs have been published and deal with specific doctrinal issues in his Philosophy of Religion such as his doctrine on God and his theory on evil. Special focus was given the Brightman's methodology in J.A. Martin's dissertation: Empirical Philosophies of Religion;⁹ in this work he outlines the basic elements of Brightman's radical empiricism but as Walter Meulder points out in his review of the work, "he failed to analyze the internal development of his (Brightman's) thought".¹⁰ A precise analysis of the inner workings of Brightman's methodology and its effect upon the autonomy of religious truth still remains to be done.

The general method followed in this study of Brightman's Philosophy of religion is then that of moving from antecedents to consequents; the philosophical interpretation of religion presupposes the whole of experience as

⁹James A. MARTIN, Empirical Philosophies of Religion with Special Reference to Boodin, Brightman, Hocking, Macintosh and Wieman, Morningsides Heights, N.Y.:King's Crown Press, 1945.

¹⁰Walter MUELDER, "Review of J. A. Martin's Empirical Philosophies of Religion" The Phil. Forum, 4 (1946), p.44.

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well as other pre-philosophical conditions which we will analyze in the first chapter. On the other hand, the methodology in a philosophy of religion presupposes an entire metaphysical system as its logical antecedent. And finally the methodology and positions taken in the Philosophy imply certain consequences for religious thought and life.

My acknowledgements and gratitude are extended to Dr. Peter A. Bertocci of Boston University for assisting me in so many ways but especially for providing orientation into Brightman's thought. My thanks also to Dr. Jannette Newhall *+ Bibliography* for tracking down unpublished materials in the Boston University library and also for providing guidance into Brightman's philosophy of religion. And finally a note of gratitude to Dr. Benoit Garceau, OMI, my thesis director, for guiding me through this work and for providing the encouragement to complete it.

CHAPTER ONE

RADICAL EMPIRICISM

Much of the interest in Brightman's thought arises out of his honest attempt to integrate the findings of the sciences both physical and human into his personalist metaphysica. He states for example in the preface of his Philosophy of Religion that it "is an objective and rational interpretation of experience, perhaps more or less 'cold-blooded', as emotionalists, shy of reason, sometimes say".¹ Living in a culture steeped in science where truth has for its archetype the truth of science and where valid knowledge is delivered through the empirical methods of science, Brightman realized that religion oftentimes fears a rational scientific investigation of itself but to postpone the issue is to leave the impression that "something is rotten in Denmark". Taking a tough-minded attitude toward religion, therefore, Brightman will attempt to interpret religion scientifically as well as philosophically.

But what does it mean to be empirical? This is the question and one perhaps only the philosopher is equipped to answer. According to Brightman, the quarrel involved here is

E.S. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940, p.VIII.

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not so much the struggle between science and religion so predominant during the latter part of the 19th Century, but rather the death struggle between philosophy and science as regards the meaning of empiricism.² Neo-realists and Instrumentalists in their effort to avoid all abstractions, pure theoretical constructions, unfounded absolutes and eternal truths, had reduced the starting point of philosophy to pure sense data; it is this narrow conception of philosophy's starting point that is the real threat to religion. Hence, the task, as Brightman saw it, was to clarify the real starting point of human thought. Once this was established, the role of science in relation to philosophy could be better understood and the true implications of a radical empiricism could then be drawn out.

1.-THE DATUM SELF AS THE STARTING POINT OF BOTH SCIENCE AND RELIGION:

The first problem in establishing the starting point of philosophy relevant for a scientific age was to refine empiricism in such a way as to avoid the narrow reductionist position of limiting starting points to sense data. Brightman's intention here is to broaden the initial first given in

²IDEM, "Why is Personalism Unpopular", Meth. Rev., 104 (1921), p.532.

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such a way as to include both sense data and value experiences as well as rational and ideal elements. Brightman goal as a philosopher of religion was to find a starting point common and prior to both science and religion.³ To achieve this goal he sought to show how the datum self in all its complexity was the real basis for radical empiricism.

The attempt on the part of behaviorists to eliminate the fact of self consciousness forms the context and background to Brightman's explanation of the self as a given. In an on-going discussion with Prof. Williams of Harvard Univ. concerning the givenness of the self he argued: "Personalism is radically empirical in building on the experienced fact that every item of experience belongs to a self".⁴

The denial on the part of the Instrumentalists and Neo-realist of self-consciousness--that the self is given immediately in experience, Brightman felt was based on their narrow conception of experience; and so by clarifying the nature of the self, Brightman felt he could be in a position to characterize in what sense the datum self is the common starting point for both science and religion.

³ According to Brightman conscious experience is not a theory but a fact and a fact "which is the necessary st. pt. of both science and religion". Personality and Religion, p.15.

⁴ IDEM, "The Self, Given and Implied--A Discussion", Jour.Phil., 31 (1934), p.267.

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He proceeded to eliminate the narrow conceptions of experience, by pointing out that many times in the history of philosophy the conception of experience has been reduced to sensory content; this is exemplified in the sense qualities of the Critical Realists, the essences or qualities of the English Realists, and the biological situation of the Instrumentalists. Brightman objects to these starting points in that empirical and concrete as they may be, they are still abstract and one-sided since "the starting point rather is the whole complex of experience, including rational, affective and volitional processes, as well as sensory qualities".⁵ Indeed there is absolutely no evidence that the shining present or present moment of experience consists of sensations alone but on the contrary every sensation is accompanied by some sort of belief.⁶ In other words, experience is not the antiseptic experience of the scientist but the buzzing, blooming confusion of everyday experience.

What we immediately experience at the starting point of all our thought and action and present fact at all times is our own self. All our perceptions, feelings, thoughts, desires, volitions--every so-called state of consciousness--belongs to the complex whole which is

⁵ IDEM, A Philosophy of Ideals, N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1928, p.15.

⁶ IDEM, Person and Reality, N.Y.: The Ronald Press, 1958, p.39.

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the total fact of experience for each one of us and is called the self.⁷

Brightman is arguing that most so-called empirical starting points "retain an 'empiricism' minus the full context of experience"⁸ and so these positions suffer from abstractionism and reductionism. The immediately first given according to Brightman is the present moment of conscious experience. It is an act of awareness in which I am conscious of something. As William James contended in his Principles of Psychology: the universal conscious fact is not feelings and thoughts exist, but 'I think' and 'I feel'. The items of experience are perceived in a field of awareness which is personal, individual, particular, and identifiable as my act. The mind or self, therefore, is not a thing or mysterious substance to which the items belong. This misunderstanding was the upshot of Brightman's discussion with Prof. Williams. Underscoring one of the latter's statements: "given to human minds...ingredients of a conscious experience", Brightman raises the question as to what these minds are in addition to or apart from what is given to them: "do minds consist of their ingredients or is there an unmentioned or ungiven something that is the real mind"?⁹

⁷ IDEM, "Personalism as a Philosophy of Religion", Crozier Quarterly, 5 (1928), p.383.

⁸ IDEM, Person and Reality, p.10-11.

⁹ IDEM, "The Self, Given and Implied--A Discussion", Jour. Phil., 31 (1934), p.263.

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Brightman's answer to the question is quite clear; the self is what is immediately experienced. "The given, present consciousness, specious present, time-span, present self-experience, field of attention, datum-self are all synonymous."¹⁰ To sum up the issue, he affirms with Descartes "that the only fact that is actually and unconditionally given is self-consciousness".¹¹

Finally, after avoiding the abstract, narrow starting points of scientific empiricism and clarifying the real nature of the self as a stream of consciousness rather than a thing or substance, Brightman characterizes the essential trait of the given self as "a genuine organic whole, [a self experience] a self experience, and not a sum of parts".¹² The mind or self as we live it and find it before the work of analysis is not a bare isolated fact or sum of facts but a complex active whole. Indeed "experiences exist only as functions of a whole mind".¹³ In opposition to the purely analytical and mechanistic approach Brightman suggests "that no one fact is as im-

¹⁰IDEM, "The Self, Given and Implied--A Discussion", p.267.

¹¹IDEM, "The Importance of Being Conscious", *Jour. of Phil.Studies*, 4 (1929), p.497.

¹²IDEM, "Personalism as a Philosophy of Religion", *Crozier Quarterly*, 5 (1928), p.383.

¹³IDEM, *A Philosophy of Ideals*, *loc. cit.* p.12.

portant as the whole structure of facts. The bricks of reality are not significant; it is the way the bricks are put together that counts".¹⁴ The self then is the experimental starting point but it is experienced as a 'unitas complex' or organic whole. He defines it as "a complex organization of interdependent parts, which together constitute a unity with properties of its own, not defined by the parts."¹⁵

Two important results stand out so far in Brightman's description of the common starting point for both science and religion. The first is that there is no such a thing as a pure experience; any one experience contains elements of thought and above all is related to the other items of experience. The second important result is that conscious experience or thought is the common starting point for both science and religion; to be empirical is not synonymous with science. If the datum self is, then a whole new perspective emerges, one in which the datum self becomes the locus for a dialectic between the various components of experience: the sensory, the rational, and the valuational.

At one point in the orientation section of his book on philosophy of religion, Brightman asks himself the question

¹⁴ IDEM, Immortality in Post-Kantian Idealism, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925, p.5.

¹⁵ IDEM, "universals and Particulars", The Phil Forum, I (1943), p.7.

what and whose experience should the philosopher deal with? Ordinary experience is so confused, inaccurate, and narrow that it is untrustworthy and so it would seem that "only the experience investigated by scientific method is worthy of serious attention".¹⁶

2.-THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE SCIENCES:

Throughout all his works, Brightman distinguishes between phenomena and noumena; the former is that which appears in conscious experience in any given moment of immediate experience prior to rational inquiry. The latter, is that which is the result of critical investigation.¹⁷ In other words, the datum self despite all its complexity, activity, and self-awareness, does not provide any real knowledge; knowledge, not even self-knowledge, can be immediate.¹⁸ The need arises, therefore, for the critical work of reason; facts must be ascertained, hypotheses formulated, and the whole of experience organized coherently. After having expanded then the definition of experience from that of pure sense data to the full complexity of conscious life, Brightman makes it clear that

¹⁶IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.8.

¹⁷IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, N.V.: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1925, p.10.

¹⁸IBID., p.330.

a radical empiricism in philosophy of religion requires that the philosopher depend on the sciences for his facts. He defines science as a description of the laws of behavior disclosed by some particular field of experience.¹⁹ Ordinary experience is too confused and incoherent. The mediation of a first moment of organization is required before the work of the philosopher can begin. The scientist's use of instruments to filter out irrelevant data and his translation of confused materials into precise measurements alone with the process of selection, cataloging under determinate headings, and correlation of data provide the needed mediation. The sciences then in summarizing the facts of experience, constitute a first moment of organization and as such provide the philosopher with his first organized subject matter. Thus according to Brightman, personal experience is the real starting point of the philosopher but this same personal experience must be analyzed as thoroughly as possible. "The shadowy-foggy whole acquires firm outlines and definite content only by processes of scientific analysis and synthesis."²⁰

The sciences according to Brightman, establish meanings by formulating judgments. He defines judgment as "any aspect of the datum which describes something other than

¹⁹IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.11.

²⁰IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, p.117.

itself, either before or after the inquiry".²¹ The judgment is that factor of experience which attempts to describe what the present moment means in terms of outside reality. The scientist is not alone however in making judgments; the artist, the moral and religious man, and the man in the street all make judgments and so what constitutes then the unique contribution of the scientist? The special work of the scientist is analysis, that is, he seeks to explain things in terms of their causes. The scientist experiences x as a complex whole involving a chaos of elements; by a process of analysis, he proceeds to break up this x into as many significant parts as possible, reducing them to their simplest components. He then relates them according to classes and attempts to determine whether there is any general factor running through them all. On this basis laws will be formulated indicating the causes believed to account for x as experienced. Analysis then is the key function of the sciences.

In view of the dependency of the philosopher upon the analytic function of the sciences, Brightman makes it very clear that a radically empirical philosophy of religion cannot do its work without a good knowledge of the sciences of religion, namely: history, psychology, and sociology.

²¹ IDEM, "Some Definitions for Personalists" Personalist, 27 (1946), p.368.

The philosopher of religion must make a thorough study of these sciences; a mere summary or second hand acquaintance is not sufficient.

This chapter (a summary of the findings of the sciences on religion) is no substitute for a thorough study of the sciences themselves; likewise, the sciences of history, psychology, and sociology are no substitutes for philosophy. Yet they are essential to it. So essential are they that the ideal student will master them before undertaking philosophy and will continually go back to them for rootage in the soil of experience.²²

To sum up then the relationship of science to experience, the philosopher must go to the sciences for his facts; it is experience as organized by the sciences that he must look into. The work of interpreting religion requires the analysis made by the sciences of religion. Philosophy's intrinsic dependence upon the sciences makes it imperative for the philosopher of religion to have a first hand acquaintance with the sciences of religion. This insistence on scientific rigor gave Brightman a hearing in the U.S.

Once the facts have been ascertained by the sciences, the next step to be taken in determining the true nature of things is to ask the question: "of what ideally past and future data are present datum-elements the signs?"²³ Each datum is a problem which asks the question: what does this mean? And so all critical knowledge is problematic that entails:

²²IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.vii.

²³IDEM, "The Dialectic of Religious Experience", Phil. Rev., 28 (1929), p.568.

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1) experimentation to arrive at working hypotheses or solutions to the questions raised by the datum; 2) the formulation of new hypotheses whenever new facts enter into the picture, and 3) an on-going search rather than any final absolute solutions.

As for the first issue of experimentation when searching for a solution to the problematic datum, Brightman means that the evidence of the datum self does not interpret itself; it is as we saw oftentimes obscure and problematic. "By experiment with the evidence we discover the meaning."²⁴ In this process of subjecting the data to test and experiments an hypothesis is formulated. He defines an hypothesis as a "process initiated in a datum-self, which proposes a judgment as possibly (thinably) true, defines the conditions under which it could be true, and sets forth its implications and involvements (see Dewey of these terms)".²⁵ Experience is always "the seat of verification and process and life".²⁶ As facts are considered in various settings and perspectives or moments themselves of the life stream, new meanings suggest themselves or rather the essential meaning is determined.

²⁴IDEM, Person and Reality, p.52.

²⁵IDEM, "Some Definitions for Personalists", 27 (1946), p.369.

²⁶IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, p.41.

