

Investigation into all forms of faith that relate to religion invariably runs across a *mystery* behind their inner nature, i.e. something *holy*, which can indeed be *cognized*^a by every individual, yet cannot be *professed*^b publicly, i.e. cannot be communicated universally. – As something *holy* it must be a moral object, hence an object of reason and one capable of being sufficiently recognized^c internally for practical use; yet, as something *mystical*, not for theoretical use, for then it would have to be communicable to everyone and hence also capable of being externally and publicly professed.

Now faith in something which, however, we yet regard as a holy mystery can either be looked upon as *divinely dispensed* or as a *pure faith of reason*. Unless impelled by the most extreme need to accept the first kind, we shall make it a maxim to abide by the second. – Feelings are not cognitions; they are not, therefore, the marks of a mystery; and, since mystery relates to reason yet is not something that can be imparted universally, each individual will have to look for it (if there is any such thing) in his own reason.

It is impossible to determine, *a priori* and objectively, whether there are such mysteries or not. Hence we shall have to look directly into the inner, the subjective, part of our moral predisposition in order to see whether any can be found in us. We shall not, however, be allowed to count among the holy mysteries the *grounds* of morality, which are inscrutable to us, but only what is given to us in cognition yet is not susceptible of public disclosure; for morality allows of open communication, even though its cause is not given to us. Thus freedom – a property which is made manifest to the human being through the determination of his power of choice by the unconditional moral law – is no mystery, since cognition of it can be *communicated* to everyone; the ground of this property, which is inscrutable to us, is however a mystery, since it is *not given* to us in cognition. This very freedom, however, when applied to the final object of practical reason

believe that they find confirmation in it. One sees in the preservation of the people to which it belongs, and of its ancient faith that has remained unadulterated in spite of the dispersion among so many peoples, the proof of a special beneficent providence which is saving this people for a future kingdom on earth; the other sees in it nothing but the admonishing ruins of a devastated state which stands in the way of the Kingdom of Heaven to come but which a particular providence still sustains, partly to preserve in memory the old prophecy of a messiah issuing from this people, and partly to make of it an example of punitive justice, because, in its stiffness, that people wanted to make a political and not a moral concept of this messiah.

^a *gekant*

^b *bekant*

^c *erkant*

(the realization of the final moral end), is alone what inevitably leads us to holy mysteries. – *

Since by himself the human being cannot realize the idea of the supreme good inseparably bound up with the pure moral disposition, either with respect to the happiness which is part of that good or with respect to the union of the human beings necessary to the fulfillment of the end, and yet there is also in him the duty to promote the idea, he finds himself driven to believe in the cooperation or the management of a moral ruler of the world, through which alone this end is possible. And here there opens up before him the abyss of a mystery regarding what God may do, whether *anything* at all is to be attributed to him and *what* this something might be in particular, whereas the only thing that a human being learns from a duty is what he himself must do to become worthy of that fulfillment, of which he has no cognition or at least no possibility of comprehension.

This idea of a moral ruler of the world is a task for our practical reason. Our concern is not so much to know what he is in himself (his nature) but what he is for us as moral beings; even though for the sake of this relation we must think the divine nature by assuming it to have the full perfection required for the execution of his will (e.g. as the will of an immutable, omniscient, all-powerful, etc. being). And apart from this relation we can cognize nothing about him.

Now, in accordance with this need of practical reason, the universal true religious faith is faith in God (1) as the almighty creator of heaven

