Christian legitimation of social order cannot be maintained very long either. To quote Camus once more as representative of this realization, man now "launches the essential undertaking of rebellion, which is that of replacing the reign of grace by the reign of justice" (46).

Obviously, it cannot be our purpose here to analyze further this revolutionary transformation of consciousness. We have used the different historical constellations of theodicy discussed above only to indicate, in the broadest outline, how man takes different existential and theoretical postures *vis-à-vis* the anomic aspects of his experience, and how different religious systems relate to this enterprise of nomization. Our purpose has been accomplished if we have indicated the centrality of the problem of theodicy for any religious effort at world-maintenance, and indeed also for any effort at the latter on the basis of a non-religious *Weltanschauung*. The worlds that man constructs are forever threatened by the forces of chaos, finally by the inevitable fact of death. Unless anomy, chaos and death can be integrated within the nomos of human life, this nomos will be incapable of prevailing through the exigencies of both collective history and individual biography (47). To repeat, every human order is a community in the face of death. Theodicy represents the attempt to make a pact with death. Whatever the fate of any historical religion, or that of religion as such, we can be certain that the necessity of this attempt will persist as long as men die and have to make sense of the fact.

4. Religion and Alienation

It will be convenient at this point to recall the fundamental dialectic that served as the starting point of these considerations—the three movements of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, the sum of which constitutes the phenomenon of society. Man, because of the peculiar character of his biological makeup, is compelled to externalize himself. Men, collectively, externalize themselves in common activity and thereby produce a human world. This world, including that part of it we call social structure, attains for them the status of objective reality. The same world, *as* an objective reality, is internalized in socialization, becoming a constituent part of the subjective consciousness of the socialized individual.

Society, in other words, is a product of collective human activity. As such, and only as such, it confronts the individual as an objective reality. This confrontation, however oppressive it may appear to the individual, requires his ongoing internalization of that with which he is confronted. More simply, it requires his co-operation, that is, his participation in the collective activity by which the reality of society is ongoingly constructed. This does not mean, of course, that he must co-operate in the specific actions that oppress him. But these actions will be real to him as elements of *social* reality only to the extent that he participates, however reluctantly, in the objective meanings that have been collectively assigned to them. It is his singular aspect that decisively distinguishes social reality from the reality of nature. For example, the individual can be killed by his fellowmen in a manner that, in terms of physical events, may be nearly the same as if these events resulted from natural occurrences without human

intervention—say, being crushed by a rock. Yet, however close the similarity of the physical events may be, an entirely different meaning attaches to these two possibilities of meeting death by being crushed under a rock. The difference is that between an execution and an accident, that is, between an event *within* the social world and an event in which "brute" nature impinges upon the social world. The individual may "co-operate" in the execution in a way in which he never can in the accident—namely, by apprehending it in terms of those objective meanings he shares, albeit unhappily, with his executioners. Thus the victim of an execution can die "correctly" in a way that would be more difficult for the victim of an accident. The example, of course, is extreme. Its point is simply that society, even when it manifests itself to the individual as extreme oppression, is meaningful in a way that nature is not. This proposition holds *a fortiori* in the innumerable cases where social reality is confronted in more agreeable experiences.

As we have seen earlier, the objectivity of the social world means that the individual apprehends it as a reality external to himself and not readily amenable to his wishes. It is *there*, to be reckoned with *as* reality, to come to terms with as "hard fact." The individual may daydream of living in a state of delightful polygamy, but he will be compelled to return to the "hard fact" of his prosaically monogamous situation. The "prose" of the matter is the common language and meaning system of his society, vastly more massive in its reality than the fugitive "poetry" of his solitary fantasies. In other words, institutions are real inasmuch as they share in the objectivity of the social world. The same holds for roles and, very importantly, for internalized roles. In his daydreams the individual may be a Turkish pasha. In the reality of his everyday life he must play the role of sensible middle-class husband. However, it is not only society, as an external structure, that proscribes the role of pasha. The individual's internal structure of consciousness, as it has been shaped by socialization, itself degrades the role of pasha to the status of

fantasy, *ipso facto* a status of *lesser* reality. The individual is *real to himself* as a sensible middle-class husband, *not* as a pasha. It is not our concern here to what extent the individual may nevertheless succeed in *realizing* himself as a pasha. The minimal requirement for such realization, certainly, would be the readiness of some others to play the role of odalisques—a technically difficult matter under conditions of monogamy. What concerns us here is simply the important fact that the social world retains its character of objective reality as it is internalized. It is *there* in consciousness too.

