

# What Is Behind the Window? Ontological Question of Spiritual Experience Between Rudolf Otto and Carl Gustav Jung

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The fundamental question of the presented study is the question of ontological status of experience with the Sacred: Where does spiritual experience belong – to the world of facts or to metaphysics? Or somewhere in between? The world of empirical experiencing is mediated to us by the science of psychology, which looks at the experience with the Sacred “from the inside”, focusing on what is happening “in front of the window”, that is, in our consciousness. The world of metaphysics offers speculative answers to what “is” reality that is situated “behind the window”, that is, in the sphere of being to which we do not have a direct evidential approach. Is it possible to say “something” about the Numinous in such a way so that it is not a mere projection of our own images? This question is answered in the study with the aid of the approach of philosophical phenomenology of religion offered by Rudolf Otto and it is applied here to depth-psychological conceptions of spirituality. According to Rudolf Otto, the divine “*insisting presence*” (Lat. *numen*) bears on man’s psyche and calls them to various demonstrations of cult or spontaneous devotion, i.e., reverence to transcendence. The initial depth psychology led by Freudian psychoanalysis describes religious notions as illusory projections of unconsciousness or “*neurosis of humanity*”. However, skepticism of the Enlightenment era, the self-sufficient science of which was supposed to lead us, proved to be another form of dogmatism and its arrogance was fully exposed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When asked whether the experience of the Numinous is only a symbol of collective ideas (C. G. Jung) or the result of a dialogue between a subject and a certain essential ontological pendant of religious experience (V. White), the author inclines to the second, meta-ontic attitude, which he clarifies in his study.

## 1 Introduction

The main objective of this study is to describe spiritual experience as a possibility of a living dialogue of man with being *in se* and *per se*. We assume that a dialogue is possible only where two initiative actors enter interaction, otherwise it is not a dialogue. The *sacred experience* – if understood as *dialogical experience* – implies the circular dynamics of address and response, while man as the experiencing subject necessarily finds themselves in the position of the addressee, since the transcendent being “leans” into the realm of the experiential first, otherwise it would not be transcendent. In the sacred experience, man mentally processes the address of the sublime and always reacts in some way (even a refusal to the address is a reaction).

Therefore, the paper is analytically focused also on the original theories of depth psychology, which interpret the psycho-spiritual experiencing of man’s encounter with the mystical and the religious in their way [1]. In fulfilling the research goal, the following questions are sought to be answered: In what sense are psychology and ontology separated by a “window” in connection with the study of the Sacred? How does the empirical science of psychology, in the conception of Carl Gustav Jung, conceive the experience of man with the Sacred? Is it possible to phenomenologically bridge the *ontic world* (the world of facts) and the *ontological world* (the world of essence) analyzing the spiritual experience of man? These questions will be answered in the study stepwise, following the trajectory of the phenomenological method, with the help of which the author seeks to describe the *natural attitude* of man in a principally “always new” dialogue with the Sacred. The phenomenological method is applied here in a line opened by Rudolf Otto, but at the same time, it does not avoid its corrections, in the interpretation of the psychologist and theologian Victor White. We consider it necessary to clarify that our ambition is not to reflect the development of discourses within the phenomenology of religion and comparative religion studies, but we want to focus our research on applying Otto’s theory to the psychological *model of symbols* of Carl Gustav Jung [2].

The structure of the reflection is as follows: 1) The author points out unsustainability of the reductive positivist status of scientific knowledge in order to expand the space for speculative possibilities of rationality to conceive spiritual experience; 2) Phenomenology of the *experience of the Numi-*



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*nous* in the intentions of Rudolf Otto and other philosophers of religion will be presented; 3) The original depth-psychological interpretations of religion, especially Jung’s interpretation, will be analyzed with this phenomenological approach; 4) The spiritual experience will be conceptually introduced into a dynamic tension between two approaches: immanently psychological and transcendently speculative; 5) Finally, the ontological status of the Sacred is conceived as *being* that becomes the experience of a “gift” by which man is addressed and appealed. The question in the title of the paper is answered in the affirmative, since endowment in the realm of experience “in front of the window” presupposes being that “gives the gift from behind the window inwards” [3].