* The *cause* of the universal gravity of all matter in the world is equally unknown to us, so much so that we can even see that we shall never have cognition of it, since its very concept presupposes a first motive force unconditionally residing within it. Yet gravity is not a mystery; it can be made manifest to everyone, since its *law* is sufficiently cognized. When Newton represents it as if it were the divine presence in appearance (*omnipresencia phaenomenon*),¹ this is not an attempt to explain it (for the existence of God in space involves a contradiction) but a sublime analogy in which the mere union of corporeal beings into a cosmic whole is being visualized, in that an incorporeal cause is put underneath them – and so too would fare the attempt to comprehend the self-sufficient principle of the union of rational beings in the world into an ethical state, and to explain this union from that principle. We recognize only the duty that draws us to it; the possibility of the intended effect in obeying this duty lies outside the bounds of all our insight. – There are mysteries that are hidden things of nature (*arcani*), and there are mysteries of politics (things kept secret, *secreta*); yet we can still become acquainted² with either, inasmuch as they rest on empirical causes. With respect to that which is universal human duty to have cognition of (namely anything moral) there can be no mystery; but with respect to that which God alone can do, for which to do anything ourselves would exceed our capacity and hence also our duty, there we can have a genuine, i.e. a holy, mystery of religion (*mysterium*). And it might perhaps be useful only to know and to understand that there is such a mystery rather than to have insight into it.

¹ phenomenal omnipresence

² können . . . uns bekannt werden

and earth, i.e. morally as *holy* lawgiver; (2) as the preserver of the human race, as its *benevolent* ruler and moral guardian; (3) as the administrator of his own holy laws, i.e. as *just* judge.

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This faith really contains no mystery, since it expresses solely God's moral bearing toward the human race. It is also by nature available to all human reason and is therefore to be met with in the religion of most civilized peoples.* It is also inherent in the concept of a people regarded as a community, where such threefold superior power (*pouvoir*) is always to be thought, except that the people is here represented as ethical, and hence the threefold quality of the moral head of the human race, which in a juridico-civil state must of necessity be distributed among three different subjects,[†] can be thought as united in one and the same being.

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But since this faith, which purified the moral relation of human beings to the highest being from harmful anthropomorphism on behalf of universal religion and brought it up to measure with the true morality of a people of God, was first set forth in a certain doctrine of faith (the Christian one) and made public to the world only in it, its promulgation can well be called

* In the sacred prophetic story of the "last things," the *judge of the world* (really he who will take as his own under his dominion those who belong to the kingdom of the good principle, and will separate them out) is represented and spoken of not as God but as the Son of man.¹³¹ This seems to indicate that *humanity itself*, conscious of its limitation and fragility, will pronounce the sentence in this selection. And this is a generosity which does not, however, violate justice. – In contrast, when represented in his Divinity (the Holy Spirit), i.e. as he speaks to our conscience with the voice of the holy law which we ourselves recognize and in terms of our own reckoning, the judge of human beings can be thought of only as passing judgment according to the rigor of the law, for we ourselves know absolutely nothing of how much can be credited in our behalf to the account of our frailty but have only our trespasses before our eyes, together with the consciousness of our freedom and of the violation of our duty for which we are wholly to be blamed, and hence have no ground for assuming generosity in the judgment passed on us.

† It is hard to give a reason why so many ancient peoples hit upon this idea, unless it is that the idea lies in human reason universally whenever we want to think of the governance of a people and (on the analogy of this) of world governance. The religion of Zoroaster had these three divine persons, Ormuzd, Mithra, and Ahriman,¹³² the Hindu religion had Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva¹³³ – but with only this difference, that the religion of Zoroaster represents its third person as the creator not just of *evil* as punishment but also of the *moral evil* itself for which humans are being punished, whereas the Hindu religion represents it only as judging and punishing. The religion of Egypt had its Ptha, Kneph, and Neith,¹³⁴ of whom, so far as the obscurity of the reports from those ancient times allow us to surmise, the first was to represent spirit, distinguished from matter, as *world-creator*; the second, a generosity which sustains and *rules*; the third, a wisdom which limits this generosity, i.e. *justice*. The Goths revered their Odin (father of all), their Freya (also Freyer, goodness), and Thor, the judging (punishing) God. Even the Jews seem to have pursued these ideas in the final period of their hierarchical constitution. For in the charge of the Pharisees that Christ had called himself a *Son of God*, they do not seem to put any special weight of blame on the doctrine that God has a son, but only on Christ's claim to be the Son of God.¹³⁵

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RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF MERE REASON

the revelation of something which had hitherto remained a mystery for human beings through their own fault.