In sum, objectivation implies the production of a real social world, external to the individuals inhabiting it; internalization implies that this same social world will have the status of reality within the consciousness of these individuals. The latter process, however, has an additional feature of great importance—to wit, a *duplication of consciousness*, in terms of its socialized and non-socialized components (1). Consciousness precedes socialization. What is more, it can never be *totally* socialized—if nothing else, the ongoing consciousness of one's own bodily processes ensures this. Socialization, then, is always partial. A *part* of consciousness is shaped by socialization into the form that becomes the individual's socially recognizable identity. As in all products of internalization, there is a dialectical tension between identity as socially (-objectively) assigned and identity as subjectively appropriated—a point of cardinal importance for social psychology, but of little interest to us at the moment (2). What is more important for our purposes here is that the duplication of consciousness brought about by the internalization of the social world has the consequence of setting aside, congealing or estranging one part of consciousness as against the rest. Put differently, internalization entails self-objectivation. That is, a part of the self becomes objectivated, not just to others but to itself, as a set of representations of the social world—a "social self," which is and remains in a state of uneasy accommodation with the non-social self-consciousness upon which it has been imposed (3). For

example, the role of middle-class husband becomes an objective "presence" within the consciousness of the individual. As such, it *confronts* the rest of that consciousness as itself a "hard fact," corresponding with greater or lesser symmetry (depending upon the "success" of socialization in this particular case) to the "hard fact" of the external institution of middle-class marriage.

In other words, the duplication of consciousness results in an *internal* confrontation between socialized and non-socialized components of self, reiterating within consciousness itself the *external* confrontation between society and the individual. In both cases, the confrontation has a dialectical character, inasmuch as the two elements in each case do not stand in a mechanistic cause/effect relationship, but rather produce each other reciprocally and continually. Furthermore, the two components of self can now engage in an internal conversation with each other (4). This conversation, of course, reiterates within consciousness the conversation (more accurately, certain typifications of this conversation) that the individual carries on with external others in his social life. For example, the individual attempting to act out the role of pasha in middle-class society will soon find himself engaged in various (in this case, it may be assumed, disagreeable) conversations with others—his wife, members of his family, functionaries of the law, and so on. These external conversations, however, will be replicated within his own consciousness itself. Quite apart from the fact that, say, the law and its morality are likely to have been internalized in the form of "voices of conscience," there will be at the least an internal conversation between the socially assigned identity of middle-class husband and the subjectively aspired-to identity of pasha, both of these appearing as crystallized "presences" within consciousness. Which of the two will be more real to the individual is a question of his "adjustment" to social reality (or, if one wishes, of his "mental health")—a matter we can leave to policemen and psychotherapists at this point.

Another way of putting this is to say that man produces "other-

ness" both outside and inside himself as a result of his life in society. Man's own works, insofar as they are part of a social world, become part of a reality other than himself. They "escape" him. But man also "escapes" himself, insofar as part of himself becomes shaped by socialization. The otherness of the social world and the concrete human beings who are the others of social life are internalized in consciousness. In other words, others and otherness are introjected into consciousness. As a result, it becomes a possibility not only that the social world seems strange to the individual, but that he becomes strange to himself in certain aspects of his socialized self.

It is important to emphasize that *this* estrangement is given in the sociality of man, in other words, that it is anthropologically necessary. There are, however, two ways in which it may proceed—one, in which the strangeness of world and self can be reappropriated (*zurueckgeholt*) by the "recollection" that both world and self are products of one's own activity—the other, in which such reappropriation is no longer possible, and in which social world and socialized self confront the individual as inexorable facticities analogous to the facticities of nature. The latter process may be called alienation (5).