## 2 Positivist Approach versus Holistic Approach to Human Experience

The 20<sup>th</sup> century began in the period of boom in “positive science”, the New Enlightenment humanism and an unprecedented rise of technology in the life of society and individuals. This mental mood of the Western culture was foreshadowed by the founder of positivism, August Comte (1798–1857), whose concept was followed by a powerful and, in the past century, majority stream of philosophical perception of science, reason, truth and truthfulness. Positivism claims that only what is “positive”, that is *factually given* (as opposed to “negative” metaphysics), is open to research activity. Everything else is metaphysical, transcendent, religious, and therefore, unscientific, and useless. According to positivists, only those quantities that are directly experienceable and measurable (*evidence based*) make sense in science. The task of science then is to rationally harmonize the results of empirical measurements – however, without caring for any ontological background of the corresponding factual reality. In their almost religiously zealous reduction efforts (Laudan 1996, 17), the positivists fell into the opposite extreme through complete rejection of rational reasoning and clarification of concepts, statements and problems that cannot be solved or verified by experience due to their different abstraction (essences, ontological values, metaphysical and symbolic realities) and called them untrue or meaningless. However, the enlightened *skepticism*, the self-sufficient science of which was supposed to lead us, proved to be another form of *dogmatism* (Whitehead 1947) and its *arrogance* (Lat. *superbia*, the opposite of religious humility) was fully revealed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Crotty 2020). The current theory of science, following the falsifiability of Karl R. Popper, the theory of revolutionary paradigmatic changes of Thomas Samuel Kuhn and the epistemological anarchism of Paul Karl Feyerabend, is moving away from positivist philosophy. Feyerabend argues that any scientist can discover and develop their own theories regardless of inconsistencies, contradictions, and criticisms; the activity of a scientist is not subject to any rational standards. New theories are winning because of the propagandistic activity of their supporters.

Science is no different from myth or religion; science is one of the forms of ideology (Rosenberg 2005, 175). According to him, science must be deprived of privileges: it should have the same rights as myth, magic, and religion in the society. The so-called post-positivists Imre Lakatos and especially Michael Polanyi developed a conception of unspoken or hidden knowledge. Expressed knowledge in science emerges in the form of interpersonal knowledge (as concepts and theories), while unspoken knowledge – as so-called personal knowledge.

The positivist attitude, which is basically based on empiricist foundations, has also spread widely to humanities, among which medical psychotherapy stands out, however, educational sciences do not lag either. A manifestation of a positivist approach to man (patient, client, or student) is a reduction of therapy to symptomatic treatment (removal of symptoms), which relieves the person of pain but does not relieve the cause of this pain, or reduction of education to measurable processes of acquisition of knowledge and skills. The demand for personality transformation, the desire for a better, more meaningful, and ultimately flourishing life disappears. Moreover, as another argument, it is not possible to methodologically divide man into individual isolated components or aspects that would become the object of autonomous and mutually independent research and practical (educational, therapeutic, etc.) disciplines. The author holds the paradigm that it is necessary to maintain the “personal principle” in the approach to man, according to which person is a self-purpose (Immanuel Kant) with its own layered history and multidimensional reality, in which its individual layers and dimensions influence and condition each other and integrate into one unit.

Already in classical Greek Platonism, the term *paideia* (“education” in the broad sense, understood as an essential development involving a holistic therapeutic effect) was explained as “care for the soul” (Gr. *epimeleia pari tes psyches*),

which is to be an everyday and ultimately the final concern of life. Only a conscious and intentional development of the soul (*psychagogy*) understood in this manner can ensure meaningfulness for existence (Jaeger 1967, 334). The individual partial “educations” and “therapies” hold the function of this last holistic aspect of every researcher, educator, and therapist. For scientists and researchers, as well as therapists and educators, this implies the need for interdisciplinarity and the imperative of the basic attitude of intellectual and practical *humilitas*, “modesty”, i.e., awareness of the limits of their scientific segment and their professional qualification, especially if they want to adhere to empirical (and therefore, limited) foundations.

