



The Ultimate Religious Reality

A Reflection on the Opinions of Robert Ranulph Marret According to ‘the Threshold of Religion’

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Abstract

Marret in *The threshold of Religion* try to represent the “ultimate religious reality”. According to him, despite being intuitive and emotional, this reality is veiled in religious thoughts and rituals. He considers the ultimate reality of religion to be "the feeling of awe" that actualized by immediate encounter with the awesome natural phenomena; a pure feeling and a fundamental reality that religious knowledge and behaviors are merely its external manifestations. The findings of the present research, which is carried out in an analytical way, show that criticizing the views of those like Taylor and Frazer, who consider the origin of religion to be theoretical knowledge and its starting point to be rational beliefs, Marret proposes an innovative evolutionary pattern in the field of the precognitive and emotional origins of religion: a). Encountering the mysterious and surprising phenomena of nature; b). A feeling of sudden surprise and a feeling of awe; c). The emergence of supernaturalism or the desire to the realm beyond of the visible; d). Personalizing the mysterious in order to disambiguate it (Animatism); e). The assumption of the harmlessness of the mysterious thing; f). The sanctification of the mysterious phenomenon and taking the path of religious appeasement and magical empathy with it.

Keywords: Awe, Mana, religious experience, the Mysterious, *the threshold of religion*.

Introduction

Robert Ranulph Marret (1866-1943) in his famous book, *The Threshold of Religion*, explores the ultimate religious reality and identifies the most primitive stages of human religion in an innovative emotionalist design. His effort in this book is basically “an accurate study of a context that, despite having an intuitive and emotional character, is covered by concepts and ideas in a chronic historical process” (Marret, 1914: 4). According to Marret, it is by the means of exploring the emotional background of thoughts and other external manifestations of religion that appears what are called “ultimate religious reality”.

Research Findings

Ranulph Marret considers the ultimate religious reality as a kind of “coincidental marvel” which is inherently ineffable. However, it can be called “awe” in reality and



“supernaturalism” in mentality. This inner feeling, which is religious by nature and a conscientious and emotional experience, is the basis for the ancient human religion and the driving force of modern human religiosity. This is why Marret refers to it as “common and fundamental human religious sense” (Marret, 1914: 1), which over times has become the driving force of religious thoughts and give birth to the theology, ethics and religious philosophy.

For Marret, religious knowledge is different from the emotional aspect of religion, but based on it. Although immediate religious experience gives identity to religious knowledge, it is always hidden in its envelope; as throughout history, the sense of awe and supernaturalism has been neglected in the envelope of various ideas, from animatism and animism to totemism and polytheism.

It seems that for Marret, there is a kind of evolutionary process from “immediate religious experience” to the rationalization of religion as follow: a). Encountering the mysterious and surprising phenomena of nature; b). A feeling of sudden surprise and a feeling of awe; c). The emergence of supernaturalism or the desire to the realm beyond of the visible; d). Personalizing the mysterious in order to disambiguate it (Animatism); e). The assumption of the harmlessness of the mysterious thing; f). The sanctification of the mysterious phenomenon and taking the path of religious appeasement and magical empathy with it.

Conclusion

1. Marret considers the ultimate reality of religion to be the feeling of awe, which is the result of the immediate encounter with the awesome powers of nature.
2. Religious knowledge is dependent on religious experience and religion begins with a spontaneous inner feeling.
3. Although religious thought and knowledge are often the rational expression of conscientious and inner feelings, but positive or negative religious discourses are often established in the field of religious knowledge, and this is why religious knowledge always has pretense.
4. Ranulf Marett, Moreover, considers the fundamental origin of various religious/magical behaviors to be the immediate experience of awe and, as a result, the spontaneous emotional tensions of human beings, but not originally religious knowledge; He emphasizes that the emergence of magical behaviors, like religious behaviors, indicates the suspension of conventional rationality and is the result of spontaneous emotions and manifestations of the ultimate religious reality.
5. However, Marett's opinions in *The Threshold of Religion* are based only on psychological arguments, and he tries to represent a pure religious experience based on scattered evidences.



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