Put differently, alienation is the process whereby the dialectical relationship between the individual and his world is lost to consciousness. The individual "forgets" that this world was and continues to be co-produced by him. Alienated consciousness is undialectical consciousness. The essential difference between the socio-cultural world and the world of nature is obscured—namely, the difference that men have made the first, but not the second (6). Inasmuch as alienated consciousness is based on this fallacy, it is a false consciousness (7). Put differently again, alienation is an overextension of the process of objectivation, whereby the human ("living") objectivity of the social world is transformed in consciousness into the non-human ("dead") objectivity of nature. Typically, the representations of human, meaningful activity that constitute the reality of the social world are trans-

formed in consciousness into non-human, meaningless, inert "things." That is, they are reified (8). The social world then ceases to be an open arena in which the individual expands his being in meaningful activity, becomes instead a closed aggregate of reifications divorced from present or future activity. The actual relationship between man and his world is inverted in consciousness. The actor becomes *only* that which is acted upon. The producer is apprehended *only* as product. In this loss of the societal dialectic, activity itself comes to appear as something other—namely, as process, destiny or fate.

Three important points about alienation should be made here. First, it must be stressed that the alienated world, with all its aspects, is a phenomenon of *consciousness*, specifically of false consciousness (9). It is false precisely because man, even while existing in an alienated world, continues to be the co-producer of this world—through alienating activity, which is and remains *his* activity. Paradoxically, man then produces a world that denies him. In other words, man can never actually *become* a thinglike facticity—he can only *apprehend* himself as such, by falsifying his own experience. Second, it would be quite mistaken to think of alienation as a late development of consciousness, a sort of cognitive fall from grace following upon a paradisical state of non-alienated being (10). On the contrary, all the evidence indicates that consciousness develops, both phylo- and ontogenetically, from an alienated state to what is, at best, a possibility of de-alienation (11). Both primitive and infantile consciousness apprehends the socio-cultural world in essentially alienated terms—as facticity, necessity, fate. Only much later in history or in the biography of individuals living in specific historical circumstances does the possibility of grasping the socio-cultural world as a human enterprise make its appearance (12). In other words, the apprehension of the socio-cultural world as an *opus alienum* everywhere precedes its apprehension as man's *opus proprium*. Third, alienation is an entirely different phenom-

enon from anomy (13). On the contrary, the apprehension of the socio-cultural world in alienated terms serves to maintain its nomic structures with particular efficacy, precisely because it seemingly immunizes them against the innumerable contingencies of the human enterprise of world-building. The world as man's *opus proprium* is inherently precarious. The world as an *opus alienum* (of the gods, of nature, of the forces of history, or what not) is seemingly everlasting. This last point, of course, is particularly important in understanding the relationship of religion to both alienation and anomy. With it, we come to our immediate concern here.

As we have already seen, religion has been one of the most effective bulwarks against anomy throughout human history. It is now important to see that this very fact is directly related to the alienating propensity of religion. Religion has been so powerful an agency of nomization precisely because it has also been a powerful, probably the most powerful, agency of alienation. By the same token, and in the exact sense indicated above, religion has been a very important form of false consciousness (14).

One of the essential qualities of the sacred, as encountered in "religious experience," is otherness, its manifestation as something *totaliter aliter* as compared to ordinary, profane human life (15). It is precisely this otherness that lies at the heart of religious awe, of numinous dread, of the adoration of what totally transcends all dimensions of the merely human. It is this otherness, for example, that overwhelms Arjuna in the classic vision of Krishna's divine form in the Bhagavad Gita:

With many faces and eyes, presenting many wondrous sights, bedecked with many celestial ornaments, armed with many divine uplifted weapons; wearing celestial garlands and vestments, anointed with divine perfumes, all-wonderful, resplendent, boundless, and with faces on all sides.

If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst forth at once in the sky, that would be like the splendour of the Mighty One. (16)

And then, in more sinister images:

> Beholding Thy great form, O Mighty Lord, with myriads of mouths and eyes, with myriads of arms and thighs and feet, with myriads of bellies, and with myriads of terrible tusks—the worlds are affrighted, and so am I.