The need for mutual respect and distinction of competencies between psychology as an empirical science and philosophy, or theology as transempirical sciences is already noted by Carl Gustav Jung, who notes, “*Not only do two apparently incompatible spheres come into contact, but they also mutually animate and fertilize each other. This requires a great deal of good will on either side.*” (Jung in White 1953, XXII). The shared interest of (empirical) psychology, philosophy, theology, and religious systems is *cura animarum*, which in its whole goes beyond partial approaches of empirical sciences, but at the same time, reflections of speculative and spiritual approaches are bound by the experience of empirical sciences. If a specific and complete man including their problems and psychological traumas is to be the center of attention, mutual respect of the two approaches (empirical and metaphysical one) should be smoothly projected to their mutual dialogue, in which, on one hand, the empirical science needs to abandon the limited dogmatic positivism, and on the other, philosophy and theology need to sincerely listen to outcomes of empirical research. The need of intellectual humility and dialogue is pointed out by Jung as follows: “*Like every empirical science, psychology also requires auxiliary concepts, hypotheses and models. But the theologian as well as the philosopher, is apt to make the mistake of taking them for metaphysical*

*a priori assertions... Similarly, my concept of the archetype or of psychic energy is only an auxiliary idea [Note: model], which can be exchanged at any time by a better formula. Seen from a philosophical standpoint, my empirical concepts would be logical monsters, and as a philosopher I should cut a sorry figure... I have never maintained that the archetype in itself is an image [Note: of objective metaphysical reality] but have expressly pointed out that I regard it as modus without definite content.*” (Jung in White 1953, XX–XXI).

The distinction could give the impression that psychology as an empirical science and philosophy, or theology, as speculative abstract sciences may lead a dialogue, however, it resembles rather a courtesy sitting of two strangers (“the blind with the deaf”), a “harmless” meeting of two incompatible spheres that have split the tasks in the field of broad human soul. Adhering to the metaphor of the window, we would have to say that it is closed for good, even with the curtains drawn. However, practice and a specific man force us to defy this superficial idea and seek authentic bridging of the empirical and the metaphysical, especially if the experience with the religious, the Sacred, the transcendent decisively intervenes in the core of the psyche. Spiritual experience of man is the *topos* that requires a living bridging of “both worlds”, the world “in front of the window” (our consciousness) and the world “behind the window” (the sacred being). This bridging will be outlined by the method of philosophical phenomenology of religion and mysticism, based mainly on the conception of Rudolf Otto.

### 3 Phenomenology of Rudolf Otto and Its Limits

Although there has been a renewed interest in mysticism and spirituality in the conditions of postmodern society (Heelas, Martin and Morris 1998; Wright 2004) in the era of realization of Nietzsche's prophecy of the "death of God", the effort to grasp this phenomenon theoretically can be observed in Europe already since antiquity. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217/1221–1274) defined mysticism as "*cognitio Dei experimentalis*", i.e., *experiential knowledge of God*. For Henri Bergson (1859–1941), the mystical experience is not just a subject of reflection, but it is a revealing experience that plays a key role in his entire philosophical thinking. In his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1921), Ludwig Wittgenstein concludes by summoning the "mystical" (Ger. *Das Mystische*), which refers to the "*in-expressible*" that is a condition for the expressible. The religious and mystical experience presupposes an attentive attitude of "listening to" something that goes beyond the possibilities of utterance and cognition and that encourages the very utterance through symbolic forms.

The German philosopher, theologian, and religious scholar Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) belongs to the greatest representatives of the philosophy of religion of the twentieth century. Phenomenology is a philosophical method that uses a descriptive examination of sets of phenomena that are differentiated from simple appearance, but also from the spiritually viewed nature of things. The task of phenomenology is to study the structures of the lifeworld (Ger. *Lebenswelt*) and the laws that govern it. The founder of phenomenology and its main representative was Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). The main motive of philosophical phenomenology is to arrive "*zu den Sachen selbst*" (Ger. *to the things themselves*) through analysis of phenomena. Otto's phenomenology of religion looks upon the Sacred from the point of view of human experience, that is, as it appears to us. In his most important work *The Idea of the Holy* (*Das Heilige*, 1917; the first English translation in 1923), Otto copes with the experience with the Sacred. The subtitle of the book is "*An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*" and it is an expression of certain polarity in the idea of the divine. According to Otto, scholastic theological systems using a rational conceptual apparatus are not the only and complete expression of this idea. According to him, it also has its rationally ungraspable side, which cannot be conceptually captured, it is only possible to refer to it by the so-called *references of the supramundane* (Ger. *Begriffe des*