"Appearance is a problem presented to us, reality is what solves the problem."²⁷

If the initial set of facts requires experimentation to arrive at a working hypothesis, the introduction of new facts into the datum self entails a reviewing of all the pertinent evidence in order to arrive at a new hypothesis. Brightman sees this process of formulating new hypotheses as involving three stages which he describes as the flight of the arrow of intelligibility; then in a second stage it flies toward the mark of analysis but discovers that its first hypothesis is not completely intelligible. Finally in a third stage it flies back to the starting point but enriched now with a new set of facts it reformulates a new type hypothesis.²⁸ And so, this process goes on forever; as new facts thrust themselves into consciousness and are subjected to analysis, original hypotheses must be re-examined and possibly reformulated. William James felt that the fundamental empiricist maxim was that the most assured conclusions concerning matters of fact should be considered as hypotheses liable to modification in the course of future experience.²⁹ Like James,

²⁷ IDEM, A Philosophy of Ideals, p.120.

²⁸ IDEM, Introduction to Philosophy, p.41.

²⁹ R.B. PERRY, The Thought and Character of William James, Vol. I., Boston: Little Brown Co., 1935, p.557.

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Brightman wants to find his facts in experience, test these facts in experience, and leave his hypotheses open to modification in the course of future experience. Indeed Brightman is a firm adherent of James's radical empiricism in all three aspects described above.

The consequence for his philosophy of religion as it insists on a radical empiricism that is experimental, is to eliminate the possibility of absolute truth. He entitles his work A Philosophy of Religion because he presents it not as the final truth or the philosophy of religion but rather as a tentative, plausible hypothesis.³⁰

I have a system of my own, but I am convinced that my views are not absolute truth, I present them as hypotheses to stimulate thought and as stepping stones to higher truth, rather than as the last word on any issue.³¹

It is precisely on this issue of open-ended enquiry rather than the assumption of dogmatic positions that Brightman rejects the title of Theologian because "too often theology has meant a mere systematization of tradition of a supposed absolute revelation".³² Experience is a growing thing: new facts come up all the time, hence the philosopher of religion must leave his solutions open so as to be able to account for

³⁰ IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, loc.cit., p.vii.

³¹ IBID., p.vii.

³² IDEM, "Religion as Truth", in FFRM, Contemporary American Theology, N.Y.: The Hound Table Press, 1932, p.53.

future developments. As he himself points out: "it is not the part of wisdom to pursue the liberal and open-minded path of the empiricist? This is the path of genuine investigation--as John Dewey says, of 'inquiry'".³³ The philosopher of religion therefore cannot accept uncritically dogmas or inspired intuitions, as he must examine and test all propositions. The discovery of religious truth implies a method that is inductive, that takes data, formulates hypotheses as to their meaning, tests these hypotheses in the light of further examination of facts, and finally verifies in the light of experience as a whole. Reason thus is empirical, examining each fact, every belief, every problem in order to reach out for hypothetical truth.

Implicit in Brightman's effort to redefine experience was the idea that scientific empiricism is not empirical enough in that it abstracted from personal conscious experience; the scientist is a person before he is a scientist. Likewise, in this second section we have seen that the philosopher of religion cannot be empirical unless he become a scientist of religion. The work of interpretation if it is to be critical, must begin not only with the datum self as it is given in a pre-analytical moment of experience, but also with the facts as analyzed and ascertained by the sciences of religion.

³³ IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.7-8.

In addition to this, the philosopher must adopt the model of experimentation used by the scientist; all facts are so many problems that ask the question: what does this mean, what does it say about reality? Hypotheses must be formulated and re-examined in the light of new facts. The most characteristic trait, however, of Brightman's radical empiricism in philosophy of religion is his agreement with James that hypotheses should be left open to modification in the light of future experience.

3.-HEGEL, THE EMPIRICIST OF CONSCIOUSNESS:

In adopting a radical empiricism of the Jamesian type Brightman's main concern was to define the role played by reason in the datum self. A man's criterion for truth he considered to be the most important thing in a man's philosophy.³⁴ On this question he faced two possible extreme solutions which he sought to avoid; on the one hand he sought to avoid the position of irrationalism with its typical disregard for the need of critical validation of personal or religious experiences; he complained especially to some of his fellow religionists that in their desire for a new social order their rejection of the need for philosophy or critical thought

³⁴ IDEM, Dissertation (for Ph.D.) "The Criterion of Truth in Albert Ritschl's Theology", Boston: Typescript, 1912, p.212.

could lead to a loss in the belief in God.³⁵ On the other hand he sought to avoid the adoption of a rationalistic, apriori conception of reason which did not and could not take into account the new developments in the sciences and the on-going nature of personal experience; "Bowne must not be erected into the St. Thomas of Methodism".³⁶ The discovery of Hegel as the empiricist of consciousness during the latter part of the 1920's gave Brightman the solution he was looking for; Hegel's conception of reason as concrete, as a function of experience, lead him to adopt Hegel'd methodology in philosophy of religion.

Underlying the search for a radical empiricism in philosophy is the function of reason within and so Brightman felt that "the key question in philosophy is not whether the present can be transcended, but how it can be transcended"?³⁷ Brightman in other words, considers the datum self as rich in elements that transcend the immediate present but the question is how exactly can the present be transcended in a critical, rational way? Is experience taken in all its concreteness rich

³⁵IDEM, "The Unpopularity of Personalism", Meth. Rev., CIV (1921), p.12.

³⁶IDEM, "The Tasks Confronting a Personalistic Phil.", Personalist, II (1921), p.164-165.

³⁷IDEM, Person and Reality, p.48-49.

enough in rational and methodological elements to avoid the inevitable drift toward radical pluralism? William James had struggled throughout his career with the problem of unity and coherence but in the end he never did resolve the question of the true nature of consciousness,³⁸ and eventually came to hold the position of radical pluralism. Brightman, as we have seen, is very close to James in many aspects but felt that he did not offer an adequate view of reason.

While I still hold the main principles of personalistic philosophy, I felt the need of supplementing and correcting Bowne's thought by greater attention to empirical fact, both in psychology and in the physical and biological sciences, and also by a more concrete and adequate view of the work of reason; in other words, by more James and more Hegel.³⁹

Being on the look-out for a more adequate view of reason, Brightman began giving a series of annual seminars on Hegel in the school year of 1923-1924 which he continued until about 1950. Prior to that time, his knowledge of Hegel had been second hand and as a result he considered Hegel to be the arch rationalist, the system builder of the Encyclopedia. But a touch of the empiricist conscience lead him to begin reading Hegel directly in his works.⁴⁰ In the latter part of

³⁸ H. SCHNEIDER, A History of American Philosophy, N.Y.: Columbia Univ., 1946, p.540.

³⁹ E.S. BRIGHTMAN, "Religion as Truth", loc.cit., p.57.

⁴⁰ IDEM, "The Present Outlook in Phil. of Rel.: From the Standpoint of an Idealist", in WIEMAN & Meland (eds.) American Philosophies of Religion. Chicago, 1936, p.321-22.

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the 19th Century and the early part of the 20th Century, commentators of Hegel had begun studying not only the Encyclopedia but also the Phenomenology of Mind and in so doing were discovering Hegel the empiricist of consciousness; Josiah Royce in his Lectures on Modern Idealism and in his The Spirit of Modern Philosophy explains how experience for Hegel is the core of reality and consequently agrees with Theodor Haering that Hegel is the empiricist of consciousness.

Theodor Haering calls Hegel 'the empiricist of consciousness'. Kant's realm of Mögliche Erfahrung was the basis of Royce's idealism. Experience is the very stuff of reality for almost any idealist.⁴¹

In this study of Hegel, Brightman came to discover that the heart of Hegel lies in the words: "the truth is in the whole". In other words, experience despite its character as an on-going process remains an organic unity. And so the possibility of a methodology that would be at the same time empirical and rational (coherent) presented itself. Like Dewey I disapproved Hegel's schematism but his method of constantly relating each piece of experience to others until all has been surveyed is for me the fundamental road to religious insight".⁴²

⁴¹IDEM, "From Rationalism to Empiricism", Christian Century 56 (1939), p.277.

⁴²IBID., p.277.

Awakened by this direct study of Hegel, Brightman set out to explore the meaning Hegel gave to rationalism and empiricism. He Discovered that "true rationalism is simply the principle of confronting every part of experience with our view of the whole, while true empiricism is the principle of accepting only that view of the whole which is honestly built up by observation of the accessible parts of experience".⁴³ Unlike James and Dewey, Brightman is convinced with Hegel that conscious experience is an organic whole made up of the various elements, phases, and moments of experience; by consciously relating these parts to the whole, reason can arrive at some kind of rational, coherent meaning without sacrificing one iota of the empiricism of the pragmatists or instrumentalists. Reason can thus achieve coherence without becoming abstract or rationalistic. As he himself says, "it may be that a science of mind, in the strict sense, is impossible because science is always abstract, whole mind is the most concrete of objects. It is concrete not as being visible to the sense, but as being a rich system of connected experience".⁴⁴ Properly understood experience includes coherent organization and so "reason can exist only as experienced ordering and interpreting of the experienced".⁴⁵

⁴³IBID., p.277.

⁴⁴IDEM, A Philosophy of Ideals, p.12.

⁴⁵IDEM, Person and Reality, p.12.

By adopting Hegel's view of reason as concrete and inclusive of experience, Brightman had discovered a way to adopt a methodology of radical empiricism that was both prior and supplementary to analysis. The datum self is rich in possibilities of relationships of all kinds but in this pre-analytical state all is confusion and chaos; analysis is needed to order experience but at the same time analysis alone is partial and sterile. Now, if reason is understood as the concrete ordering of the elements of experience into a coherent whole rather than as abstract and apriori reasoning then rational meaning becomes possible without sacrificing concreteness. This position Brightman adopts as his methodology of radical empiricism.

His method is the empirical-rational one of exploring what is now given (the thesis) in relation to which is not now given, but is implied by, or involved in, what is given (the antithesis), and then going on to discover what follows from the relation of the thesis to the antithesis (the synthesis). The goal of this method is to move (by rationally connected steps) from the given situation in which man finds himself until thought reaches the most inclusive, the most adequate, and the most interconnected account it can give of the whole range of experience and its implications, this goal is truth, and the true in the whole.⁴⁶

⁴⁶IBID., p.94.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER ONE

Brightman's definition of empiricism can be summed up in one word: experience. Experience is a unique act, so unique that all subsequent efforts to explore reality are but a search into the meaning of experience. Conscious personal experience is at once the starting point of all investigation and the point of arrival; as the present moment of consciousness is transcended and the circle of known reality becomes wider and wider, all of being is explained and understood in terms of experience. Implied here is the Personalist conviction that the self is the key of all reality.

The traits or characteristics then of personal consciousness as given in the datum self such as those of unity and activity will form the backbone of the new methodology of empirical coherence. The unity of the self makes all experiences inter-related; the implicit presence of reason within consciousness makes it possible to relate these experiences into a complex coherent whole. It is the ability of the self to be self-reflexive that awakens thought in its specific function of reason; immediate conscious experience is chaotic. Analytical reason turns this immediate experience into knowledge; but it can only do so because it discovers the self as relational by its very nature. Reason will move experience towards unity both by its analytical function which is the

work of science and by its synoptic function which will move it to full philosophical coherence. The relational character of experience in its very immediacy is the basis for an empiricism that considers reason concrete.

The other trait which is characteristic of the datum self is that of activity or process. The strong emphasis given by Brightman to the experimental, to the constant need to reformulate hypotheses in the light of new facts, and the emphasis given to on-going search rather than to absolute truth, all arise out of his awareness of evolutionary characteristics. Experience is truly active and evolutionary and so a real empiricism must remain open to future development.

Given the importance then of the initial starting point for Brightman's definition of empiricism, it becomes evident why he insists on avoiding all artificial, abstract, or partial starting points. The danger besetting all scientists and philosophers is to forget that they are first of all men before they exercise the specific function of their respective disciplines. We can conclude then that the real meaning of empiricism for Brightman lies not in his close adherence to the results of the sciences but rather to the central role accorded to experience in his philosophy. It will be conscious personal experience understood as unitary and active that will be the key to the self.

CHAPTER TWO

EMPIRICAL COHERENCE AND RELIGIOUS TRUTH

In an early article summarizing the results of his doctoral dissertation, Brightman states that "a man's criterion of truth is the key to the understanding of all his thought".¹ True knowledge is more than immediate awareness or conscious perception; the empirical spirit demands tested belief. Since warranted beliefs require standards or criteria to be judged by, the question of the criterion of truth is central to Brightman's conception of how religious truth should be interpreted.

We saw how the method of radical empiricism led Brightman to consider the datum self as an organic whole involving the continuous interplay of sensory, scientific, artistic, and religious experiences in an on-going process of related activities. In this perspective, what is the importance and specific truth contribution of religion? How is religious truth to be interpreted? Is religious experience an autonomous source of knowledge,² or is religion a problem to be analyzed and explained away.³

¹E. S. BRIGHTMAN, "Ritschl's Criterion of Religious Truth", American Journal of Theology, 21 (1917), p.212.

²IDEM, "The Dialectic of Religious Experience", Phil. Rev., 38 (1929), p.558.

³IBID., p.559.

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Radical Empiricism will seek to take each item of experience and relate it to the other items of experience in order to arrive at a coherent view of experience as a whole. Consequently, in Brightman's empirical philosophy of religion the specifically philosophical interpretation requires in the first place, a close examination of the religious experience itself and, in the second place, it must examine the question of the autonomy or independence of religious truth from the other items of experience; and finally, it must integrate religious experience into experience as a whole. This chapter then will be divided into three paragraphs: the meaning of religious experience by itself, the claims of religious truth to independence from other criteria of truth, and the question of empirical coherence or organic integration.

1.- THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In an early statement, Brightman states that "in any philosophical enquiry, it is wise to begin with experience".⁴ The attempt must be made to "cling closely to the facts of experience, and subtract the additions made by faith, belief and reasoning".⁵

⁴IDEM, Religious Values (N.Y.: The Abington Press, 1925), p.57.

⁵IBID., p.57.

The very concreteness of all experiences makes it almost impossible to separate any one experience from our thought about it; indeed, "'pure' religious experience, purged of all admixture of idea and belief, is an abstraction as unreal as a 'pure' sensation in psychology".⁶ The very conviction, however, that all items of experience are interrelated makes it imperative that each item be examined for its truth content.