> When I look upon Thy blazing form reaching to the skies and shining in many colours, when I see Thee with Thy mouths opened wide and Thy great eyes glowing bright, my inmost soul trembles in fear, and I find neither courage nor peace, O Vishnu!
> (17)

Examples from other religious traditions could be multiplied almost at random, in our own from the awesome throne vision of Isaiah to William Blake's of the tiger, "burning bright in the forests of the night," pointing beyond its own "fearful symmetry" to the divine other behind the phenomena of nature. To be sure, in the more "sophisticated" developments of religion this terror of the alien mystery in the sacred is modified, mellowed, brought closer to man in a variety of mediations. Even there, however, one will not grasp the religious phenomenon if one does not retain an awareness of the otherness continuing as the hidden essence underneath the more "graceful" or "gentle" forms (to use the terms employed by Arjuna, as he implores Krishna to show himself again in the, at least relatively, homely shape of the four-armed Vishnu). The awe and fascination of the totally other remains, even there, a leitmotif of the encounter with the sacred (18).

If one grants the fundamental religious assumption that an other reality somehow impinges or borders upon the empirical world, then these features of the sacred will be dignified with the status of genuine "experience." Needless to say, this assumption cannot be made within a sociological or any other scientific frame of reference. In other words, the ultimate epistemological status of these reports of religious men will have to be rigorously bracketed. "Other worlds" are not empirically available for the purposes of scientific analysis. Or, more accurately, they are only

available as meaning-enclaves within *this* world, the world of human experience in nature and history (19). As such, they must be analyzed as are all other human meanings, that is, as elements of the socially constructed world. Put differently, whatever else the constellations of the sacred may be "ultimately," empirically they are products of human activity and human signification—that is, they are human projections (20). Human beings, in the course of their externalization, project their meanings into the universe around them. These projections are objectivated in the common worlds of human societies. The "objectivity" of religious meanings is *produced* objectivity, that is, religious meanings are objectivated projections. It follows that, insofar as these meanings imply an overwhelming sense of otherness, they may be described as *alienated projections*.

In our previous discussion of religious legitimation, we have already seen in what manner the latter provides a semblance of stability and continuity to the intrinsically tenuous formations of social order. We can now identify more accurately the quality that permits religion to do this—to wit, the quality of its alienating power. The fundamental "recipe" of religious legitimation is the transformation of human products into supra- or non-human facticities. The humanly made world is explained in terms that deny its human production. The human nomos becomes a divine cosmos, or at any rate a reality that derives its meanings from beyond the human sphere. Without going to the extreme of simply *equating* religion with alienation (which would entail an epistemological assumption inadmissible within a scientific frame of reference), we would contend that the historical part of religion in the world-building and world-maintaining enterprises of man is in large measure due to the alienating power inherent in religion (21). Religion posits the presence in reality of beings and forces that are alien to the human world. Be this as it may, the assertion, in all its forms, is not amenable to empirical inquiry. What is so amenable, though, is the very strong tendency of religion to alienate the human world in the process. In other

words, in positing the alien over against the human, religion tends to alienate the human from itself.

It is in *this* sense (and *not* in the sense of regarding the religious assertion as such as epistemologically invalid) that we feel entitled to associate religion with false consciousness, at any rate in terms of a high statistical frequency in its historical manifestations. Whatever may be the "ultimate" merits of religious explanations of the universe at large, their empirical tendency has been to falsify man's consciousness of that part of the universe shaped by his own activity, namely, the socio-cultural world. This falsification can also be described as mystification (22). The socio-cultural world, which is an edifice of human meanings, is overlaid with mysteries posited as non-human in their origins. All human productions are, at least potentially, comprehensible in human terms. The veil of mystification thrown over them by religion prevents such comprehension. The objectivated expressions of the human become dark symbols of the divine. And this alienation is powerful over men precisely because it shelters them from the terrors of anomy.