This revelation says, *first*, that we should represent the supreme lawgiver, neither as *merciful* and hence *forbearing* (indulgent) toward human weakness, nor as *despotic* and ruling merely according to his unlimited right; and his laws not as arbitrary, totally unrelated to our concepts of morality, but as directed at the holiness of the human being. *Second*, we must place his goodness, not in an unconditional *benevolence* toward his creatures, but in that he first sees to their moral constitution through which they are *well-pleasing* to him, and only then makes up for their incapacity to satisfy this requirement on their own. *Third*, his justice cannot be represented as *generous* and *condoning* (for this implies a contradiction), and even less as dispensed by the lawgiver in his quality of holiness (for before it no human being is justified), but only as restricting his generosity to the condition that human beings abide by the holy law, to the extent that as *sons of men*¹³⁶ they can measure up to it. – In a word, God wills to be served as morally qualified in three specifically different ways, for which the designation of different (not physically, but morally) personalities of one and the same being is not a bad expression. And this creed of faith at the same time expresses the whole of pure moral religion which, without this distinction of personalities, would run the danger of degenerating into an anthropomorphic servile faith, because of the human propensity to think of the Divinity as a human authority¹ (who does not usually separate in his rule [the parts of] this threefold quality but rather often mixes or interchanges them).

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But, if this very faith (in a divine Trinity) were to be regarded not just as the representation of a practical idea, but as a faith that ought to represent what God is in himself, it would be a mystery surpassing all human concepts, hence unsuited to a revelation humanly comprehensible, and could only be declared in this respect as mystery. Faith in it as an extension of theoretical cognition of the divine nature would only be the profession of a creed of ecclesiastical faith totally unintelligible to human beings or, if they think that they understand it, the profession of an anthropomorphic creed, and not the least would thereby be accomplished for moral improvement. – Only what we can indeed thoroughly understand and penetrate in a practical context, but which surpasses all our concepts for theoretical purposes (for the determination of the nature of the object in itself), is mystery (in one context) and can yet (in another) be revealed. Of this kind is the above mentioned mystery, which can be divided into three mysteries revealed to us through our own reason:

1. The mystery of the *call* (of human beings to be citizens of an ethical

state). – We can form a concept of the universal and *unconditional* subjection of human beings to the divine legislation only insofar as we also consider ourselves his *creatures*; just so can God be considered the ultimate source of all natural laws only because he is the creator of natural things. It is, however, totally incomprehensible to our reason how beings can be *created* to use their powers freely, for according to the principle of causality we cannot attribute any other inner ground of action to a being, which we assume to have been produced, except that which the producing cause has placed in it. And, since through this ground (hence through an external cause) the being's every action is determined as well, the being itself cannot be free. So through our rational insight we cannot reconcile the divine and holy legislation, which only applies to free beings, with the concept of the creation of these beings, but must simply presuppose the latter as already existing free beings who are determined to citizenship in the divine state, not in virtue of their creation, but because of a purely moral necessitation, only possible according to the laws of freedom, i.e. through a call. So the call to this end is morally quite clear; for speculation, however, the possibility of beings who are thus called is an impenetrable mystery.

2. The mystery of *satisfaction*. The human being, so far as we have cognition of him, is corrupted and of himself not in the least adequate to that holy law. However, if the goodness of God has called him as it were into being, i.e. has invited him to a particular kind of existence (to be a member of the Kingdom of Heaven), he must also have a means of compensating, from the fullness of his own holiness, for the human being's inadequacy with respect to it. But this goes against the spontaneity (presupposed in every moral good or evil which a human being might have within himself), according to which the required goodness must stem from a human being himself, not from someone else, if it is to be imputable to him. – Inasmuch as reason can see, therefore, no one can stand in for another by virtue of the superabundance of his own good conduct and his merit; and if we must *assume* any such thing, this can be only for moral purposes, since for ratiocination it is an unfathomable mystery.