Once abstraction is made of the inevitable thought elements present to all experiences, the philosopher in search of the objective validity of the religious experience comes to perceive that "less of either faith or reason is involved in acknowledging an obligation than in believing in God".⁷ As the philosopher examines the complex whole of his personal consciousness for a datum that is immediately given beyond any shadow of a doubt, it is the experience of values in general and of moral values in particular that stands out as the undeniable fact: values exist whether we believe in God or not;⁸ quite clearly we see Brightman straining to find an undeniable fact that will resist the skeptical glance of the scientist; the empirical temper of the times requires facts,

⁶IBID., p.9.

⁷IBID., p.57.

⁸IBID., p.58.

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and so he is determined to build his philosophy of religion on a foundation that resists doubt. Following the tradition of empirical theologians who in post-Kantian times were seeking to find a firm foundation for faith in experience,⁹ he applies the empirical principle in theology which leads him to study religion rather than God directly; "it is proper for the theologian to remember that he can never stand save at the human end of this relationship (commerce between the human and the divine) and that he can have no knowledge of what stands at the Divine end save that which is given him in and through the relationship itself".¹⁰ In any case, in searching for the empirical fact of religion as it appears in consciousness, the fundamental datum is found to be that of moral obligation; "obligation is self-recognized and self-imposed".¹¹

It is precisely at this juncture--in searching for a fact consciously experienced--that religion is connected with the value-striving self because "our experience of values in general and of moral value in particular is an undeniable fact whatever our further theories may be".¹²

⁹James A. MARTIN, Empirical Philosophies of Religion with Special Reference to Boodin, Brightman, Hocking, Macintosh and Wieman, Morningside Heights, N.Y. : King's Crown Press, 1945, p.4-5.

¹⁰John BAILLIE, The Interpretation of Religion, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928, p.10.

¹¹E. S. BRIGHTMAN, Religious Values, p.58.

¹²IBID., p.58.

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Special emphasis is given to moral values in that the moral obligation impels man to achieve his perfection and consequently implies the "command to realize all values".¹³

Morality is the condition of the realization of all other values in any total and harmonious way. If a man renounces moral obligation he may have a streak of genius in art, in intellect, or even in religion; but he has abandoned the power which would unify and perpetuate his values. For the personalist, then, the moral will is the center of personality and hence of religion.¹⁴

In defining value in general as "whatever is liked, desired, or approved",¹⁵ Brightman specifies the moral obligation as the basis and foundation of all other values, including that of religion because morality consists in the obligation to perfect oneself, to improve the personality which is the fundamental drive of the conscious self characteristic of the conative self. Thus religion is related to morality for two reasons: because the moral obligation is the most experiential fact of the conscious self and, secondly, because moral obligation is the foundation and basis of all values.

¹³IBID., p.58.

¹⁴IDEM, "Personalism as a Philosophy of Religion", Crozier Quarterly, 5 (1928), p.389.

¹⁵IDEM, Religious Values, p.15.

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Having related religion very closely to moral values and value striving in general, Brightman with Höffding "holds that religion is essentially a belief in the axiom of the conservation of values; faith asserts that, come what may, the truly worthwhile will never perish".¹⁶ A close examination of all the facts concerning value experiences indicate that the strivings of the self for betterment cannot be illusory or futile but rather point to an ultimate reality which embodies the objectivity of value as well as their permanence. Thus, he says, all facts observable in the value experience point toward faith.¹⁷ As a result of this diagnosis Brightman puts forth the following definition of religion: "concern about experiences which are regarded as of supreme value; devotion toward a power of powers believed to originate, increase, and conserve these values".¹⁸ He presents two other definitions, one descriptive and the other normative but both embodying the position that religion is an attitude related to and based on the value striving experience.

¹⁶IDEM, "The Unpopularity of Personalism", The Methodist Rev., 104 (1921), p.16-17.

¹⁷IBID., p.17.

¹⁸IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.18.

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Religion is the total attitude of man toward what he considers to be superhuman, and worthy of worship, or devotion, or propitiation, or at least, of reverence. Religion ought to be characterized by the feeling of dependence on a personal God and dominated by the will to co-operate with God in the conservation and increase of values.¹⁹

What then is the function of religion? Granted its experiential basis and rootage in the value experience, what precise role does religion play within the personality, according to Brightman? Any question about religion or about God, he feels, necessarily derives from the question about man and man's possibilities.²⁰ In answer to the question, Brightman conceives the true function of religion as helping the person realize the full dimensions of his personality: his worth as a human person in contrast to lower forms of conscious experience and his harmony and union with other persons, especially the divine person.

The chief function of religion is to bring man to realize in feeling, in thought, and in action, a due sense of the worth of personality, individual and social, human and divine.²¹

¹⁹ IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, 3rd ed., 1963, p. 256-257.

²⁰ IDEM, Personality and Religion, N.Y.: Abington Press 1934, p.11.

²¹ IBID., p.11.

²² Brightman defines person as a self capable of reason and value. "Personalism as a Philosophy of Religion", Crozier Quarterly, 5 (1928), p.383.

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The very nature of person cannot be determined just from the momentary self but only "through the development of its potentialities".²³ In other words, it is through the value-striving experience that a self begins to realize its potentialities and, consequently, its personhood, since Brightman defines a person "as any member of the class of selves who is capable of achieving value".²⁴ What religion accomplishes in this perspective is to make the person realize the full dimensions of its potentialities. More specifically, the religious experience seeks the harmony of the whole personality with itself and with God. When the personality is fully itself: conscious of its ideals and relations to other selves, living in harmony with God, it embodies value, "it is what we mean by value".²⁵ The goodness of the person can only be realized by its internal and external harmony; and since "religion is an expression of man's total personality, his thought, will, and feeling, it is the expression of a total harmony".²⁶ This is why Brightman speaks of religion as the value of values.²⁷

²³ IBID., p.383.

²⁴ IDEM, Personality and Religion, p.14.

²⁵ IDEM, Religious Values, p.9-14.

²⁶ IDEM, "Is Christianity Reasonable", Religion in the Making, 1 (1941), p.401.

²⁷ IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.21.

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What unique truth does religious experience provide that neither science nor philosophy can provide? Brightman feels that as an experience of and by itself "the religious datum is not a problem but a revelation".²⁸ All the data in conscious experience are problems for the analytical, scientific mind but at the same time each data is a clue or sign to the larger meaning of reality. The religious experience as the expression of the full range of possibilities open to the person, especially communal life with other selves and God, reveals something of the full dimensions of reality. It speaks very clearly of the harmony of the universe and the unity between all things; indeed, it confers unity on life by repressing the strivings of the total personality.

Religion aims at unity in human life and in fact confers an actual unity to life that no other type of human experience can approximate. Religion is all-inclusive. The philosopher aims at the intellectual unification of human life. Religion seeks the harmony of the whole personality with the whole God.²⁹

The unique truth and special task that religion would seem to contribute then, is to prevent the moral man from any artificial narrowing of his range of needs; the knowledge which the religious experience furnishes is not scientific or even philosophical but nonetheless prevents our ignorance from

²⁸ IDEM, "The Dialectic of Religious Experience", Phil. Rev., 38 (1929), p.558.

²⁹ IDEM, Religious Values, p.98.

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cutting itself from the truly real. "The task which religion imposes on man under the actual conditions of life is that of finding in himself the clew of something more than himself."³⁰

Brightman upholds that when approached and studied empirically, religion as given in human experience is related to the moral striving self and functions as a revelation of man's fullest possibilities, that is, his potential harmony within himself, with God, and with other persons. The implications and questions raised by this immanentist position will be studied later but for the moment, our task is to continue to follow Brightman in his search for a completely empirical approach in the interpretation of the meaning of religion.

2.-RELIGIOUS TRUTH CANNOT REMAIN ISOLATED

The constant thread running through Brightman's thought and methodology is the idea that empiricism means coherence or unity as his adoption of the Hegelian methodology clearly indicates; his empirical analysis of the religious experience leads him to see the function and truth of religion as achieving unity; harmony within and harmony without. It is in this same light that he will find the traditional positions of theologians, both old and new, deficient. He will criticize

³⁰IBID., p.109.

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them as abstract, that is, as failing to relate religion to the whole of experience.

In his doctoral dissertation on the criterion of religious truth in Ritschl, he distinguishes two main streams of thought in the Christian tradition. The first upholds that "truth is to be won out of history--the historical revelation in Christ and His community".³¹ Religious truth is this view is autonomous and independent because it is guaranteed by a higher authority than man. The second stream of thought upholds that "Christian truth is not simply a relation in history, an empirical process, but also a relation to the supra-historical; in this view, religious truth is connected "with every other activity of thought that aims to know the supra-historical" and consequently the truth content of historical revelation must at least be compared and made coherent with other sources of truth. Brightman sees Ritschl along with Luther as belonging to the first position and trying to break with the second tradition of which Aquinas and orthodox Lutherans are examples.³² From the very beginning of his philosophical career under the guidance of Bowne, Brightman opposed the position of theologians such as Ritschl who maintained the autonomy of religious truth and who failed to relate it

³¹IDEM, Ph.D. Dissertation, p.49-50.

³²IBID., p.50.

to other activities of thought: he felt that the authority of historical revelation itself had been shaken by the historical criticism and that the dogma taught by the structured Church failed to take into account the developments in human culture. Furthermore, as his own thought developed and as he became more and more empirical, he found the position of his own master to be over-rational in that it still depended on a priori principles.

The first abstract position which Brightman criticizes then is that of the fundamentalists who accept the literal historical account of the Bible as authoritative. Brightman understands Luther as teaching that genuine and sincere faith is exercised only in reference to the genuine revelation of God and that the exclusive authority of the Christian revelation and history is the only supreme authority of truth.³³

The skepticism of modern thought toward the security of historical fact as a basis of religion in addition to the findings of higher Biblical criticism, of which Brightman was very well acquainted,³⁴ certainly make historical revelation a very dubious starting point for the philosopher of religion seeking to be scientific and empirical. In addition to the unreliability of historical fact, Brightman feels that the claims of

³³IBID., p.49-50.

³⁴Brightman published a text-book on the subject: *The Sources of the Hexateuch*, N.Y.: Abington Press, 1918.

historical Christianity seems to "exclude any solution of the fate of those nations that stand outside the course of the historical development of Christianity".³⁵ As a consequence, Brightman concludes that, with the breakdown of these traditions standards of belief, the idea of a dogmatic authority in Biblical revelation is unsatisfactory because dependent on history.³⁶

The second abstract position to be criticized by Brightman is that of Church authority teaching dogma based on revelation and tradition; he finds this dogmatic stance to be unempirical because it erects truths elaborated in the past into binding first principles thereby subordinating the present to the past. The truth to be believed here is considered to be a completed whole truth which is once and for all believed and is to be retained rather than to be discovered.³⁷

The Christian revelation is viewed as a completed whole, demanding acquiescence, rather than as the seeds of a new life or as the spirit which will guide us into all the truth. The perspective of history as the gradual unfolding of the purposes of God, the advance of time as genuinely creative...If Jesus founded the Church, then the whole of the Church is essential to an understanding of his religion; and if God made the world, its development reveals God.³⁸

³⁵ IDEM, Dissertation, p.22.

³⁶ IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.23-24.

³⁷ Henry WIEMAN, American Philosophies of Religion, Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1936, p. 35.

³⁸ E.S. BRIGHTMAN, "Is Christianity Reasonable", Fel. in the Making, I (1941), p.404.

Brightman upholds a conception of revelation which is not closed after death of the apostles but remains open and develops in its essentials throughout time. This position is linked to his understanding of religion as the values of values, the growth of the self. He asks: "Is not the Christian revelation first and foremost a revelation of the nature of the good?"³⁹ In this perspective, it is not so much the physical historical facts such as the physical body of the Resurrected Christ but the living faith that Jesus triumphed over death: the essentials of Christianity are the values embodied in them, values which enhance the growth possibilities of the self.⁴⁰ And so, rather than set up the early dogmas of the Church as a series of truths to be accepted and believed, the truths of religion should result from a "growing exploration of what Jesus means" on the basis of what is happening to the self in our present times. This is much more consonant with the Protestant conscience whose ideal is to face the "evidence of Scripture, history, and personal experience and thus arrive at a conscientious decision. The seat of authority here is the soul; the person's total experience and reason must speak the final word of assent or dissent".⁴¹ The divorce

³⁹IBID., p.403.

⁴⁰IBID., p.402.

⁴¹IBID., p.405.

then of past religious truth from the on-going development of life leads Brightman to reject the dogmatist as un-empirical.

The shift from dogma to life so characteristic of Protestant modernist theologians with its emphasis on a growing exploration of the truth rather than the acceptance of a fixed codified doctrine transformed the idea of theology so much that the old distinction between natural and revealed theology came to be largely ignored; the properly philosophical method replaced that of theology. According to Schleiermacher "theology should be a scientific exposition of Christian experience or the Christian consciousness";⁴² Ritschl in turn held that "all religious truth must be verifiable in present experience"⁴³ But since all experience implies presuppositions,⁴⁴ the search by these post-Kantian theologians for a firm foundation for faith in experience required the elaboration or adoption of a philosophy that would enable them to explore the meaning of experience. It is here that the danger of becoming un-empirical was strongest. In the case of Ritschl, he adopted Lotze's metaphysics of 'esse est agere'⁴⁵ but failed to understand

⁴²Albert KNUDSEN, Present Tendencies, loc.cit., p.187.

⁴³E.S.BRIGHTMAN, Dissertation, p.15.

⁴⁴Josiah ROYCE, The Spirit of Modern Philosophy, N.Y.: W.W.Morton and Co., 1967, p.297.

⁴⁵E.S.BRIGHTMAN, Dissertation, p.15.

"the essential fact of the unity of self-consciousness".⁴⁶

The unity of the thinking, willing, and feeling subject make it impossible to keep separate the three criteria for religious truth which Ritschl proposes: historical revelation, will and feeling. His toleration of a system of double truth and his repudiation of any need for a relation between the two demonstrate that he failed to grasp the most important empirical fact of all: that of the unity of the self. Consequently he failed to see that the rational needs of the self must be respected. "If we correct Ritschl's empiricism by a personalism (of Professor Bowne's type), that recognizes the unity of the subject, and looks on the harmonious, consistent realization of the total personal life as the ultimate criterion of truth, then we shall be enabled to revise the three Ritschlean criteria".⁴⁷ In this criticism of Ritschl's philosophy, we see very clearly that for Brightman empiricism means coherence: the concrete unity of the self. It is this conception of empiricism that forces him to criticize Ritschl as un-empirical.