Religion mystifies institutions by explaining them as *given* over and beyond their empirical existence in the history of a society. For example, marriage (more accurately, kinship) is a fundamental institution because of certain biological preconditions of social life. Every society is faced with the problem of providing for its physical procreation. This has meant, empirically, that every society has worked out more or less restrictive "programs" for the sexual activity of its members. The historical variability of these "programs," of course, is immense, as even a perfunctory glance at the ethnological evidence will indicate. The problem of legitimation is to explain why the particular arrangement that has developed in a particular society, in whatever sequence of historical accidents, should be faithfully adhered to, even if it is at times annoying or downright painful. One efficient way of solving the problem is to mystify the institution in religious terms. The institution of moiety exogamy in certain Brazilian tribes, say, or

that of monogamy in our own society may then be legitimated in terms that effectively mask the empirical contingency of these arrangements. To have sexual relations with a member of one's own moiety in Brazil or with someone else's wife in America can then be sanctioned not only as a contravention of the established mores but as an offense against the divine beings posited as the ultimate guardians of the institutions in question. Now it is not only the condemnation and the violence of fellowmen that interpose themselves between lust and its desired end, but the avenging power of an angry divinity. There can be little question but that, given an appropriate plausibility structure, very effective controls are provided by such metaphysical legerdemain. There can also be little question but that this is done by means of an alienation of man from his proper world. In the extreme case, as we have seen earlier, marriage then ceases to be apprehended as a human activity at all and becomes a mimetic reiteration of the *hieros gamos* of the gods. The difference between that and a conception of marriage as a sacrament of the church is more one of degree than of quality.

To take another example, every society is faced with the problem of allocating power among its members and typically develops political institutions in consequence. The legitimation of these institutions has the special task of explaining and justifying the requisite employment of means of physical violence, which employment indeed gives their peculiar "majesty" to the institutions of political life. Again, the mystification of the empirical character of political arrangements in question transforms this "majesty" from a human to a more-than-human property. Realistic, empirically grounded apprehension concerning people with the power to chop off heads becomes transformed into numinous awe before the "dread sovereignty" of those who represent the divine will on earth. If circumstances should then develop that make head-chopping politically expedient, the activity in question can be made to seem as but the empirical result of supraempirical necessities. *Le Roi le veult* becomes, as it were, an echo

of "Thus says the Lord." Again, it is easy to see how the "programs" of political institutionalization are strengthened in this way—once more, by alienating them from their roots in human activity. In both this and the previous example, it must be strongly emphasized that, when we speak of "transformation," we do *not* imply a chronological progression from non-alienated to alienated apprehensions of these institutions. On the contrary, the progression, if it takes place at all, moves in the opposite direction. The institutions of sexuality and power *first* appear as thoroughly alienated entities, hovering over everyday social life as manifestations from an "other" reality. Only much later does the possibility of de-alienation appear. Very frequently this appearance goes together with a disintegration of the plausibility structures that previously maintained these institutions.

Mutatis mutandis, the process of mystification extends to the roles clustered in the institutions in question. In other words, the representation implied in every role is mysteriously endowed with the power to represent suprahuman realities. Thus the husband faithfully channeling his lust in the direction of his lawful spouse not only represents in this reiterated action all other faithful husbands, all other complementary roles (including those of faithful wives) and the institution of marriage as a whole, but he now also represents the prototypical action of connubial sexuality as willed by the gods and, finally, represents the gods themselves. Similarly, the king's executioner, who faithfully chops off the head of the lawfully condemned malefactor, not only represents the institutions of kingship, law, and morality as established in his society, but he represents the divine justice that is posited as underlying these. Once more, the terror of suprahuman mysteries overshadows the concrete, empirical terrors of these proceedings.

It is very important to recall in this connection that roles are not only external patterns of conduct, but are internalized within the consciousness of their performers and constitute an essential element of these individuals' subjective identities. The religious mystification of internalized roles further alienates these, in

terms of the duplication of consciousness discussed before, but it also facilitates a further process of falsification that may be described as bad faith (23).

One way of defining bad faith is to say that it replaces choice with fictitious necessities. In other words, the individual, who in fact has a choice between different courses of action, posits one of these courses as necessary. The particular case of bad faith that interests us here is the one where the individual, faced with the choice of acting or not acting within a certain role "program," denies this choice on the basis of his identification with the role in question. For example, the faithful husband may tell himself that he has "no choice" but to "program" his sexual activity in accordance with his marital role, suppressing any lustful alternatives as "impossibilities." Under conditions of successful socialization, they may then be "impossible" in fact—the husband may be impotent if he attempts them. Or again, the faithful executioner may tell himself that he has "no choice" but to follow the "program" of head-chopping, suppressing both the emotional and moral inhibitions (compassion and scruples, say) to this course of action, which he posits as inexorable necessity for himself *qua* executioner.