3. The mystery of *election*. Even if we admit such a vicarious satisfaction as possible, a morally believing acceptance of it is itself a determination of the will toward the good that already presupposes in the human being a disposition well-pleasing to God – one which the human being, in his natural corruption, cannot however bring about on his own within himself. But that a heavenly *grace* should work in him to grant this assistance to one human being, yet denies it to another, not according to the merit of works but through some unconditional *decree*, and elects one part of our race to salvation, the other to eternal reprobation: this again does not yield the concept of a divine justice but must at best be deferred to a wisdom whose rule is an absolute mystery to us.

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Now regarding these mysteries, so far as they touch the moral life-history of every human being – namely how does it happen that there is a moral good or evil in the world at all, and (if evil is in every human being and at all times) how is it that good will still originates from it and is restored in a human being; or why, when *this* happens in some, are others however excluded from it – regarding this God has revealed nothing to us, nor can he reveal anything, for we would not *understand* it.* It would be as if from the human being, through his freedom, we wanted to *explain* and *make comprehensible* to us what happens; regarding this God has indeed revealed his will through the moral law in us but has left the *causes* whereby a free action occurs or does not occur on earth in the same obscurity in which everything must remain for human investigation; all this ought to be conceived, as history, according to the law of cause and effect yet also from freedom.[†] Regarding the objective rule of our conduct, however, all that we need is sufficiently revealed (through reason and Scripture), and this revelation is equally understandable to every human being.

That the human being is called to a good life conduct through the moral law; that, through an indelible respect for this law which lies in him, he also finds in himself encouragement to trust in this good spirit and to hope that, however it may come about, he will be able to satisfy this spirit; finally, that, comparing this expectation with the rigorous command of the law, he must constantly test himself as if summoned to accounts before a judge – reason, heart, and conscience all teach this and drive us to it. It is presumptuous to require that more be made manifest to us, and if this were to happen, we must not regard it as a universal human need.

But, although that great mystery which encompasses in one single formula all those we have mentioned can be made comprehensible to

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*† We normally have no misgivings in asking novices in religion to believe in mysteries, since the fact that we do not *comprehend* them, i.e. that we have no insight into the possibility of their object, could just as little justify our refusal to accept them as it could the refusal to accept (say) the capacity of organic matter to procreate – a capacity which likewise no one comprehends yet, though it is and will remain a mystery for us, no one can refuse to accept. We do, however, *understand* what this expression means, and have an empirical concept of its object together with the consciousness that it contains no contradiction. – Now we can with right require of every mystery proposed for belief that we *understand* what is meant by it. And this does not happen just because we understand *one by one* the words with which the mystery is enunciated, i.e. by attaching a meaning to each separately, but because, when combined together in one concept, the words still allow a meaning and do not, on the contrary, thereby escape all thought. – It is unthinkable that God could make this cognition come to us through *inspiration*, if we for our part do not fail earnestly to wish for it, for such cognition could simply not take hold in us, since the nature of our understanding is incapable of it.^{††} Hence in a practical context (whenever duty is at issue), we understand perfectly well what freedom is; for theoretical purposes, however, as regards the causality of freedom (and equally its nature) we cannot even formulate without contradiction the wish to understand it.

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every human being through his reason, as an idea necessary in practice, yet we can say that, to become the moral foundation of religion, and particularly of a public one, it was revealed at the time when it was *publicly* taught for the first time, and was made into the symbol of a totally new religious epoch. *Solemn formulas* normally contain a language of their own, sometimes mystical and not understood by everyone, intended only for those who belong to a particular society (a brotherhood or community), a language which properly (out of respect) ought to be used only for a ceremonial act (as, for instance, when someone is to be initiated in an exclusive society as member). The highest goal of the moral perfection of finite creatures, never completely attainable by human beings, is, however, the love of the Law.