Finally, the gradual development in his thought which led him to adopt the Hegelian methodology of concrete inclusive reason and consequently to move away from the strictly

⁴⁶IBID., p.104.

⁴⁷IBID., p.106.

rational to the empirical referred to above, forced him to abandon and criticize some of the elements in Bowne's thought which he found to be too Kantian and aprioristic. The apriorists distinguish between experience and reason; experience consists in certain givens such as those in the order of sensation. Reason, on the other hand, produces eternal principles of validity which are not derived from experience; the acceptance of the validity of values, that of religious faith in particular, are independent of any other standards, and of the flux of time.⁴⁸ Brightman considers this un-empirical; a truth cannot be independent of experience. To be unqualifiedly apriori, a truth must relate necessarily to all experience in such a way that it is always valid, no matter what happens.⁴⁹ This fact cannot be known until the whole span of experience has been consciously lived through. This is why Brightman preferred to speak of omnitemporal truths rather than eternal truths.⁵⁰ Principles, judgments, truths are movements of experience and therefore they are not abstract, detached, or autonomous but rather they are relational sub-

⁴⁸ "Religious faith refuses to admit that there is an external rational standard by means of which the truth of religion can be judged." Albert KNUDSEN, Present Tendencies, loc., cit., p.184-185.

⁴⁹ E.S. BRIGHTMAN, A Philosophy of Religion, p.3.

⁵⁰ IDEM, "Bowne: Eternalist or Temporalist", Personalist XXVIII (1947), p.257.

jects to be organized into a coherent whole by reason. Only a concrete inclusive understanding of reason can accomplish this and so he criticized his master for being un-empirical in that Bowne considers reason a source of abstract propositions.

Recalling Brightman's statement concerning the two streams of thought in the Christian tradition: the making first of all of revealed religious truth an independent form of truth and second of all seeing religious truth as related to other forms of thought, we see very clearly that he stands behind the second tradition. Religious truth cannot be independent of the whole of experience. Unlike traditional Catholic theologians like Aquinas who see religious truth as having relationships to metaphysical truths but nonetheless remaining autonomous and regulative of all natural truth, Brightman felt that the criterion of religious truth is the harmony or coherence of the total personality; religious truth contributes its unique truth but must be judged on the basis of the growth of the self in time. Hence philosophy is superior to revelation and theology. As historical revelation and dogma came to be doubted under the impact of higher criticism, theologians turned from the properly theological method to the philosophical method or immanent search for the meaning of religion. Theology thus became empirical in its approach, striving to draw religious truth from experience. Implied

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however in this endeavor is a philosophical system, a specific way of understanding the function of reason within experience. It is this underlying conception that specifies one philosophy of religion from another. And so in Brightman's case we see him criticizing other positions on the basis of their faulty understanding of the function of reason within experience. This is what we will investigate in the following paragraph: Brightman's conception of empirical coherence as operative in his philosophy of religion.

3.-EMPIRICAL COHERENCE AS A CRITERION:

Up to this point in our attempt to define Brightman's empirical philosophy of religion, the key word has been that of experience; his redefinition of empiricism was seen to depend to such an extent on the understanding of experience as the entire conscious life that a methodology of concrete inclusive reason could be used in the interpretation of religion. Now that we have seen how Brightman conceives the religious experience by itself and how he eliminated certain ways of interpreting religion because of their abstractedness, it is time to enquire into what exactly does an empirically coherent interpretation of religion consist in? What is the criterion for the evaluation of religious truth?

According to the preface of his Philosophy of Religion volume, all human knowledge begins, continues, and ends in

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experience; the keynote of the interpretation of religion is experience. Indeed, Brightman claimed that all the problems of philosophy of religion concerning faith, worship, tradition, God, revelation, immortality, doubt, skepticism, or secularism were to be considered as stresses and strains within experience".⁵¹ His controversial theory about a Finite God is classic example of his determination to use experience as the pivotal axis of his philosophy of religion. But since Brightman insists very strongly upon a critical rational interpretation of the religious experience, it becomes clear that reason is operative within experience but it is not the whole of experience or even the prototype of rationality; the key to Brightman's philosophy of religion is his understanding of experience as empirical coherence and how he conceives the function of philosophical reason within experience as a whole.

The key to the understanding of the specific role of reason is Brightman's notion of empirical coherence. Is empirical coherence synonymous with experience as whole or is it synonymous with reason considered as a part of the whole? That reason always functions as a part of the self especially in the light of Brightman's rejection of the apriori, is clear but is an empirically coherent self the sole product of

⁵¹IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.1.

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the work of reason alone? It is at least evident from his definition of experience as the whole of conscious life rather than the restrictive definition of mere sense data or feeling that conscious experience includes both experience taken in the restrictive sense and reason taken as a principle of logical coherence. Experience in other words is synonymous with consciousness or thought; since the datum self is defined as conscious experience, the self in its immediate givenness is identical with thought or consciousness. Now, as we saw, the conscious datum self or experience is characterized by its activity and unity and is best described as a concrete universal or gestalt.⁵² Of its very nature, the self is a stream of consciousness which intends organization: it is movement seeking rational totality whose purpose or ideal is a concrete inclusiveness.⁵³ As thought or consciousness seeks to be reflexively rational, it discovers within itself a principle of logical coherence⁵⁴ which permits it to move from an initial chaotic starting point to a situation of conscious reasonableness.

⁵²IDEM, "Personality as a Metaphysical Principle", in E.S.BRIGHTMAN (ed.), Personalism in Theology, Boston: Boston University Press, 1943, p.44.

⁵³IDEM, "An Empirical Approach to God", Phil. Rev., XLVI (1937), p.154.

⁵⁴IDEM, "Personalism as a Philosophy of Religion", Crozier Quarterly, 5 (1928), p.384.

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As Brightman himself puts it: reasonable personality is the end, reason is the means.⁵⁵ Therefore empirical coherence can be understood to mean both the datum self as a concrete universal (growing rational totality) or the self once it has been rationally interpreted by synoptic or philosophical reason; in the first case, empirical coherence is the pre-analytical self considered as a gestalt in its immediate givenness; in the second place, empirical coherence is the post-analytical self after it has been rationally interpreted and made reflexively coherent by reason. Finally, we could perhaps find a third way of understanding empirical coherence by referring to it as the ideal towards which the self is striving: the completely reasonable personality. Brightman tells us that "there is in the depths of human nature an ideal of infinity...the conception of reason itself--the ideal of perfect coherence--is an essential aspect of this ideal".⁵⁶ Over and over again then Brightman stresses the essential unity of the conscious self; it is in fact the first principle of his entire system of personal idealism.

⁵⁵ IDEM, A Philosophy of Ideals, p.130.

⁵⁶ IDEM, "The Personalistic View of Human Nature", Religion in Life, XIV (1944-1945), p.8.

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Having distinguished the three meanings of empirical coherence, we must turn now to the specific function of reason within experience and how empirical coherence is used as a criterion of truth. Experience is made up of a series of movements towards unity or rational totality but only philosophical reason attempts to organize experience as a whole. Science, art, morality, religion, all contribute to the organization of the self but each works in its own special area and therefore the need arises "to interpret the relations of all kinds of experience to each other, seeking for some clue to the interrelations of logic, sense experience, and value experience".⁵⁷ No truth can stand in isolation because an isolated proposition remains unrelated to the rest of experience and therefore is only half reasonable because to be reasonable is to be perfectly related. "The mind cannot exist half reasonable and half unreasonable any more than the nation can exist half slave and half free."⁵⁸ It is the role and function of philosophical or synoptic reason to perform the task of correlating all the items and facets of the self into one coherent whole. Something unrelated is unreasonable and consequently, irrespective of the rationality of any one item of experience, that item needs to be related to the whole.

⁵⁷ IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.5.

⁵⁸ IDEM, "Christianity, Philosophy and the Teaching of Religion", The Jour. of Bible and Religion, X (1942), p.14.

Very clearly then Brightman conceives the role of philosophy as one of synopsis or coherence. "To philosophize is to be a human being with one mind instead of a chaos of conflicting feelings, prejudices, and opinions."⁵⁹ Philosophy seeks to be concrete; it aims to see reality in its interconnection and interdependence.⁶⁰ Implied here is the understanding of reason that is not reduced to mere tautological analysis or eighteenth century axioms but enlarged to mean systematic inclusiveness. Concrete is taken here in its etymological sense: that of growing together or thinking interconnectedly and 'holistically', parts related to the whole to which they belong. Brightman summarizes his conception of metaphysics in the following statement:

It is man's creative effort to rise above the confusion of everyday experience, through the descriptive order of science and the normative order of art, morality, and religion to an orientation that comprehends them in a single order of truth in a living and growing unity.⁶¹

The metaphysician summarizes and grasps as a whole what the other items of experience provide in their respective fields: ordinary experience, science, values--art, morality, religion

⁵⁹ IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, p.22.

⁶⁰ IBID., p.12.

⁶¹ IDEM, Person and Reality, p.11.

At this point of our analysis, before going to the nature of the relationship between philosophical reason and religion in a philosophy of religion based on empirical coherence, we should ask ourselves how does empirical coherence actually function as a criterion of truth? Brightman sketches for us in his article on the empirical approach to God, the broad outlines of his dialectical method.

Personal experience, apprehended as completely as possible, analyzed as thoroughly as possible, tested as experimentally as a system or totality--that is the basis and method of metaphysics.⁶²

Brightman came to emphasize more and more according to Todrank the importance of coherence as empirical.⁶³ All the data and facts of experience must include not just sense data but also logical and rational elements in such a way that the whole is seen concretely. This is why he came to insist on the necessity of the sciences in order to apprehend the full dimensions of personal experience; the work of analysis produces initial working hypotheses which need to be tested as experimentally as possible by verifying them in actual experience.⁶⁴ But the ultimate test is that of synopsis: all hypotheses grasped together as a whole.

⁶²IDEM, "An Empirical Approach to God", Phil., Rev., XLVI (1937), p.155.

⁶³G.H.TODRANK, The Empirical Evidence for Brightman's Theistic Cosmology, Boston: Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston Univ., 1955, p.39.

⁶⁴E.S.BRIGHTMAN, An Introduction to Phil., p.41.

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The criterion of practical consequences as used by the pragmatists at first sight appears to be a comprehensive test of all situations, but the difficulty is that what is true from one point of view is false from another; how does one determine the nature of the end that is served by the true idea.⁶⁵ The criterion of rational consistency is based on the principle of contradiction but if the presence of contradiction is a sign of error, mere consistency is not an adequate sign of truth. Having eliminated the criteria of practical consequences and of logical consistency as inadequate, Brightman does not deny their role in the work of interpreting experience but on the contrary attempts to integrate them into the third and only adequate criterion: that of empirical coherence. An adequate test of truth requires: (1) that all the facts of experience be considered (quality of inclusiveness); and (2) that the propositions about these facts be related in an orderly and significant way (Systematic). By coherence he means then taking into account all the propositions as interconnected in a totality that hangs together; "any proposition is true, if it is both self-consistent and coherently connected with our system of propositions as a whole."⁶⁶

⁶⁵IBID., p.60.

⁶⁶IBID., p.69.

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To sum up then this section on empirical coherence, we may say that religious experience is involved in a kind of dialectic. Of and by itself religion is an experience containing its own truth value but because the self is a unitary whole, religion is related to all other items of experience. One of these items is the presence of reason which operates first of all as the analytical reason of the sciences; now these sciences form hypotheses concerning religion, and indeed if taken by themselves would reduce religion to a non-sacred type of experience. It is precisely at this point that the function of synoptic reason is needed to correlate the truth contained in the sciences of religion. In addition to this, however, the religious experience contributes something unique at the very level of empirical coherence--it points to the harmony of the person with all reality--but does so at the feeling level, whereas reason achieves empirical coherence at the rational level.

CONCLUSION

In what sense then is religion autonomous and what is the precise relationship between philosophical reason and faith in an empirical philosophy of religion based on empirical coherence? Having examined the issues involved in a methodology based on experience and the specific role played by

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reason in this scheme of things, it becomes clear that philosophy is the judge of faith and theology but not in the sense of contributing a higher kind of truth but rather as assimilating religion into a higher kind of synthesis. The religious experience makes its own kind of unique contribution to the self which even philosophical reason cannot surpass; but because the criterion of truth is truth of the whole, the truths of religion must be transformed by being related and integrated into a higher synthesis. Brightman is very close to Hegel here in that he conceives the role of the philosopher of religion as one of reshaping the truth of faith and theology so as to form a coherent whole.

Hegel took a developmental view of the theological descriptions of a revealing God as being destined for assimilation to the philosophical theory of religion. The latter is the sole heir and modern reformulation of all phases of sacred theology.⁶⁷

And so, in arguing with the upholders of the absolute autonomy and independence of religious experience, Brightman suggests that this makes religious experience too abstract--cut off from the other items of experience. What is needed is the complete harmonization and integration of all the items of experience so that the maximum degree of concretization can be achieved, It is only the philosopher that qualifies.

⁶⁷James COLLINS, The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1967, p.395.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SELF AS A METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE

The methodological perspective of the first two chapters did not allow us to enquire into Brightman's notion of the self as a growing unity and so, in order to pursue further the central role played by the notion of experience and subsequently its implication for the interpretation of religious truth, we will analyze in this third chapter Brightman's conception of the self as a metaphysical principle. For him, the self or conscious experience is the source of all truth concerning reality; the totality of the person's experience is somehow the source of all meaning. The fourth and last chapter will draw out the full implications of the use of experience as a criterion for religious truth.

Our analysis of Brightman's empirical philosophy of religion had as its principal focus his empirical methodology in the hope of clarifying some of the issues involved in any attempt to interpret religion concretely; his redefinition of empiricism, the adoption of Hegel's methodology of radical empiricism, the understanding of reason as concrete and inclusive--a function of experience, the interpretation of religious experience as a contribution to the person's growth in unity, and finally the use of empirical coherence

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as the criterion of religious truth. The central issue involved in all these questions is that of experience. The meaning and possibilities of a concrete or empirical philosophy of religion then rest on the philosopher's foundational conception of experience: his notion of the self and reality.

The question before us then in this chapter is to explore Brightman's determination to make the person (datum-self or conscious experience) the metaphysical principle or key to reality in the hope of shedding light on the methodological issues of his philosophy of religion. As a personalist trained under Borden Parker Bowne, he conceives the self as basically conative activity¹ and later, as a result of his discovery of Hegel, he came to stress the temporal character of the self; Hegel, as we know, in contrast to Kant, stressed the concrete activity of the mind, especially the temporal aspect involved in the dialectic. It is my contention that this aspect of temporality in the self provides the clue to understanding Brightman's notion of empirical coherence.