A different way of saying this is to say that bad faith is that form of false consciousness in which the dialectic between the socialized self and the self in its totality is lost to consciousness (24). As we have seen before, alienation and false consciousness always entail a severance, in consciousness, of the dialectical relationship between man and his products, that is, a denial of the fundamental socio-cultural dialectic. This dialectic, however, is internalized in socialization. Just as man confronts his world externally, he confronts its internalized presence within his own consciousness. *Both* confrontations are dialectical in character. False consciousness, in consequence, may refer to both the external and the internalized relationship of man to his world. Insofar as socialized identity is part of that world, it is possible for man to apprehend it in the same alienated mode, that is, in

false consciousness. Whereas in fact there is a dialectic between socialized identity and the total self, false consciousness fully identifies the latter with the former. The duplication of consciousness brought about by socialization, and the concomitant internalization of the socio-cultural dialectic, is thus denied. A false unity of consciousness is posited instead, with the individual identifying himself totally with the internalized roles and the socially assigned identity constituted by them. For example, any relevant expressions of self not channeled in the role of faithful husband are denied. Put differently, the internal conversation between husband and (potential) adulterer is interrupted. The individual sees himself as *nothing but* a husband in those areas of his life to which this role pertains. He has become a husband *tout court, the* husband of the institutional *dramatis personae.* Social type and subjective identity have merged in his consciousness. Inasmuch as such typification is alienating, identity has itself become alienated. And inasmuch as such merging is in fact, anthropologically, impossible, it constitutes a fabrication of false consciousness. The individual acting on this presupposition is acting in bad faith.

It is once more very important not to confuse this phenomenon of subjective alienation with anomy. On the contrary, such alienation can be a most effective barrier against anomy. Once the false unity of the self is established, and as long as it remains plausible, it is likely to be a source of inner strength. Ambivalences are removed. Contingencies become certainties. There is no more hesitation between alternative possibilities of conduct. The individual "knows who he is"—a psychologically most satisfactory condition. Bad faith in no way presupposes some sort of inner turmoil or "bad conscience." On the contrary, the individual who seeks to divest himself of the bad faith institutionalized in his situation in society is likely to suffer psychologically and in his "conscience," quite apart from the external difficulties he will probably encounter as a result of such "unprogrammed" ventures.

It will be clear from the above that bad faith, just as false consciousness in general, can occur without its being legitimated religiously. We would also emphasize very strongly that religion need not necessarily entail bad faith. But it will be seen without difficulty, if the previous argument is granted, that religion can be a powerful instrument for the effective maintenance of bad faith. Just as religion mystifies and thus fortifies the illusionary autonomy of the humanly produced world, so it mystifies and fortifies, its introjection in individual consciousness. The internalized roles carry with them the mysterious power ascribed to them by their religious legitimations. Socialized identity as a whole can then be apprehended by the individual as something sacred, grounded in the "nature of things" as created or willed by the gods. As such, it loses its character as a product of human activity. It becomes an inevitable *datum.* Its reality is directly grounded in the suprahuman *realissimum* posited by religion. The individual is now not only nothing but a husband, but in this "nothing but" lies his right relationship with the divine order. Indeed, his socialized identity may become the subjective "locale" of the sacred, or at least one such "locale." The awesomeness of the sacred, posited as a reality "behind" the phenomena of the external world, is introjected into consciousness, mystifying the formations of socialization that have been deposited there. Put crudely, the individual is now in a position to shudder at himself.

The essence of all alienation is the imposition of a fictitious inexorability upon the humanly constructed world. The most important practical consequence of this is that empirical history and biography are falsely apprehended as grounded in supraempirical necessities. The innumerable contingencies of human existence are transformed into inevitable manifestations of universal law. Activity becomes process. Choices become destiny. Men then live in the world they themselves have made as if they were fated to do so by powers that are quite independent of their own world-constructing enterprises. When alienation is religiously legitimated, the independence of these powers is vastly

augmented, both in the collective nomos and in individual consciousness. The projected meanings of human activity congeal into a gigantic and mysterious "other world," hovering over the world of men as an alien reality. By means of the "otherness" of the sacred the alienation of the humanly constructed world is ultimately ratified. Inasmuch as this inversion of the relationship between men and their world entails a denial of human choice, the encounter with the sacred is apprehended in terms of "total dependence" (25). This may or may not involve a masochistic attitude, though, as we have seen, the latter is an important motif of religious consciousness.