*Überweltlichen*). Otto called this non-rational moment of the sacred the *Numinous* (Lat. *numinosum*) as essentially scientifically indescribable "basis of being" (from Lat. *numen* – "acting deity", "effecting divine power"). *Sacrum*, a deep transcendent dimension of being, manifests itself as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (Lat. *awe-arousing and fascinating mystery* [4]), as a mystery that attracts, enchants, and captivates, which manifests itself as love, mercy, nobility, which, on the other hand, evokes fear and horror (Lat. *trémens* means "shiver", "awe"). Therefore, these are two different moments of the same thing: *mysterium fascinans* and *mysterium tremendum*. Deity appears as a mystery, as something "completely different" (Ger. *Ganz Andere*, Lat. *totaliter aliter*), which evokes in man fear and awe, but at the same time, it attracts them, and it is the primeval source of all religious and mystical experiences with the Sacred.

It is only possible to indicate what *mysterium tremendum* is, it is impossible to define or describe it to someone who has no direct experience with it. "*The feeling of [Note: mysterious dread] may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship... It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy. It has its wild and demonic forms... It has its crude, barbaric antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious.*" (Otto 1969, 12–13). Otto mentions here God's wrath in the Old Testament, in which a superficial reader sees only self-willed irritability. However, it is a "*natural expression, an element of holiness*" (Otto 1969, 18, 92). They who personally experience *tremendum* can hardly rationally or insurgently condemn God for his cruelty. Rather, they are imbued with a sense of immense power and the complete, overwhelming superiority of God over man, to which a sense of their own insignificance, exposure, and extreme dependence is attached. According to Otto's analysis, the *Numinous mystery* is usually scary, but it does not always need to be so. The essential religious experience may include astonishment at the complete *otherness* of what appears to us as the deepest mystery (the *nothingness* of St. John of the Cross, or the *emptiness* of Buddhist mystics; Otto 1969, 30).

*Mysterium fascinans*, just like *tremendum*, cannot be known by them who have no experience with it; it creates a “contrast harmony” with *tremendum*. The Sacred that evokes extraordinary dread, at the same time irresistibly allures and intoxicates. “*The creature, who trembles before it, utterly cowed and cast down, has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, nay even to make it somehow his own, the mystery is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him, and beside that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication, it is the Dionysiac-element in the numen.*” (Otto 1969, 31).

The Sacred appears to man as *energicum* (Lat. “full of strength”), *majestas* (Lat. “magnificence”), evokes *fascination* (Lat. “mirum”). Otto claims that in every man there is a certain “*sense of the Numinous*” (Lat. *sensus numinis*), the Sacred is an *a priori* category (according to Immanuel Kant). In other words, the *sense of the Numinous* is given to us pre-experientially, it is a part of our inner equipment through which we perceive the world around us. However, it must be “updated” by an outer stimulus. The Sacred is not exclusively an irrational category, but it also includes rational symbolic and ethical elements that schematize its irrational part (the Numinous) and thus produce various culturally conditioned religious forms.

Otto rejects the characteristics of the religious experience as an experience of total dependence (Schleiermacher 1800), because it is not unique for the Numinous, but can be changed for other experiences (of submission and manipulation). The mystical experience is “emotional”, and Otto strived to describe it as such phenomenologically. He wanted to prove unrepeatedness of this experience and like that to determine, notionally define what is religious experience. He was convinced that through analysis of his own introspective experiences and experiences of the others he managed to prove that the Numinous is a particular “religious” feeling, which resembles other feelings, it may even evoke them, but it does not come directly from them and is not identified with them. It contains a sublimity that impacts human mind

in two ways: “*It humbles and at the same time exalts us, circumscribes and extends us beyond ourselves, on the one hand releasing in us a feeling analogous to fear and on the other, rejoicing us.*” (Otto 1969, 42). Human individual has *numinosum* imprinted on themselves as universal human *a priori* that emerges in various forms during their lifetime (like Jung’s “activated archetype”).