¹"Personalism may be defined as that system of philosophy which views personality as the active ground of the world, and as containing in the mystery of its uniqueness the key to all the antinomies of metaphysics." James Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, N.Y.,: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917, Vol.9, art. "Personalism" by R.T.Flewelling.

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1.- THE PERSON AS KEY TO REALITY

Throughout all of Brightman's thought, the call to experience and direct empirical reality is a recurrent theme: all philosophizing must begin with a given, an immediate experience, and a direct intuitive grasp of a datum. Because of this very insistence, however, Brightman was exposing himself to the accusation of solipsism. Indeed, Sellars raised the question as to whether we have an intuitive grasp of the self as such, let alone that of objects outside the self.² Brightman, in answer to these objections, seemed to reinforce the solipsism of immediate experience by restating a first principle of idealism that "direct immediate experience is not knowledge".³ And in answer to Sellars' question he stated "strictly speaking, we do not have direct knowledge on anything".⁴ In other words, it is possible to experience something directly but this does not mean that we know it. Knowledge of something requires that it be related to something else and ultimately with a totality of some kind. The question then is how did Brightman manage to emphasize conscious

²E. S. BRIGHTMAN, "Do We Have Knowledge-by-Acquaintance of the Self", Jour. Phil., 41 (1944), p.695.

³IBID., p.694.

⁴IBID., p.695.

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experience as the starting point of all knowledge and still manage to obtain knowledge?

In an article entitled: Personality as a Metaphysical Principle, he states the reason why the datum self is able to transcend its own immediacy and thereby serve as a metaphysical principle: "every moment of experience points beyond itself".⁵ The datum self, according to Brightman, contains an objective reference or principle or self-transcendence. This objective reference is three-fold: (1) the reference of the memory to the past, (2) reference to the future by its anticipation and (3) the reference to the object of thought, "at every moment we are thinking something, feeling something, related to something that is other than our thinking, feeling or act of relating".⁶ It is on the basis of the existence of this three-fold objective reference which is experienced immediately in the datum self that Brightman makes the claim for the self as a metaphysical principle: "No other known entity has the three-fold reference of a self in specific concreteness; no other, therefore, is so well equipped to establish and maintain relations and to serve as a key to reality."⁷

⁵IDEM, "Personality as a Metaphysical Principle" in BRIGHTMAN (ed.) Personalism in Theology, Boston: Boston University Press, 1943, p.48.

⁶IBID., p.48.

⁷IBID., p.48.

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Experience is the only evidence presented in consciousness for belief in the subconscious, the unconscious, the social order, mathematics, ideal values, and the divine.⁸

In other words, Brightman is saying that there may be a real world outside of my consciousness but the point is, I know only my experience of it in my consciousness, the reality other than my present consciousness must be inferred or believed in. For example, in the case of my eating an apple itself is said to exist on the basis of the taste and other evidences.⁹ Brightman calls the present moment of conscious experience the "shining present". The referent is called the illuminating absent.

The first trait of the shining present is that of conscious awareness.¹⁰ In using many terms to designate the same reality: experience, situation experienced, shining present, datum self, Brightman is referring to the same thing: the present moment of consciousness.

The second trait of the shining present is its "innocence". This means "that from the mere presence of the shining present nothing can be inferred about the rest of the universe".¹¹

⁸IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, loc.cit., p.11.

⁹IBID., p.12.

¹⁰IDEM, Person and Reality, p.47.

¹¹IBID., p.47.

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In other words immediate conscious experience does not yield knowledge about anything; it is only itself. Intelligence and reason must go to work interpreting, analyzing and establishing workable hypotheses in order to establish any kind of real knowledge. Brightman defines knowledge as a "proposition confirmed by the facts of reason".¹² Reason's job is to bring the chaotic facts of immediate experience into some kind of order. Now, the only way to do this, is to explain them as signs of a reality other than the present experience.

The third trait of the shining present is its first-personal aspect. "All experience is somebody's.

It belongs to the self-whether human or subhuman or superhuman. Any experience can include the awareness: 'This is mine;' it belongs to the unity of my consciousness, my memories, my purposes; and no one else can experience it immediately as I do.¹³

This trait brings out perhaps the loneliness of the self in the shining present and its subsequent desire to reach out to something outside the self. Brightman says elsewhere that as a self, "I am a monad with no windows, yet within myself, I find the universe mirrored. And, furthermore, I am unable to understand the riches within me if I do not somehow ascribe them to a source beyond me."¹⁴

¹²IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, p.330.

¹³IDEM, Person and Reality, p.48-49.

¹⁴IBID., p.49.

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This trait then of first person aspect is easily combined with another trait which Brightman adds, that of privacy; my experience cannot be duplicated. "No other being can experience my experience as I do."¹⁵

A fourth trait is that of self-identity. Each single act of awareness in a shining present is recognized as belonging to the self, the I. As Brightman puts it, "...the complex present is such that the experient can always say: this present whole of consciousness and all its parts are mine; they are what I am at this present moment."¹⁶ The experience of self-identity is an experience of unity in plurality. The shining present involves as we said a multitude of elements, but underlying the experience is the awareness that all this belongs to the self. And in addition, as new acts of consciousness succeed themselves, memory makes it possible to recognize the same self as underlying each separate act.

Memory does not occur in a shining present until there is an experience of recognition that the present experience is like one, or refers to one, which I--the self of the present, one with the self of the past--experienced in some way myself in the past.¹⁷

¹⁵IDEM, Personality and Religion, N.Y.: Abington Press 1934, p.37.

¹⁶IDEM, Person and Reality, p.49.

¹⁷IBID., p.51.

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A fifth trait is what Brightman calls its evidential character.¹⁸ He means by this that the data contained in the shining present are so many signs or clues of realities other than the self; they are in short, evidence for the existence of other things. The experient just has to begin thinking, provided he thinks coherently, and he will find himself, discovering other minds, God, nature, etc. The point Brightman is making here is that the human self has no choice but to begin inside himself in the present moment of experience and that very experience is ground for proving the existence of other things. This notion recalls to mind the procedure Descartes used in one of his proofs of the existence of God when he indicates that the presence of the idea of the perfect is evidence for postulating the existence of a cause capable of causing such an effect in the mind.

A sixth trait is its experimental character. By this, Brightman means that the evidence of the shining present does not interpret itself; it is oftentimes obscure and problematic and so it must be subjected to all kinds of experiments. "By experiment with the evidence we discover the meaning."¹⁹ We saw how Brightman forsakes the naive common sense approach every datum of experience is a mere appearance until it is

¹⁸IBID., p.52.

¹⁹IBID., p.52.

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subjected to tests and experiments. Knowledge as a term is used "to distinguish isolated, or prejudiced, or unverified assertions from those that have been put to the test of further experience and reasoning and found to meet the test".²⁰

A seventh trait is that of its interpersonal character. This means that in certain cases of tested evidence the shining present is discovered to be interpersonal. "It finds within itself what it interprets to be communications from other persons."²¹ This trait also applies to the fact that when a thinker achieves testable statements, these statements then become accessible to all competent observers.²² This last point is significant for Brightman's methodology in that he is a firm believer in democratic society, a society which requires mutual understanding and intelligent communication.

An eight trait is the element of duration. "No experience occurs in a single indivisible instant...every actual present is a present-past-future."²³ This trait is linked with that of complexity and the awareness of self-identity; the shining present has to be a 'time-span' of actual experience involving a succession grasped as a whole otherwise the expe-

²⁰IBID., p.20.

²¹IBID., p.53.

²²IBID., p.19.

²³IBID., p.53.

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rience of complexity would be unexplainable. The presence of memory guards this succession from becoming a pure multiplicity. The awareness of self-identity gives the necessary stability within the change. The significance for methodology here is that thought will be essentially considered a process, an activity constantly developing and moving toward more and more truth or coherence. There is never a moment of completion, a moment where the mind reaches an absolute truth. For Brightman truth is always open, always tentative.

And finally, the last trait significant for an understanding of Brightman's methodology is the issue of control and counter control. In the shining present I am aware of choosing and directing certain activities; I am in control of the situation. But at other times and even in most experienced situations, there are factors which I neither choose, nor will, nor desire. These factors are grouped under the concept of 'counter control'.²⁴ Control and counter control are not synonymous with objective or subjective because at times the objective may be in accordance with our plans and hopes; "it is under control, whether or not our choice is viewed as the cause of its amenability to our wishes."²⁵ In the same way

²⁴IBID., p.54.

²⁵IBID., p.54.

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our subjective emotions; desires as such may be contrary to our wishes. And so, the complex time-span of first personal consciousness contains actually or potentially two basic types of processes; that which the self controls and that of the Given. Now, any one moment of experience "is an indivisible whole of some degree of activity controlling some aspects of the Given".²⁶ No experience is made up of pure control or pure given and so it is up to rational analysis to separate the amount or degree of each type of activity. Furthermore, the Given is divided into two types: the rational and the non-rational.²⁷ By the rational Given, Brightman means the principles of logic or of necessary inference; he considers them as unchangeable. "The validity of logical entailment is an area immune to any force of man or nature or God that may be exerted against it."²⁸ He includes in this category the validity of true value. The non rational Given refers to factors which in themselves have no logical structure such as sense qualities, desires, emotions. These factors are contingent as opposed to the necessity of the rational Given. This is the area of brute fact.

²⁶IBID., p.56.

²⁷IBID., p.56.

²⁸IBID., p.57.

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Having summarized then the traits of the shining present we see that each trait has a particular significance for Brightman's methodology. It is said that a philosopher's method depends on his theory of knowledge; but then it must be added that a theory of knowledge depends on what the philosopher considers to be his first principle or irreducible first given. For Brightman this first principle is the datum self given as unitary and conative. His entire metaphysics consists in analyzing the structure of human experience since the person is assumed to be the key to all reality. In a sense everything in Brightman's system flows from his psychology. As in most idealist positions the first fact is that a man who decides to think can only start with himself as the only ground of evidence. Everything starts therefore with conscious experience.

To conclude this paragraph we can summarize Brightman's thought by a quotation:

The heart of the dialectical method is this: I, the metaphysician--the human person trying to be genuine (existential, as some would now say)--must start exactly where I am. Unless I am blind, solitary, and changeless, I must look beyond where I was when I started, I must seek 'the other', the negative, the beyond, the more. I must note that the root with which I started and the branches which grew, have developed bud and blossom, and finally some good red apples²⁹

²⁹IBID., p.32.

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2.-THE BASIS OF EMPIRICAL COHERENCE:

In paragraph one we saw how, according to Brightman's idealistic position, the immediate experience of the self is potentially rational and rich in implicit relationships to all things such that its very richness and depth is the key to reality. Our study of Brightman's empirical methodology, however, led to the central role played by empirical coherence. The question facing us now then is to ascertain what the root and basis is for this insistence on empirical coherence. Once this is clear we will be able to proceed to draw out the implications or theological consequences involved in this type of philosophy of religion.

In searching for the foundational underpinnings of Brightman's notion of empirical coherence, three characteristics of the self seem to provide the clues needed to interpret the central role given to empirical coherence. The first characteristic is that of temporality, the second that of growth and development, and finally that of search for perfect rationality.

A.-The temporality of the self:

The shining present reveals only a present moment of consciousness, an almost solipsistic now. The now, however, contains clues that lead to problems and solutions. Our major

concern here is to clarify how reason confronts the problem of the fleeting character of the present. Indeed the term 'present' has no single literal meaning; it changes as soon as it is mentioned.³⁰ The datum self then involves many presents. But will there be as many selves as there are different moments?

Fortunately the shining present furnishes some very significant clues for the solution of this problem. The most promising clue is that of the presence of memory in the shining present. Brightman tells us that we have to assume the trustworthiness of memory, otherwise our present experience would become nonsense. A self without a past does not cohere with the other data found in the shining present. Memory or the act of remembering in the present a past event, feeling or thought is not just the re-presenting anew some once conscious scene. It includes a recognition of the self as well. When I remember or recall having seen a church steeple I am conscious that it was I that saw that church steeple.

I recognize the scene as an experience of mine that I once had. The role of memory is to help me locate a past feeling or thought in the series of my past experiences.

³⁰ IBID., p.46.

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Memory is not a repetition of the past; that is impossible. The past, as past can never be present. Nor does it consist merely in the occurrence of experiences more or less similar to the past one. Memory does not occur in a shining present until there is an experience of recognition that the present experience is like one, or refers to one, which I--the self of the present, one with the self of the past--experienced in some way in the past.³¹

As a result of this ability of memory to reach back into the past and to re-present in the shining present the experiences of the same self, a link is established between the past self and the present self. In helping the present self to recognize one of its past experiences, an identification is made between the two selves. They are seen as the same. And so by a series of memory linkages which serves as a mediation between the past and the present, a continuity is established throughout the entire series of presents. They all belong to the same self, the one and the same self then underlies them all.

The self is constantly changing; its very temporality forces it ever onward. This creates the problem of orientation; what is the meaning of it all? Brightman's view of this situation will give us the clue that will enlighten the general significance of these materials. He says, "change may be transient or constant; but all change is temporal and is known

³¹IBID., p. 51

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as change by its relation to some enduring meaning which is changeless and omnitemporal."³² The flow of shining presents is precisely such a change; as one now succeeds another there must be some underlying meaning which explains the series of points. A little farther on he tells us, "the experience of time is a union of change and permanence. Time is usually identified with change; yet change could neither occur nor be known were there not some permanent meaning in the change... The knowledge of the law of change presupposed the permanence of self"³³. The moving self then needs a frame of reference to guide the change.

It is the unity of the whole self (past-present-future) which establishes this frame of reference. Everything starts in the shining present and everything returns to it. In the cognitive order reason moves out from the present as from an all-inclusive whole and judges the truth of any proposition on the basis of its coherence with the whole of experience (that of the whole self). In the order of values the true values are distinguished from false values on the basis of satisfaction to all levels of desire and by relationship with the religious aspirations of the self to the ground of all value.

³² IDEM, Person and Reality, p. 119.

³³ IBID., p. 122

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The frame of reference is always that of the self. All process and evolution needs a permanent medium of some sort; for Brightman that permanent medium is the whole self.