Now, it is important to recall here that the relationship between human activity and the world produced by it is and remains dialectical, *even when this fact is denied* (that is, when it is not present to consciousness). Thus men produce their gods even while they apprehend themselves as "totally dependent" upon these their products. But, by the same token, the "other world" of the gods takes on a certain autonomy *vis-à-vis* the human activity that ongoingly produces it. The supra-empirical reality posited by the religious projection is capable of acting back upon the empirical existence of men in society. Thus it would be gravely misleading to regard the religious formations as being simply mechanical effects of the activity that produced them, that is, as inert "reflections" of their societal base (26). On the contrary, the religious formations have the capacity to act upon and modify that base. This fact, however, has a curious consequence—namely, the possibility of *de-alienation itself being religiously legitimated*. Unless this possibility is grasped, a one-sided view of the relationship between religion and society is inevitable (27). In other words, while religion has an intrinsic (and theoretically very understandable) tendency to legitimate alienation, there is also the possibility that de-alienation may be religiously legitimated in specific historical cases. The fact that, relative to the over-all tendency, the latter cases are somewhat rare does not detract from their theoretical interest.

Religion views institutions *sub specie aeternitatis*. We have seen how this tends to bestow a quality of immortality on these precarious formations of human history. It may also happen, though, that the same formations are radically *relativized*, precisely because they are viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. This may take quite different forms in various religious traditions. For example, in some of the more sophisticated soteriologies of India the empirical world, including the social order and all its norms, appears as essentially an illusion, the realm of *maya*, nothing but an epiphenomenon *vis-à-vis* the ultimate reality of the *brahman-atman*. Inevitably, such a perspective relativizes the taken-for-granted institutional "programs" and, indeed, invalidates their traditional religious legitimations. The following passage from the Shvetashvatara Upanishad may serve as an illustration:

Sacred poetry [*chandas*]—the sacrifices, the ceremonies, the
   ordinances,
The past, the future, and what the Vedas declare—
This whole world the illusion-maker [*mayin*] projects out of
   this [*Brahman*].
And in it by illusion [*maya*] the other is confined.
Now, one should know that Nature [*Prakriti*] is illusion [*maya*],
And that the Mighty Lord [*mahesvara*] is the illusion-maker
   [*mayin*]. (28)

To be sure, quite different practical implications may be drawn from this religiously induced skepticism about the commonsense verities. In the Indian soteriologies two typical implications have been the options of withdrawing from this illusion-world in the ascetic quest for liberation (*moksha*) and of continuing to act within it *as if* the traditional "ceremonies and ordinances" still held, but doing so in an attitude of inner detachment from one's mundane activity—the classic distinction between the so-called "way of knowledge" *jnana-marga* and "way of action" *karma-marga*, the latter finding its most famous expression in the Bhagavad Gita (29). Whatever the practical implications, the relativization inherent in the category of *maya* makes the socio-

cultural world appear once more as a contingent, historical construction of men—a humanizing and thus at least potentially de-alienating effect (30).

Mystical religion, with its radical depreciation not only of the value but the reality-status of the empirical world, has a similar de-alienating potential. To the mystic this world and all its works, including those of "ordinary" religious practice, are relativized. In extreme cases this relativization may lead to a religiously legitimated anarchism, as in the antinomian movements of Christianity and Judaism. More commonly it leads to an "as if" compliance with the "ceremonies and ordinances" established in society, be it as a matter of convenience or out of consideration for the weaker spirit of the masses that has a need of these. The following passage from the *Theologia germanica* illustrates the latter attitude:

> Thus order, laws, precepts, and the like are merely an admonition to men who understand nothing better and know and perceive nothing else; therefore are all law and order ordained. And perfect men accept the law along with such ignorant men as understand and know nothing other or better, and practice it with them, to the intent that thereby they may be kept from evil ways, or if it be possible, brought to something higher. (31)

Again, different practical mandates may be drawn from such a perspective. It is not difficult to see that an antinomian mandate is likely to have potentially revolutionary consequences, while the outlook expressed in the above passage is rather likely to have a conservative effect. While these different possibilities are of great interest for a general sociology of religion, we cannot pursue them further here. The point here is, once more, that religious perspectives may *withdraw* the status of sanctity from institutions that were previously assigned this status by means of religious legitimation.