Despite Otto’s insight intuition, we reject his theory of affective basis of the Sacred experience. From a philosophical point of view (but also from a religious point of view, and even from a psychological point of view), limiting the essence of religious experience to emotion means an incompetent reduction. Religion certainly also includes the passionate search for the truth, the effort for its conceptual or allegorical interpretation and the effort to constitute a basic ethical norm that results from the experience with the Sacred. According to this key, Abraham’s exodus, Albert Schweitzer’s decision to serve the poor in Africa, or Buddha’s *awakening* would be narrowed down to an emotional reaction conditioned by a numinous experience. The experiential spectrum would not even correspond to psychological practice if it were deprived of the speculative, rational, and volitional aspect. The numinous experience, however unique and personal, seeks an interpretive framework in man, through which they would grasp it, even if not completely and exhaustively (which would be contrary to the very nature of the Sacred), then at least tentatively and symbolically. Even according to empirical research, Otto’s “*contrast harmony*” of the Numinous is a singular phenomenon and can hardly become the ultimate norm of religiosity (Hardy 1980, 399). Here, both empirical and speculative approaches to the numinous experience come together to criticize this aspect of Otto’s theory, which was undoubtedly influenced by the romantic atmosphere of the time. From the perspective of the aim of the author’s study (bridging the empirical and metaphysical through phenomenology), however, Otto offers a valuable tool that can be legitimately applied. This is precisely what the author intends to do in analyzing psychological interpretations of spiritual experience.

## 4 The Original Theories of Depth Psychology

The emphasis on psychosomatic unity and unconscious sources of mental processes was already placed by Aristotle, Augustine, and later Thomas Aquinas. However, psychology as the science of a meeting of the conscious and unconscious in the human mind, in modern times, was described by Carl Gustav Carus in his work *Psyche* (1848; “*das Unbewusste ist das Göttliche*”), building on the psychology of ideas by Johann Friedrich Herbart and preparing the theoretical basis for Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis.

Freud deals with the analysis of religion and faith in God in several works (*Totem and Taboo* from 1913, *The Future of an Illusion* from 1927, or *Moses and Monotheism* from 1939). He seeks to prove that religion is merely a manifestation of “compulsive neurosis” and a collection of illusions that represent the repressed, unfulfilled childhood desires of a defenseless man who commit themselves to powerful protection. According to him, the religious phenomenon can therefore be reduced to an infantile phenomenon, originating from the *Oedipus complex*. The divine is a projection of crowded-out desires or repressed fears. The cause of all manifestations of psyche is the incestuous sexual desire, which manifests itself through regressions or sublimations as a substitute: art, science, psychosis and especially religion. This assumption, on which the criticism of religious beliefs was based, had to be abandoned in the light of empirical data by Carl Gustav Jung and later by Freud himself. It has been shown that the denial of the truth value of religious claims (see *The Future of an Illusion*) is wishful thinking of Freud himself rather than the result of psychoanalytic research. Freud strived for meta-psychological theories; however, he left the field of empirical science to supplement it with limited metaphysical prejudices.

Jung initially accepted this view of Freud, but gradually took a diametrically opposing position. But even Jung cannot be said to have reached a final attitude toward the transcendent and metaphysical validity of religious expressions. He strictly adhered to empirical nature of psychology, which did not allow him to take a similar speculative leap [5]. While for Freud religion is a symptom of disease, for Jung, the root of all psychological diseases is the absence of religion. In 1932, he wrote: “*It is safe to say that everyone of them [my patients] fell ill because he had lost what the living religions of every age had given to their followers, and none of them was really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.*” (Jung in White 1953, 47).

Contradictory evaluations of religion by Freud and Jung are logical consequences of differences in the interpretation of psychological data. Jung rejected Freud’s theory of sexuality as the dominant psychological factor and replaced it with a more compendious abstract conception of the absolute, *unspecified energy*. Therethrough, he predestined psychology to cooperate with religion. In ideas of his patients, he recognized universal symbols of humanity for creative and undifferentiated deity. However, he himself perceived specific deities rather as a fantasy concretization of the mentioned energy, instead of concluding that this energy, manifested in various manifestations, expresses an *innate desire* (Lat. *naturale desiderium*) for the Sacred. In doing so, he wanted to avoid accusations of proceeding to metaphysics.