The order of time is irreversible; each moment in a series appears at a certain time and then another replaces it. In the case of the human self the stage of immediacy is followed by that of mediacy until gradually a very high degree of complexity is reached. This complexity however, is always seen against the background of the same self; memory allows a continual identification of the identity of the self in each of the moments of the flux. The self therefore becomes a unity in complexity; the many moments are unified in relation to the whole self, the self of the past-present-future.

B.- The self as growth and development;

The temporality of the self is an immediate given fact; it is a datum. Now of what total self is this datum a sign? Everything in Brightman's thought would seem to indicate that he would answer this question with the following tentative hypothesis. The full significance of the self is to be a drive toward wholeness and totality, that is, to be related with all reality both by knowledge and by adherence to values. A text taken at random in Brightman seems to indicate this line of thought. "Man finds himself by finding something else.

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Pure subjectivity seems to be impossible..Communion with the object to which our religious valuations refer will thus bring with it also as expansion of the personal consciousness and will satisfy its need for growth."³⁴

If we recall what was said about the durational character of the self; that it moved through a series of presents gradually growing and developing into a very complex organism due to the accumulation of past experiences, everything would seem to indicate a need for wholeness. Conscious awareness starts in the shining present and then proceeds to work out from there as from a center. But then as it reverts back to the shining present it finds itself transformed and enlarged by its very movement out to "theother". This movement from the immediate to the mediate and then back to the starting point resulting in development is reminiscent of Hegel's spirit. Brightman describes for us the categories of Hegel in a way that suggests his application of them to the stages of development of the self on its way to wholeness.

³⁴ IDEM, Religious Values, loc.cit., p. 114.

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As stated earlier, the basic categories are Sein, Wesen, and Begriff. Sein is the principle of immediacy; thought must start with the fact of givenness--and always recognize that in every given experience (the shining present) reason is at work, striving for completion and wholeness. Thought cannot remain satisfied with Sein. Wesen, its basic antithesis, is the principle of external relations, exemplifying the rational need for the 'other' to explain the given. (It is the illuminating absent which is the very life blood of the sciences.) But a synthesis is needed. Merely to assert a shining present Sein--orSchein and an illuminating absent (Wesen) is not only to leave the two unrelated but also to leave unexplored the higher structures and values of personal, social, and spiritual life. Such exploration leads to the synthesis, Begriff (which almost means personality), in which synoptic principles both include all that Sein and Wesen have contributed and add new insights into the properties of organic wholes and the meaning of ethical, aesthetic, religious and philosophical experience.³⁵

The meaning of the self in process would seem to be that of wholeness, of totality. The text where Brightman describes Hegel's categories indicates that the movement away from Sein (immediacy) toward Wesen (mediacy or the principle of external relations--complexity) is the work of reason striving for completion and wholeness. But reason itself is part of a whole and as such it is not the permanent medium which underlies the movement. It is the self and the ever-widening horizons of the self that form the permanent basis for the whole process just as Hegel's Absolute Spirit was the medium for him.

The examination then of the general characteristics of temporality, the successive stages of immediacy and mediacy,

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IDEM, Person and Reality, p.95.

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and the requirements of all changes all seem to verify the hypothesis that the general movement of the self is toward totality and wholeness. That this is truly Brightman's thought is confirmed to some extent by his description of Hegel's categories; in Hegel the development is that of an absolute spirit whereas in Brightman it is an individual self. But in both cases the central issue is that of wholeness and perfection.

C.-Perfect rationality as the ideal of personality:

Throughout Brightman's work there is the call to the society of our day not to put aside the many types of specialization which are quite necessary but to make some attempt to relate all this to the meaning of life as a whole. He saw that it was the task of the philosopher to attempt this interpretation of everything in the light of experience as a whole. This effort to synthesize the results of the sciences as well as the results of the higher structures of human life such as religion, art and philosophy should lead to an enlargement of the horizons of the self. A study of religion for example would lead the self to reinforce its connections and relations with God; the study of metaphysics would lead to a discovery of the total universe. And finally, the study of aesthetics would lead to the domain of beauty.

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This effort to realize all the possibilities of relatedness contained in the self as achieved through religion, art and philosophy certainly reflects Brightman's search for perfect rationality as the ideal of personality. The movement away from immediacy into that of external relations and the domain of complexity is balanced off by a return to the self in an effort to uncover all the connections and interrelations which were implicitly contained in both Sein and Wesen. It is interesting to note the remark Brightman makes concerning Hegel's 'Begriff'; he indicates that it almost means personality. His self or person attempting to interpret the whole of experience is very close to Hegel's Spirit in its moment of great synthesis when it recaptures both its immediacy and its mediacy.

Brightman would advocate a self whose wholeness in-and-for itself would be so complete as to be all-inclusive of everything. He is not an absolutist. The double movement away from the self into external relations and then back to the self to enrich it with this newfound complexity makes of the self the model of rationality. By its inner drive towards rationality the self succeeds in discovering all its potentialities, its relationships to all of reality. From a self-enclosed monad that it was in the beginning it radiates its light into all things.

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CONCLUSION

The whole concept of the self would seem to revolve around the idea of time as duration. In the description of the shining present the characteristic trait was seen to be that of temporality. The shining present is a moment of conscious experience. One moment succeeds another in an unending series of nows. Each present moment reveals a new aspect of the self because the self is not a mind substance underlying all the nows but rather the act of consciousness itself. At the level of interpretation and investigation the question of self-identity arises but the presence of memory linkages enable the present self to reach back into the past and discover there its former moments of awareness. And so, in addition to present conscious self, the continuity of the same is assured. The presence of plans and purposes help to extend the self into the future. The results of these investigations is the constitution of a total self: past-present-future. And so again we see Brightman's conception of the self as unitary except that here the present self is unified with its total span of experience. The search for coherence is based on the temporal character of the self.

At the level of metaphysical interpretation where an attempt was made to investigate the meaning of the whole self, the self moves out from the sphere of immediacy into ever

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growing complexity. The activities of religious, aesthetic, and scientific experience reinforce and develop the full potentialities of the self for relatedness. Philosophical reason provides the necessary function of synopsis such that the self constitutes a gradual process of unitary growth.

Development and growth seem to summarize best Brightman's conception of the self. Indeed, the very notion of empirical coherence itself is understood as reasonable personality and so the search for a concrete, empirical methodology literally means finding a way to make the self or person whole. The goal of life is to grow out and become so to speak all things by knowledge and desire. Fulfillment, maturity, growth, wholeness, to be empirically coherent is the goal of the self.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLICATIONS AND EVALUATION

Two questions have preoccupied us throughout this investigation: the first is the issue of using experience as a criterion of truth and the second is the relationship of philosophy to religious truth. This study of Brightman's thought up to this point has helped to clarify certain methodological issues; the importance of defining experience, the need to determine the function of reason within experience, the role of the sciences and finally the use of an adequate criterion of truth. It is time however to draw out the implications for religious truth when interpreted by concrete experience. The study of these implications will make it possible to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Brightman's philosophy of religion.

Three important results can be distilled from our analysis of Brightman's conception of experience and the role he assigns to reason in his empirical philosophy of religion: (1) all items of experience, including that of religious experience, belong to that complex, unitary whole known as the datum self; (2) the truth value and validity of all experience must be judged by reason both analytic and synoptic; and (3) the final and ultimate criterion of truth is the ability to

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harmonize and contribute to the growth of the person as empirical coherence. On the basis of three general results which correspond to the three levels in his methodology: immediacy, mediacy, and synthesis, we can draw out the consequences or implications involved.

The procedure in this chapter will be what J.C.Martin refers to as drawing out theological consequences."At the same time we may raise certain questions concerning the religious assumptions and the theological consequences involved in these attempts to develop an empirical religious philosophy"¹. Early references to biographical detail and to intellectual influences have accounted for Brightman's religious assumptions especially his attitude toward revelation, but now it is time to ask; does his methodology of empirical coherence imply any significant modifications or limitations with reference to basic theological concepts.²

1.- Some Theological Consequences:

The strong case that Brightman builds up for using experience as a source of religious truth clearly puts him into the camp of the New protestantism or "the religion of seeking

¹ James A.MARTIN, Empirical Philosophies of Religion, loc.cit., p. 7-8.

² IBID., p. 7-8

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God in one's feelings, thinking, experience, volition and this in distinction from the Old Protestantism, which found God revealed in Jesus Christ, to whom man responds with faith".³

But as in the case of all the efforts on the part of post-Kantian theologians to find a firm basis for faith in experience, the shift from dogma to life meant adopting a philosophy enabling them to explore the presuppositions of experience. Most Modernist theologians came to adopt Hegelian idealism;⁴ R.J.Cooke defines modernism "as a substitution of philosophical idealism for New Testament interpretations of historical realities, or as Percy Gardner would say, it is an affirmation of a spiritual and evolutionary concept of Christianity as opposed to a so-called materialistic and cataclysmic view of Christian origins and christian beliefs".⁵ The strong appeal of Hegelian idealism lay in its claim to a concrete methodology capable of organizing and obtaining meaning out of growing evolutionary experience.

³ George W. Richards, "From the Standpoint of a Supernaturalist." American Philosophies of Religion, loc.cit., p.312.

⁴ "Le modernisme a été une lointaine conséquence de la critique Kantienne et de ce qu'elle est devenue chez les disciples, Hegel en particulier. Si l'on désire dans le concret un recoupement bref et combien illuminateur, qu'on se rappelle comment celui qui prétend avoir fondé le modernisme, Loisy, a d'abord été touché par le panthéisme de Hegel, à lui transmis par Renan, dans ses cours au Collège de France." A. Monette "Pour l'avènement d'un nouvel humanisme." R.U.O.22 (1952) p.398.

⁵ R.J.Cooke, "What is Modernism?" Methodist Review, 112 (1929) p. 187-188.

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In this evolutionary perspective, the only possibility for truth is the kind that emerges out of the development of the self--that so harmonizes with the past and the anticipations of the future self that a meaning emerges from the present datum self. Jean Wahl describes contemporary philosophy as "le mouvement vers le concret", that is, an attempt on the part of present philosophers to eliminate the over-simplified attempts of materialism and idealism to interpret reality and instead to attempt an interpretation of reality based on a reflection of interior and exterior events in such a way as to transform the event into experience. Of itself the present moment of experience is chaotic and unmeaningful but by the work of concrete reason working from within to transform the bare facts of the event into a meaningful experience.⁶ This immanent work of reason transforms experience into a history.

The consequences for religious truth in this view are clearly stated in the dictum: life rather dogma. All dogmatic, a-priori, systematic truth is abstract, unconnected, detached from life and hence cannot contain any meaning unless it be

⁶ "Bare facts have no meaning. Knowledge is only of things experienced. But knowledge is not concerned merely with here and now of experience. Knowledge is concerned with the relation of every phenomenon to the whole."
E.S. Brightman, "The Personalistic Method in Philosophy",
Meth. Rev., 103 (1920), p. 372.

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related to the whole which is the growing unity of the self's on-going experience. The truths of religion must be related to the whole of life and studied in connection with it. The authoritative position once held by dogmatic truth is replaced by that of experience. No absolute starting point is granted to theology or revelation in meaningful experience, experience is the only authority. Past events, dogmas, Church teachings, principles etc. are considered only in so far as they contribute to the coherence of the present moment in the history of the self.

In a world of rapid development in the sciences both physical and human, in a world of complex personal and social problems, and in a world bewildered by an accelerated process of change, men feel the need for orientation; men seek a point of reference, a perspective, a principle to order the many elements encountered in life's experience so as to arrive at some kind of meaning, some kind of intelligible unity. It is in this context that religion's traditional role as source of orientation has come to be questioned and re-evaluated. Theologians ask is it possible that the truths taught by the teaching authority of an institutionalized Church based on a Revelation which occurred in the past can be still relevant to man's problems today? Could it not be that the complexity of present day life has simply outgrown the simplicity of the Gospel truths? Put in another way, is the orientation offered

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by religion enough to satisfy the special kind of meaning needed by man today? The problem is fundamentally then one of pluralism: is one source of truth based in the past sufficient to guide our lives today?

Implicit to the emergent conception of truth where each new development in the self gives rise to new meaning is the idea that experience itself is a kind of revelation. Each new event, each item of experience, each new fact contain possibilities for new truth about reality. As we recall, Brightman's theory of the dialectic makes the items contained in the immediate self point out to things and realities beyond it-self so that when reason sets out to interpret the meanings of these events, wider and wider realms of reality are discovered. This means that all avenues of truth must be left open; no one system or doctrine should be favored. "Reason cannot accept uncritically dogmas or inspired intuitions, it must examine and test all for its possible contents of truth. 'Reason knows no barriers, no privileges, no separations. Its impartial eye examines every fact, every belief, every problem, with a view to finding the truth wherever it may be'.⁷ And so an essentially pluralistic approach to truth is adopted; each and every position is given a good hearing before being judged as to their coherence with the whole of experience.

⁷ IDEM, "Religion as Truth" loc.cit., p. 53.

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The dialectical movement of the self makes it that one moment of history of the self may be different from another moment but always they must be made to hang together--only manifest logical contradictions rule out any one position.⁸

In terms of consequences for religious truth this pluralist notion of truth means that truth is never absolute. Any one position is limited, open to complementation; this is why "the varieties of philosophical interpretations are inevitable because of the limitations of our minds and the inexhaustibility of the universe, it appears improbable that all finite minds will ever see the whole in the same way".⁹

The quest for truth then is a kind of ideal towards which everyone works; Brightman refers to this work of organizing and interpreting the chaos of each new experience in order to sift out all the truth contained therein as the infinite task. "Kant spoke of the unendliche Aufgabe, the infinite task, of knowing the world of nature, but the task of building a world of spirit in the world of Spirit is even more truly infinite".¹⁰

⁸"The only absolute is that truths cannot contradict each other." Person and Reality, p. 5.

⁹IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 13.

¹⁰IDEM, "Chaos and Cosmos: A Meditation for our Times", Religion in Life, 1X (1940) p. 25.

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This task of building up the world of Spirit belongs first of all to God but He must struggle against the chaos of unintelligibility and so "perhaps the task of divine cosmos is inexhaustible, and the perfection of the universe may consist not in its being finished at some future time, but rather in its indefinite, eternal perfectibility".¹¹ Whatever may be our conception of the divinity, in Brightman's case he upheld that God was limited by certain givens and therefore was a Finite God, One thing is clear, on the basis of a pluralistic open-ended notion of truth, the search for truth is never ended. In this view, the truth is in the whole and since the whole is never fully present, truth can never be complete. And so, all positions and differences are welcomed. The differences are to be expected and actually make life richer, progress more inevitable, development freer, when each point of view finds its full expression.