In conformity with this idea, "God is love"¹³⁷ would be a principle of faith in religion. In God we can *revere* the loving one (whose love is that of moral *approbation* of human beings so far as they conform to his holy laws), the Father; in God also, so far as he displays himself in his all-encompassing idea, which is the prototype of the humanity generated and beloved by him, we can *revere* his *Son*; and, finally, so far as he makes his approbation depend upon the agreement of human beings with the condition of his love of approbation, the *Holy Spirit*,* but we cannot truly call

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* This Spirit, through whom the love of God as author of salvation (really, our corresponding love proportionate to his) is united to the fear of God as lawgiver, i.e. the conditioned with the condition, and which can therefore be represented "as proceeding from both,"¹³⁸ besides "leading to all truth (observance of duty),"¹³⁹ is at the same time the true Judge of human beings (at the bar of conscience). For "judging" can be taken in a twofold sense: as concerning either merit and the lack of merit, or guilt and nonguilt. God, considered as *love* (in his Son), judges human beings insofar as a merit can yet accrue to them over and above their guilt, and here his verdict is: *worthily* or *unworthily*. He separates out as his own those to whom such merit can still be imputed. The rest go away emptyhanded. On the other hand, the sentence of the judge according to *justice* (of the judge properly so called, under the name of Holy Spirit) upon those to whom no merit can accrue, is: *guilty* or *not guilty*, i.e. damnation or absolution. – In the first instance the *judging* means the *separating out* of the meritorious from the unmeritorious, the two sides both competing for the one prize (salvation). But by *merit* we do not understand here a moral advantage before the law (for with respect to the latter no surplus of observance to duty can accrue to us over and above what is due), but only in comparison to other human beings, relative to their moral disposition. *Worthiness* has moreover always only negative meaning (not-unworthiness), that is, moral receptivity to such goodness. – Hence he who judges under the first qualification (as *bruteus*)¹⁴⁰ pronounces a judgment of election between *two* persons (or parties) competing for the same prize (salvation); while he who judges under the second (the judge in the proper sense) passes sentence upon *one and the same* person before a court (conscience) that decides between prosecution and defense. – Now if it is assumed that, although all human beings are indeed guilty of sin, to some there can nonetheless accrue a merit, then the pronouncement of the judge proceeds *from love*, a lack of which can lead only to a *judgment of rejection* and its inevitable consequence of a *judgment of condemnation* (since the human being is now handed over to the *just judge*). – It is thus, in my opinion, that the apparently contradictory propositions, "The 'an arbiter of games (Greek)

upon him in this multiform personality (for this would imply a diversity of beings, whereas God is always only a single object), though we can indeed in the name of that object which he himself loves and reveres above all else, and with which it is both a wish and a duty to enter in moral union.¹⁴² For the rest, the theoretical profession of faith in the divine nature under this threefold quality belongs to the mere classical formula of an ecclesiastical faith, to distinguish it from other forms derived from historical sources – a formula to which few human beings are in a position of attaching a clear and distinct concept (one not exposed to misunderstanding); its examination pertains rather to teachers in their relation to one another (as philosophical and erudite expositors of a holy book), that they may agree on its meaning, not all of which is suited to the general capacity of comprehension or to the needs of the time, while mere literal faith hurts rather than improves the true religious disposition.

Son will come again to judge the quick and the dead,"¹⁴⁰ but also, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17), can be reconciled; and they can agree with the other where it is said, "He that believeth not in him is condemned *already*" (John 3:18), namely by the Spirit, of whom it is said, "He will judge the world because of sin and righteousness."¹⁴¹ – The anxious solicitude over such distinctions as we are instituting here in the domain of mere reason, strictly for reason's sake, might well be regarded as useless and burdensome subtlety; and so they would be indeed, if they were directed to an inquiry into the divine nature. But since in their religious affairs human beings are constantly inclined to turn to the divine goodness on account of their faults without, however, being able to circumvent his justice, and yet a *generous judge* in one and the same person is a contradiction, it is obvious that their concepts on this subject must be very wavering and inherently inconsistent even from a practical point of view, hence their justification and exact determination of great practical importance.

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