Alfred Adler diverted the focus of psychotherapy from exploring the causes to exploring the goals of mental processes. His position changed from looking back to looking to the future. Thus, religion can also be understood not from the perspective of a regressive substitute for forbidden incest (Freud), but as a patulous fruit of psychic energy. Inspired by Adler’s teleologically guided psychology, Jung explains various religious rituals (setting fire, immersion in water, ceremonial purification, etc.) as symbols of the original inner rebirth, personality transformation of an individual (as opposed to Freud’s theory of masked imitations of sexual intercourse). Religion is a noble system in which libido is gradually spiritualized. Behind individual manifestations of *creative sexual libido (energy)* there is a universal, creative, and renewing Spirit that is not a fantastic substitute for libido, but rather libido is a special manifestation and symbol of the Spirit. God is not a projection of the physical father, but rather the father is the first infantile substitute for God. The physical father is a little god rather than God being the great father. Even though Jung avoids taking a metaphysical stand as much as possible, it can be hardly denied that by the assumption of “*undifferentiated libido*” (*energy*) it is possible to explain

psychological data only under an assumption that is highly metaphysical. By building psychology on a conception that transcends empirical psychological observations because libido is observable only in individual forms and manifestations, Jung complied with the Aristotelian doctrine that no science can explain its last principles and must leave this task to philosophy. For traditional metaphysics, the formless *energeia* is synonymous with *actus purus*, and philosophy has always referred to God as a “pure act”. Jung’s “*undifferentiated libido*” is apparently just an abstraction from distinct forms of libido (White 1953, 57). Within the precise boundaries of empirical psychology, this energy (as in physics) is an abstraction, expressing dynamic relationships, based on a theoretical assumption that is confirmed by experience. In any case, Jung thus rejects purely causal mechanistic hypotheses (Freud) and positivist assumptions to “open the horizon” of empirical psychology to references to *Ganz Andere*, “wholly other”.

In his writing *Psychology and Religion* (1937), we read: “*Religion, as the Latin word [Note: religio] denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the numinosum, that is, a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, who is always rather its victim than its creator... The influence of an invisible presence causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness... We might say, then, that the term ‘religion’ designates the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been changed by experience of the numinosum.*” (Jung 1969, 7–8).

According to Jung, *numen* is an *archetype*, an imprint in the soul of man (like Otto’s *a priori*), which is commonly referred to as *imago Dei*, “the image of God”. In the human soul, however, the presence of the Absolute appears only as a flash, an intuition, never as knowledge of its essence. This *numinous insight* can be actualized to a real religious experience in

man’s psyche [6]. The human being is thus naturally religious, man is *homo religiosus*, although their religiosity is manifested in the diversity of confessions and in the different intensity of religious experiences. And this will only happen if despite their human limitations, they are able to realize the qualities hidden in their unconsciousness and to dispose of archetypal symbols of the Sacred for an encounter that is “*tremendum et fascinans*”. Only in this way can the individual soul discover a hidden personality that can reach its full development, the integral *Self* (Ger. *Selbst*), which is the ideal center of psychic totality.

## 5 The Question of Ontology of the Numinous

The question remains whether the *experience of the Numinous* is merely a symbol of collective ideas, important for mental health, as claimed by Carl Gustav Jung, or whether it is a result of a subject's dialogue with some essential ontological pendant of religious experience.

In agreement with Schleiermacher and Otto, Jung emphasizes the original *numinous experience*, as this "*seizes and controls the human subject*" and is an "*involuntary state of the subject*". He is less concerned with the quality of its "*careful and scrupulous observation*". However, such an experience is rather a kind of raw material that can take the form of magic, superstition, or even madness, and may not result in an authentic religious attitude. The primitive experience (Ger. *Urerfahrung*), which is essential in every religion, is emphasized here, but at the same time, it provides an unbalanced image of religion, as it appears from broader anthropological research. Besides the passive acceptance of superpersonal forces, the soul in the mystical experience and immediately after it also takes the necessary degree of active attitude (interprets the world, inculturates itself, socializes and acts in accordance with the accepted morality). Edmund Husserl's pupil Gerda Walther describes the first phase of *abandonment and desolation* (Ger. *Verlassenheit*) as propaedeutic for the culmination of a mystical experience. In it, one feels an urgent demand to abandon one's self-consciousness and to allow one's own Self to be carried to unification with the Sacred. Subsequently, however, a conscious and voluntary consent of man, through which the mystical experience culminates, comes (Walther 1956).