It is precisely because the goal of philosophy is the rational, the true, the universal, that finite minds fall short and no finite view is completely adequate. We may ask, in Hegel's spirit, whether every view does not represent a genuinely needed side of truth; and whether the error of any thesis does not consist in the denial of its antithesis.¹²

One other consequence linked to the pluralistic approach to truth is the leading and important role played by

¹¹ IBID., p. 25.

¹² IDEM, An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 13-14.

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the philosopher of religion. If all other branches of learning, including that of Theology, are specialized in that they exploit one point of view, the philosopher must synthesize all the points of view; his task is to make a synthesis with all that is given to him. And if, the ~~only~~ authority open to the critical thinker is that of his own experience, then each and every man must be his own philosopher; each individual is called upon to make his synthesis.

The method of radical empiricism by its historical and pluralistic approach to truth assimilates religious truth into the multifaceted dimensions of conscious experience and so the chief and perhaps the most characteristic consequence is that all truth is made relative to the self. The whole method is centered on man's experience and could be described as a kind of phenomenology which attempts to draw out rational meaning from the events in the shining present; Brightman quotes Bowne as saying that personality is not a principle that can help us to understand experience but it is rather an hypothesis to unify knowledge, experience, values all of life such that the categories of thought do not explain intelligence, it is intelligence or personality that explain the categories.¹³ He defines a category as a principle, the denial of which would make the entire universe of discourse to which it

¹³ IDEM, "Why is Personalism Unpopular?" Methodist Rev. 104 (1921) p. 525-526.

applies either impossible or fundamentally incoherent; for example time is a category because it is a prominent feature of the shining present.¹⁴ All hypotheses and categories then are presented in terms of their basis or harmony with the whole of experience. The hypothesis concerning nature, for example is that of a form of consciousness--divine consciousness to be exact--because this seems to be the most coherent explanation of the facts as they appear to the self.

All the empirical evidence we have for nature is found in the form of consciousness, which indicates that nature throughout its being is at least related to consciousness, able to appear in it, and harmonious with its conditions. From these facts it is reasonable to infer that nature and personality are constituted of one and the same kind of stuff, the stuff of personality.¹⁵

Irrespective of the strengths inherent in a methodology which insists on making all hypotheses cohere with experience, it is evidence that the price paid will be that of explaining all realities in terms of one kind of reality, that of human experience. The consequence is one of anthropomorphism. The whole issue of the supernatural, of Revelation, of dogma are reduced to the idea of religion or what Baillie calls the human end of the relationship between God and man.

¹⁴IDEM, Personality and Religion, p.98.

¹⁵IDEM, "A Christian View of Nature", in Diffendorfer (ed.), Christian Bases of World Order, Nashvill: Abindon Press 1943, p.75.

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"All the problems of philosophy of religion concerning faith, worship, tradition, God, revelation, immortality, doubt, skepticism, or secularism are stresses and strains within experience."¹⁶ Religion is to be interpreted in terms of its possibilities for growth in the personality. This immanentist approach however, narrows considerably the range of issues possible.

Le modernisme a donc été une nouvelle branche et comme une extension de l'idéalisme. Si la connaissance affirme avant tout le sujet qui connaît si les catégories sont des formes de l'entendement de l'homme qui les pose, il sera naturellement difficile de savoir comment atteindre le monde tel qu'il est. Nos connaissances dites objectives sont affectées d'un incurable relativisme.¹⁷

The relativism or subjectivism spoken of here is not taken in the sense of opposite to objective; for Brightman "objectivity is 'warranted' subjective personal belief, tested by appropriate subjective personal standards of reason, observation, and experiment".¹⁸ The relativism engendered by the method of empirical coherence consists then in its inherent anthropomorphic reduction of all reality to meanings coherent with the human self. And so, very clearly the method

¹⁶ IDEM, A Philosophy of Religion, p.1.

¹⁷ A. MONETTE, "Pour l'avènement d'un nouvel humanisme" R.U.O. 22 (1952), p.399.

¹⁸ L.S. BRIGHTMAN, Persons and Values, p.10.

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leads to adopt as true that which coherent with the self rather than that which is true in itself.

The implications and consequences described so far all seem to stem from the idealism inherent in Brightman's empirical Philosophy of Religion; the need for concretion, the emphasis on the developmental and dialectical approach to truth, and the subjectivism arise out of the author's empirical idealism. Indeed, in order to evaluate properly Brightman's work in philosophy of religion not only must we study his thought in the context of his whole Philosophy, but also in the context of American Philosophy as a whole and the special place of idealism in that Philosophy. But since this would involve a whole study in its self, we will not attempt to do so here. However, we do know that Brightman was influenced by Josiah Royce¹⁹ and that despite Royce's adherence to a monism, Brightman struggled like Royce to formulate an empirical idealism. Royce had stated that "to complete the understanding of idealism, you need a theory of the facts of nature, so interpreted as to be in harmony with the view that

¹⁹"I wish that somebody would tell me what my precise relation to Bowne is. I suppose that our agreements were rather on the increase toward the end of his work. I always prized him much; but each of us had many irons in the fire. I ought to have come closer to him before he left us." Josiah ROYCE, letter to Brightman, July 16, 1913.

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only ideas are the realities, and yet so adapted to experience as to free your idealism from the arbitrariness of the inner life of mere finite selves".²⁰ And so, like Royce then, the two poles of Brightman's thought are the empirical or concern for scientific fact and the rational in the sense of concrete reason. In our evaluation then we would like to keep in mind Brightman's particular form of idealism and attempt to make an appreciation of his thoughts on the philosophical interpretation of religion on the basis of his empiricism.

2.- The Limitations of the Idealistic Position:

The interpretation of religion by Brightman's criterion of empirical coherence yields two results: the first, the worth of religion consists in its agility and power to fulfill the personality; the second is that religious truth is never absolute. In order to be able to evaluate these two results, it is necessary that they be related to the foundational underpinnings of both of Brightman's method and metaphysics. As James Collins tells us, "In all these areas it is difficult to refrain from equating the entire reality with what is discovered about it by means of a particular

²⁰Josiah ROYCE, The Spirit of Modern Idealism, loc. cit. p.185.

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philosophical study".²¹ To uncover the truth-value, therefore, of the results, it is necessary to reflect upon them in the context of his entire philosophy. In this way, we can separate the chaff from the grain.

Establishing the connection between a particular statement on religion and a man's entire system is particularly necessary in the case of idealism. For the absolute idealist, the real and the ideal coincide. And in the case of a personal idealism, such as Brightman's, the person is the key to reality: "From the outset of his speculation, the philosopher pledges himself to a definite, if incipient, view of reality and the function of the mind therein. This initial decision will condition all subsequent developments, setting appreciable limits to his inquiry, posing problems in a characteristic way and dictating the main lines of solution in accordance with his original attitude. With special force do these observations apply to the idealist thinker."²²

The method is centered on man's experience; it could be described as a kind of phenomenology if we define phenomenology as a reflexive description of human consciousness in order to arrive at the nature of reality. Brightman does not

²¹James COLLINS, "The Role of Monistic Idealism in Croce's *Esthetic*" N. Sch., XVII (1943), p.32.

²²IBID., p.32.

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attempt to bracket out reality but nevertheless the object analyzed and studied is human consciousness. Granting that human consciousness refers out to an other, and objective order, it still remains true that the object studied is man's experience and hence the situation of a partial one-sided approach. This is a damaging accusation for a method that wants to be all inclusive and comprehensive.

To answer that the philosopher cannot start with anything but himself is simply to recognize the situation of man as a knower: to know man must know according to his manner of, according to his powers, but if knowledge is to mean anything it must reach and make present things as they are. The "other" must be reached somehow 'quod se' and not 'quod nos'. We cannot assume that reality is relative to human consciousness; certainly not at the beginning of a philosophy. It does not make too much sense to say that reality x is such and such to-day because of this or that experience situation and then to-morrow to say reality x is now something else because of a change in my situation. It is possible to grant that much of our knowledge is conditioned by our situation but this only emphasizes the need to distinguish in our acts of knowing the manner of knowing and the thing known. To accomplish this, a method must be constructed which respects at the outset the givenness of the "other".

Human consciousness is not the whole of reality and so

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a method predicated on the capacity of human experience to reveal reality is a one-sided approach. For this reason, a realist cannot accept Brightman's method as tool for a complete investigation of being. Peter Bertocci suggest that the advantage of the radical empiricism is that while casting doubt on positivism it does not preclude any other metaphysical system: dualism, realism, idealism, materialism, or pantheism.²³ This is true if we consider that all thinking must begin with man and his experience but it is not true if we consider that man's knowledge is not the whole of being and that consequently all being cannot be explained or known as it is by a reduction to man's way of knowing. Brightman's method is based on the assumption that all reality can be explained in terms of human personality. But this is an assumption and as such it must be proven.

The starting point of Brightman's metaphysics is in the shining present. This phenomenological starting point colors all his subsequent terminology; in this metaphysics, being as known is prior to objective being and all reality is interpreted as being experienced. The term 'being' is said to be "summum genus that includes all that is found in the shining

²³Peter A. BERTOCCI, "The Person as Key to Reality", in Brightman, chap. 18, p. 345.

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present and all possible referents--even non-being is a kind of being because non-being can be mentioned."²⁴ As to the realms of being or kinds of being, their significance must be derived from their meaning for experience.

Time, for example, is a category and a category of all possible realms of being. The procedure to establish time as such a prominent category is an interesting illustration of personalistic method. It begins naturally in the shining present (the self) where the most prominent feature is temporality and makes this the basis for establishing time as a category at least in the shining present.²⁵ The passage from the shining present to the illuminating absent is a crucial one but there are sufficient indications to satisfy the requirements defining a category. For an idealist or personalist any view of time must be coherent with time as it is found in the shining present. It is on this basis that Brightman concludes that the illuminating absent is also temporal. Time then is a category and a category of all possible realms of being.

²⁴ IDEM, Person and Reality, op.cit. p. 75.

²⁵ IBID., p. 91.

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In terms of personalistic terminology experience is an immediate given whereas time is more illuminating. And so, at the level of interpretation where light is sought, the category of time will be operative. For now it seeks to discover an hypothesis which, without reducing or explaining experience away, shows how the relationships between them may be most clearly conceived; empirical reasoning does not make experience more connected or less connected than it is--it attempts an hypothesis which helps us to further relate them to each other in order to reduce the mystery.

Therefore in all this, the purpose of verification is not to go outside the experient, but to remain inside the datum self in order to bring light into the shining present; the philosopher seeks to reduce the obscurity of his experience by seeking answers to the clues given him in his experience. Life has two levels; that of sheer living and that of reason; both are within the experient. And yet much of the answer will be to refer to another because this is the only coherent explanation of our experience.

One final point concerning Brightman's method is the fact of its openness. The arrow of intelligibility is always on the move. Life brings with it new facts, new experiences and as a result new hypotheses must be formed. This makes

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philosophy a very experimental affair. As Brightman puts it, "Metaphysics is a series of experiments, an experience as a whole and its field extends beyond that of all laboratories and all observatories. Yet its method is always experimental, since it is forever seeking to enlarge the scope of its observations and inferences and to connect them carefully with each other, as it seeks light on its problems: what is the ultimate nature of the world."²⁶

²⁶IBID., p.5.

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CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER FOUR:

The attempt to treat experience as a whole is characteristic of idealism; experience is conceived of as unitary and active. In addition to this the method of radical empiricism is geared up to making the most of concrete facts; it attempts to be as analytical as possible, gathering up all the latest facts from the sciences. And so from these two points of view Brightman's methodology and metaphysics of experience constitute an attempt to leave neither life nor logic aside. He preserves life by stressing experience and succeeds in upholding unitary vision by dealing with experience as a totality or coherent whole. No one can accuse Brightman of being one-sided; indeed the very method is conceived as a movement from whole to parts and then back to whole again. At one stage of thought the stress is on experience and at another stage the stress is on the whole of experience. But nonetheless, the preference is for the whole; coherence is the objective or target of the arrow of intelligibility. Perfect coherence is impossible for the human mind but this is its goal; it aims to diminish the mystery of life.

Coherence always comes out on top--it was coherence or chaos, and I never was especially fond of chaos. Nor has a purely rigor-and-vigor view of coherence as a strictly deductive system, derived from fixed postulates, seemed to me a suitable criterion of truth about the real world; it leaves no room for the contingent facts of experience to come in through the armor of system.

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As between Spinoza and Hegel, give me Hegel, who invites new facts to come in through every antithesis and synthesis... I am an empiricist, but an empiricist who insists on getting the connections among his facts clear and his relevant facts as complete as possible.²⁷

And yet the strongest critique we can make of Brightman's position is precisely in regard to the narrow starting point which he adopts as an idealist. His first given is the conscious self--all else must be inferred from signs and clues within consciousness; this is known as epistemological dualism. In any case it is a position that denies the givenness of the body, of the world, of other selves. There are no other facts but the facts for self and so the entire system suffers from the narrowness of the starting point of idealism.

For a realist, reality is not only a fact for self, it is a fact for itself. The real given would seem to be three fold: a conscious experience, an object experienced, and the encounter between knower and reality. This last point is what constitutes the context or matrix for all thought. According to Kierkegaard, there is a fact or datum which stands out over all the others; there is so to speak a primary fact which could be called the fact. This fact is the givenness in being of both the knower and the surrounding world. Both the individual knower and the world exist before

²⁷ IDEM, "Review of Reviews", Phil. Forum 9 (1951), p.2.

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the act of knowing takes place. The first given is that being is--things are, they exist--and this is the primary fact to which and from which all knowledge flows. We shall examine this issue further in our general conclusion.

FINAL CONCLUSION

Standing in the midst of three currents or traditions: idealism, modernism, and personalism, Brightman's philosophy of religion has deserved close study. Our hope and expectation was that an examination of his thought would yield insights into the possibility of using personal conscious experience as the ultimate source or criterion of religious truth. Our main concern was to determine the issues involved in any attempt to use experience as a privileged starting point. Each of our chapters deals with the different aspects that seem to constitute the core of Brightman's empirical philosophy of religion and in a careful thinker like him, a close study of his methodology should be enlightening for any attempt to be concrete and empirical in religious matters.