In the Biblical tradition the confrontation of the social order with the majesty of the transcendent God may also relativize this order to such an extent that one may validly speak of de-aliena-

tion—in the sense that, before the face of God, the institutions are revealed as nothing but *human* works, devoid of inherent sanctity or immortality. It was precisely this relativization of the social order and the concomitant disruption of the divine-human continuum that sharply set off Israel from the surrounding cultures of the ancient Near East (32). An excellent example of this is the Israelite institution of kingship, which, compared with the institutions of sacred kingship in the surrounding cultures, constituted a kind of profanation (33). The episode of the condemnation of David by Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1–7) nicely shows the humanizing (and, *ipso facto*, de-alienating) consequence of this profanation—David is denied his royal prerogative of bad faith and addressed as just another man, responsible *as a man* for his actions (34). Such a "debunking" motif may be traced all through the Biblical tradition, directly related to its radical transcendentalization of God, finding its classic expression in Israelite prophecy but continuing in a variety of expressions in the history of the three great religions of the Biblical orbit. This same motif accounts for the recurrent revolutionary use of the Biblical tradition, against its (of course also recurrently attempted) employment for conservative legitimation. Just as there have been recurrent instances of kings mystifying their actions with the use of Biblical symbols, there have also been, over again, the Nathans who have unmasked them as very human mystifiers in the name of the same tradition from which the legitimating symbols derived (35).

Just as institutions may be relativized and thus humanized when viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*, so may the roles representing these institutions. False consciousness and bad faith, widely legitimated by means of religion, may thus also be revealed as such by means of religion. Finally, and paradoxically, the entire web of religious mystifications thrown over the social order may, in certain cases, be drastically removed from the latter—*by religious means*—leaving it to be apprehended again as nothing but a human artifice. Both the radical depreciation of the empiri-

cal world in various traditions of mysticism and the radical transcendentalization of God in Biblical religion have been capable of leading to this result. As we shall try to indicate presently, the latter development has actually been historically instrumental in bringing about that global secularization of consciousness in which all the de-alienating perspectives of modern Western thought (including, incidentally, that of the sociological perspective) have their roots.

One may say, therefore, that religion appears in history both as a world-maintaining and as a world-shaking force. In both these appearances it has been both alienating and de-alienating—more commonly the first, because of intrinsic qualities of the religious enterprise as such, but in important instances the second. In all its manifestations, religion constitutes an immense projection of human meanings into the empty vastness of the universe—a projection, to be sure, which comes back as an alien reality to haunt its producers. Needless to say, it is impossible within the frame of reference of scientific theorizing to make any affirmations, positive *or* negative, about the ultimate ontological status of this alleged reality. Within this frame of reference, the religious projections can be dealt with only as such, as products of human activity and human consciousness, and rigorous brackets have to be placed around the question as to whether these projections may not *also* be something else than that (or, more accurately, *refer to* something else than the human world in which they empirically originate). In other words, every inquiry into religious matters that limits itself to the empirically available must necessarily be based on a "*methodological* atheism" (36). But even within this inevitable methodological restraint one further point should be made once more: The religious enterprise of human history profoundly reveals the pressing urgency and intensity of man's quest for meaning. The gigantic projections of religious consciousness, whatever else they may be, constitute the historically most important effort of man to make reality humanly meaningful, at any price. Our discussion of religious masochism has in-

dicated one price that has been paid for this. The great paradox of religious alienation is that the very process of dehumanizing the socio-cultural world has its roots in the fundamental wish that reality as a whole might have a meaningful place for man. One may thus say that alienation, too, has been a price paid by the religious consciousness in its quest for a humanly meaningful universe.