This anthropological "accessory equipment" of a pure numinous experience, however, does not say anything about its metaphysical essential basis, as it develops in the field of everyday empire. It only points out that the human psyche contains a strong desire for "true judgment", concerning reality, either attributed to faith or reason. The "truth" of spiritual experience really lies outside the competence of an empiri-

cal psychologist. However, it does not lie outside the competence of a speculative psychologist (philosopher or theologian), whose gnoseological demands, reflecting the demands of man as such, transcend the line between the empirical and the metaphysical. Even according to the empiricist Jung, the psyche itself is a postulate beyond the boundaries of science (it is a *Grenzbegriff*, Ger. "a boundary concept") and its contents are unexhausted and inexhaustible. Although archetypes are hypothetically primordial images of the collective unconscious, they perform the function of temporary models for the subject and no empirically verifiable hypothesis can explain their origin. Here, however, Jung must paradoxically break the aforementioned transempirical boundary when he presupposes their origin in essential energy ("*undifferentiated libido*") and sees the goal of psychic transformations in attaining one's own Self (Ger. *das Selbst*). For the sake of completeness, it must be said that Jung does not say anything about the transcendent external principle, but places also these boundary concepts in the boundary sphere between immanence and transcendence (in the space of the "house, just in front of the window" looking outside). Although Jung uses the term "*transcendent function*" of the symbol, uniting the various tensions of the psychic apparatus into a higher synthesis, this *unification* (from the Greek *syn-bollon*) is a living creative act, overcoming contradictions, in the process of subject individuation. The symbol fulfills a transcendent function, but in the sense of the subject's disposition to go beyond the empirical, not in the sense of the real presence of the Sacred in the realm of experience. The subject himself disposes, through the symbols, to meet the Sacred, but psychologist Jung refuses to say whether the Sacred reality exists *in se*, outside the experiencing subject.

The Oxford theologian and psychologist, Jung's friend, Victor White, points out that symbols are polyvalent, that is, they can have various meanings. However, this also means that the meaning of a true symbol will not be exhausted if we find its rational formulation that will define the symbol or

“explains” it. Here, the gnoseological demands of man expand and move from rationalist schematism (of the ancient, medieval, or contemporary scholastics) to the field of the “living world” of man (see the German phenomenological term *Lebenswelt*), in which the living symbol is much more revealing and clarifying than precise definitions and conceptual formulations. The symbol moves us, moves the center of our consciousness, changes our values. The numinous experience evokes not only an idea, but especially pleasure, fear, awe, etc. However, according to White, the religious symbol is not only an archetypal embodiment of formless energy in the inner sky of the immanent world of man (Jung), but is rather a “window”, a more or less *transparent image* through which a transcendent deity shines through to man. Religious or magical rituals are an expression of the effort to make it present and to restore these original images (White 1953, 244–246).

There is no doubt that mystical experience offers its phenomenal side to psychological research; on the other hand, this in-depth experience is ungraspable, as it relates to something “un-speakable”. Thus, the spiritual experience stands in the middle, between the world of facts and the metaphysical, that is, also the metapsychological world, and offers itself as their “bridge”. Phenomenologically speaking, the deity, by its “entry” into the history and the depths of man, enables man to find a reference of the ultimate meaning in it. A person who experiences the Numinous perceives it as an immediate address, as a “word” from the outside that transforms their personality to fuller development. The phenomenological approach does not define essences; however, it points out the total transcendence of the Sacred, and thus confirms its ontological status (see e.g., Dojčár 2013, 5–10). If an individual interprets a spiritual experience as an immanent projection of individual or collective consciousness, they will not consider their experience to be mystical. Transcendence of the Numinous is therefore a guarantee of its ontological value.