And so as we summarize our findings, we see that at the basis of his entire philosophy lies in his redefinition of empiricism that avoids the one-sidedness of British empiricism and the transcendentalism of absolute idealism; this redefinition allows him to reshape his whole notion of experience. An inheritor of Sowne's personal idealism which stresses the conative activity of the self, he amplified the role of value striving in the total experience of the self redefining person as a self capable of values. It is this latter emphasis that is reflected in his definition and understanding of religion. The influence of William James is

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manifested in Brightman's determination to make use of the analytical work of the sciences as a necessary intermediary between ordinary experience and philosophy. But it is especially Brightman's adoption of Hegel's methodology of rational empiricism that colors all the rest and that leads him to formulate a philosophy of religion based on empirical coherence. By uncovering the inner development of his empirical approach to religion we have come to see more clearly the issues involved in any attempt to be concrete and close to life and experience in the search for religious truth. We would like to list these results in this final conclusion.

1.-The need to examine the presuppositions of experience.

The first result and perhaps one of the most significant comes as a result of analyzing Brightman's determination to establish a starting point common to both science and religion in that this effort points up the all important and central role played by one's definition of experience. No one understands this better than idealists who by deliberate intention conceive the task of the philosopher as that of uncovering the presuppositions of experience.

No, experience itself is meaningless without presuppositions, every one has an unconscious philosophy. Every one has beliefs about the world as world, and in its wholeness. One may neglect or even hate a conscious philosophy. Nobody is without the faith that it would need, a whole philosophy to articulate.¹

¹Josiah ROYCE, The Spirit of Modern Philosophy, N.Y.: The Norton Library, W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1967, p.294.

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The history of the modernist movement in both Protestant and Catholic circles seems to bear Royce out. As the reliance on the authority of Scripture or official Church teaching was gradually abandoned as a starting point for religious truth and efforts were made to find a firm foundation for faith in experience, it became quite apparent that underlying the word of experience was for the most part Hegelian idealism. No less an authority on modernism than Baron Friedrich von Hügel, after realizing pervasive influence of Hegel upon the religious scene of his time, refers to "the slender religious power of Hegelian interpretations of religion".² For the Baron "givenness is the central characteristic of all religion worthy of the name"³ and so when he himself began probing the Hegelian presuppositions of the term experience, he came to realize the danger of building a whole system of religion on an unexamined notion of experience.

Brightman was very much aware of the need to examine and establish one's presuppositions. Indeed it is for this very reason that he never considered himself a theologian either in the old traditional sense of one who starts with revelation or in the modern sense of one who starts with

²Baron Friedrich von HÜGEL, The Mystical Element of Religion, Vol. I., N.Y.: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1927, p.xvi.

³IBID., p.xvi.

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experience. He was first and foremost a philosopher of religion⁴ with the specific task of defining the real meaning of experience and seeing how religion fits into that experience. And so it is to Brightman's credit that he fully realized this exigency. The analysis of his philosophy of religion bears witness to that necessity.

2.-Religious truth must build on both the felt needs and real needs of people.

The second learning drawn from our study, builds around Brightman's contention that the deepest meaning of religion is its contribution to the development of the person. This strong linkage of religion with personality and the growth possibilities of persons raises the question whether or not religion can retain its fullest and deepest meaning when the needs of persons are made the criterion of true religion. The question is what becomes of the divine pole of the religious relationship. An observer of the Protestant scene in America of the 1920's makes the following observation:

The primary interest of the Reformation was in vital personal religion. Luther staked his case on the declaration that religion finds its real vindication in the experience of living people rather than in the declaration of an official Church...underneath his reform is the principle that practical vitality and efficiency are to be sought first. Recent developments in Protestantism indicate that we are coming to accept and apply

4L.S. BRIGHTMAN, "Religion as Truth" in Fern, loc.cit., p.53. X

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this principle. More and more religious programs are being formulated on the basis of the ascertained needs of people rather than on the basis of alleged authoritative utterances. The distinctions between the denominations are being softened as all alike cease to urge their exclusive divine rights.⁵

We see expressed here the pragmatic temper so congenial to the American way of life evident as far back as the Puritans' need to judge the presence of grace in their souls by the observation of exterior fruits in action. The emphasis here is on the felt needs of persons and how they can be adapt to changing conditions. In other words the suggestion is that a person take from religion whatever seems to fit the ascertained needs of the moment.

But on the other hand it has been suggested that the real question in religion is not so much what we think we need as what we really need in fact. If we start with ourselves and our ascertained needs, we run the risk of failing to see in the truths of Revelation some of our very real needs. It may be that when God speaks to man, He is not so much speaking about Himself, as He is speaking to us about ourselves as men. Some commentators of the Death of God movement have observed that the real issue is not the loss of faith in a transcendent God but the loss of faith in the

⁵G.B.SMITH, "The Problem of Authority in Protestantism", Crozier Quarterly, 5 (1928), p.396.

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meaning of man. One of the essential needs of man is that of openness to another person and that without a response to another who speaks to us, we cannot be ourselves. Hocking intimates this fact in the following statement.

It must come as a positive datum, something itself personally experienced or 'revealed'. It is here that religion takes the issue out of the hands of philosophy. For religion in its historical forms is empirical; it appeals to the realistic temper: it deals with facts. Its function is not to prove God but to announce Him... it appeals only to man's power to recognize what he needs in what is real. Hence religion calls upon every man for an individual and ultimate 'I believe' which means...'I see'.⁶

Hocking's position here is very close to von Hügel's remark that "givenness is the central character of all religion". Brightman in this connection by his decision to stick only to the facts experienced in the datum self describes the core of the religious experience in terms of the experienced need to fulfill oneself. In searching for the empirical fact of religion he identifies the moral obligation to perfect oneself as the primary fact relevating Scripture and Tradition to a secondary or instrumental role of assisting the self in its growth.

This ties in with what von Hügel calls the slender religious inspiration inevitable in a position that makes consciousness the first given rather than the "being-with"

⁶William E. HOCKING, Human Nature and its Remaking, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934, p.426-427.

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situation of the person with a body in the world with other persons and with God. And so in response to the question: can religion retain its intrinsic meaning if the needs of persons are made the criterion of truth, the answer is yes, if we include the real needs of persons as well as the felt needs. A restriction to felt, conscious needs reduces religion to ethics and moral striving.

3.-Philosophy of religion is a necessity in times of cultural transition.

The third result of our analysis of Brightman thought regards the importance and necessity of a philosophy of religion. Brightman's empirical philosophy of religion teaches us the requirements of such a discipline.

In times of social stability the chief function of philosophy of religion is to justify the existing system and hence in such times philosophy of religion tends to become theological. But in times of great cultural transition it adopts two functions: to theorize in an exploratory and experimental manner in an effort to bring to light the outlines of the new being born and to criticize the old way and point out what seems better. Thus philosophy of religion has three functions in respect to the actual conduct of religious living: to sustain, to explore, and to transform.⁷

As the awareness of cultural change grows within us and the realization that the knowledge explosion is upon us the need arises to orient ourselves, to find out what is happening around us. Brightman's remark that ordinary experience

⁷Henry WIEBMAN, American Philosophies of Religion, loc.cit., p.61.

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is too confusing and complex for reflexive thought and that consequently a study of the sciences both physical and human practically imposes itself upon someone who wants to orient himself today in the midst of change. This^{is} where Brightman's demand that the philosopher of religion study the sciences of religion: psychology, sociology, and history of religion points up the necessity of getting all the facts before any kind of synthesis or judgment is made. He saw the great need for a more empirical temper if religion was to survive in an age of science and technology. And so his empirical philosophy of religion teaches us a valuable learning for the study of religion in our own times.

The other function played by philosophy of religion is that of evaluating the new forms of religious expression and thought as the world of religion attempts to adapt to changing times. Recent commentators observe that we have been too hasty perhaps in adopting the latest cultural fad as a basis for religious expression because all too often the fad changes leaving religion holding the bag. The need for reconstruction looms large on the horizon and so it is absolutely necessary that we establish criteria in order to be able to evaluate changes in religion. This is precisely the function of the philosopher of religion; it is for him to examine language, the findings of the social sciences, the value strivings of every day experience, all in the light of

critically examined criteria.

Brightman's own philosophy of religion is a beautiful illustration of a philosopher or religion at work. His elaboration of the criterion of empirical coherence points up the central role played by a criterion in the evaluation of religion and its relationships to the other areas of experience. As with Royce however, Brightman stresses the internal meaning of ideas, conceiving the process within the self as a history possessing organic unity. Although he did reject monism and the logic of absolute consistency and retained the dualism of Bowne's Personalism on the premise that the self is the key to all reality, his criterion is still immanent to the conscious self; light shines in the shining present and radiates out--to the past and to the future. It seems to me that given the critical role played by philosophy of religion in furnishing criteria for evaluation of religious change, the criterion should be external as well as internal. As Chesterton once said, everything in reality should prove a religious truth. And so while agreeing with Brightman on the importance of a criterion, we disagree on inclusiveness of empirical coherence, our next point will bear this out.

4.-The need for a vision or frame of reference:

The fourth result that can be distilled from this present study is the key role played by the notion of

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temporality in any approach to religion that seeks to be concrete and empirical. By definition a thing in process is not finished; it is what it is now and what it has been but its future is not yet. In this view the nature of anything is its potentialities--what it can develop into, what it can do. Brightman reminds us that "human nature is what man can do within its limits".⁸ In a metaphysics of process there are no fixed natures or essences--all is becoming--and so the only way to determine who I am is to experiment.

Experientia docet. The acorn and the man must unfold their potentialities by experiment. There is no way of determining apriori, by methods either logical or theological, the possible limits of growth, of knowledge, or love, or of sin. Human nature is a voyage of discovery.⁹

Brightman is very definitely a philosopher of process but unlike many contemporaries, however, he sets limits to this voyage of discovery: that laws of logic, the ideal values of truth, beauty, goodness, holiness, and brute fact. And so, as the personality seeks perfection and fulfillment, it needs reason to determine the limits of its growth possibilities.

Given that all reality is an on-going struggle of a society of Persons and that the ideal of reason is the supreme ideal (because broader than all man's limits--for without it he would not be able to recognize a defect, a sin as a sin), all defects and sins, whatever

⁸E.S. BRIGHTMAN, "A Personalistic View of Human Nature", *Religion in Life*, XLV (1944/45), p.4.

⁹IBID., p.7

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else they may be, are offenses against the reason of man's own nature. Hence, reason is the measure of all potentialities.¹⁰

The conclusion to be drawn here is that, if temporality in the self entails growth and development at the very core of its being, then a frame of reference, a vision of reality as a whole is needed. Otherwise, perspective is lost rendering the self in process incapable of judging its progress. I would submit however, that the only true frame of reference for time is eternity. Brightman rejects the category of eternity and replaces it with the category of the omnitemporal or the true for all times and yet we feel this position should logically lead to a radical pluralism as in William James. There needs to be a reality that transcends time if process is to obtain a meaning that is coherent with all of reality. Either things hang together or they do not. In this sense Royce was correct in maintaining a monism.

5.-The truth is in the whole:

This last question concerning the relationship between time and eternity leads us into our fifth and final outcome of our study: the truth is in the whole. Pascal after Saint Augustine says somewhere that we cannot begin to look for something unless we have in a certain sense already found it. A pure search is impossible. Brightman is perfectly clear on

¹⁰ IBID., p.8-9.

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this point. His ideal of empirical of coherence is based on the initial insight that the self is an organic unity. All the rest of his philosophy is premised on this one preliminary intuition of the self as a whole. The first given is a preliminary synopsis, so to speak of the whole of reality and so in a sense the whole is seen from the very beginning.

But again the difference between the initial starting points of idealism and realism throw the axiom: the truth is in the whole, into an entirely new perspective. If being is the initial first given, then very truly the whole is given in the very beginning. And even if the search or way to truth is not always one of absolute certitude, at least the goal is absolute in that being is an absolute outside of which there is nothing at all. And so while we agree with Brightman that the truth is in the whole, the whole must not be narrowed to conscious experienced being. There is need for a vision, a frame of reference that will unite men in their on-going search--not a vision of the purely ideal--but a vision of a reality that is at once concrete, personal, absolute and eternal.

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SUMMARY STATEMENT

The present dissertation seeks to answer the question: what are the methodological and epistemological issues involved in a philosophy of religion that attempts to interpret religion in a radically empirical way. More particularly, this study intends to specify the nature of the relationship between philosophical reason and experience--the tension between abstract and concrete thought when dealing with religion. This thesis takes up Edgar Sheffield Brightman's empirical philosophy of religion because his notion of empirical coherence was considered apt to bring out the issues pertinent to our problem.

One of the first issues, which is analyzed in the first chapter, is Brightman's elaboration of a starting point for philosophy that will be common to both science and religion. He develops his own brand of radical empiricism but is influenced by Josiah Royce, William James, Borden Parker Bowne, and especially by Hegel. It is an empiricism based on concrete reason. Experience understood as the datum self with all its items ranging from sensation through ideals, values, and brute facts, but always manifesting the characteristics of unity and activity, constitute the presupposition to his whole philosophy of religion.

Aware of the need to be empirical in an age of science, he examines religion for what it yields as an empirical fact with the result that he finds religion to be based on the fact of moral obligation; religion is the foundation of all value striving. This empirical approach forces him to reject all traditional positions toward religion as abstract because not related to experience. Historical fact in particular he judged to be

un-empirical and consequently he rejects Revelation and Church teaching as absolute starting points for religious truth.

By defining empirical coherence as the logical principle which functions to make the self coherent by correlating all the items of experience: sensation, values, science, he sees philosophical reason as performing the necessary task of synthesizing the whole. Religious experience contributes a unique truth in providing a foundation for all other values but nonetheless it needs to be integrated and correlated into the whole of experience and so philosophy must take the truth delivered by religion and adapt it to the whole. Religion contributes to the harmony and coherence of the self at a feeling level, whereas philosophy does so at the thought level.

Chapter three attempts to find the basis for Brightman's notion of empirical coherence in the idea of duration or temporality. The presence of memory and the projection of ideals render the self able to recapture its wholeness over the time span. The self is not a substance with a stable self-identity but a process that grows in unity and coherence by the work of reason. Empirical coherence is the very core of the self.

Given these metaphysical antecedents and the methodology of an empirical philosophy of religion, certain consequences follow for religious truth. Life is more basic than dogma; the needs of the self as felt and ascertained in conscious experience constitute the starting point rather than Revelation. A second consequence is that given the experimental approach to truth no view can ever be final or absolute; the category of the omni-temporal replaces that of eternity. Both consequences imply the limitations of idealism in that consciousness is the only given.