## 6 Conclusion

*“The one and only immediate guarantor of reality is the observer,”* claims the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (in White 1953, XXIV) – in accordance with phenomenological foundations. If *religio* is a “careful and scrupulous observation” of the Sacred, then the observer of the Numinous himself guarantees its transcendence, and thus, also its ontological value. Even though it is not possible to grasp the Numinous conceptually and define it (it is possible only tentatively and figuratively), this does not mean that it is ontologically empty – it “controls and fascinates” us (Rudolf Otto) with its unpredictability, immediacy, love, power. Jung insists that the dichotomy between empirical psychology and meta-empirical spirituality is impossible, and calls on us to become more responsible, mature in our religion, or in our godlessness. *“Western man fools himself when he thinks he has outgrown religion and has no need of God and he is learning in the bitter Nemesis to his pretensions to self-sufficiency. But he has outgrown an infantile religiosity which is no more than an escape-mechanism, an outer and theoretic compensation for inner godlessness in practice.”* (Jung in White 1953, 59).

## Notes

- [1] In this study, we do not deal with the distinction between *religious* and *mystical experience*, nor do we analyze the various notions of mysticism and spirituality, although we are aware of their variousness. We start from the core of every mystical and religious-mystical experience, which is the *experience of the Numinous*, in the intentions of Rudolf Otto.
- [2] Carl Gustav Jung consistently avoided the conception of psychology as “*objective science*”, as it has no basis outside the singular subject’s own sphere of consciousness. Therefore, according to him, deep psychology is fundamentally relativistic, and even his theory of symbols, archetypes, and collective unconsciousness serves as a function of hypotheses rather than ultimate claims about the objective world. It should also be noted that Jung did not provide any systematic interpretation of his theories, and any attempt to systematize his ideas by other authors encounters reductivism and partialism. On the contrary, he blames the tendentious “objectivism” of psychology for his teacher Freud, with whom he broke up for this very reason (in 1913).
- [3] The metaphor of the *window* as a transparent *topos*, which separates and at the same time connects the sphere of rational constructions with the sphere of essential being, i.e., it forms a passage of their meeting and “dialogue”, is indeed limited and imperfect. The question may arise whether the “window” rather connects these two spheres (then it should be open, possibly without “glasses”), or rather separates (then it should have colored glass, or it should be filled with imaginary stained glass). The question of whether spiritual experience is the result of a subjective immanent and contingent construction of consciousness (it arises “in front of a closed window”, i.e., inside) or is given by the entry of objective transcendent and necessary reality from the outside into the realm of personal experience (originates “behind an open window”, i.e., outside), this question is the subject of the epistemological controversy of constructivism vs. essentialism, which reflects the theme at the level of paradigms (outside the metaphors of the window) and develops still current arguments for both competing positions. We do not elaborate on this controversy at this point; we are inclined to the dialogical, i.e., “relational paradigm”. “*A relational paradigm is beyond the alternative of a naive realism and positivism on the one hand or a radical constructivism or deconstructivism on the other hand.*” (Krech 2019, 2).
- [4] The form “*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*” is better known, but Rudolf Otto uses the form “*fascinosum*” rather than “*fascinans*” in his German manuscript (Otto 1920), although in Latin the active participle “*fascinans*” better captures the intended attribute of the Sacred.
- [5] See Jung’s preface to the work of psychologist and theologian Victor White *God and the Unconscious*. On pages XX–XXI, he expresses his conviction that the psychologist is strictly limited by the empirical field of research and, although he deals with spiritual phenomena, he must approach them as the contents of the human mind. If we considered his psychological claims to be metaphysical *a priori*, we would make a mistake. “*The atom of which the physicist speaks is no metaphysical hypothesis, it is a model. Similarly, my concept of the archetype or of psychic energy is only an auxiliary idea, which can be exchanged at any time for a better formula. Seen from a philosophical standpoint, my empirical concepts would be logical monsters.*”
- [6] In his later writings (*Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 1954; *Mysterium coniunctionis*, 1956), C. G. Jung, however, explains the possibility of unifying opposites: empirical consciousness and supra-empirical contents, which are reflected in the human mind as symbols – archetypes of supra-individual being. At the same time, these are not Immanuel Kant’s *a priori* “pure” concepts, but “impure” (content-soaked) images that are a *testimony* of being, not being itself.

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