

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

UNDERSTANDING MYSTICISM:
AN ANALYSIS
OF METHODS AND THEORIES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

BY

MARY LALLIER TSAKIRIS

APRIL 1977

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the approaches and methods used to understand mysticism. Both negative and positive treatments are considered and the positive views are separated into three main groups; mysticism seen as (1) a non-cognitive, emotional, subjective experience, (2) a non-cognitive, emotional, objective experience, and (3) a cognitive, emotional, objective experience.

The conclusion is that if the aim of the analysis is to evolve a mystical theology or philosophy, a metaphysical description of the mystical object and relationship, none of the traditionally conceived theoretical options of theism, pantheism, atheism, provides an adequate interpretation for the whole body of mystical phenomena.

The testimony of many mystics and the thoughtful analyses of certain writers point to and find their most meaningful interpretation in the conceptual framework offered by Process philosophy. The Process "panentheistic" view is proposed as representing so far the closest theory describing in abstract philosophical concepts the same understanding known concretely, experientially by the mystic during mystical experience.

SOMMAIRE

L'objet de ce travail est d'étudier les voies et moyens d'une analyse du mysticisme.

Le travail examine les différentes études traitant le mysticisme comme un phénomène soit positif, soit négatif et sépare les points de vue positifs en trois groupes principaux; le mysticisme comme: (1) une expérience émotionnable, mais non-cognitive et subjective, (2) une expérience émotionnable, non-cognitive, mais objective, (3) une expérience émotionnable, cognitive et objective.

Si on veut élaborer une théologie ou philosophie du mysticisme, soit un portrait métaphysique, on conclue qu'aucun des concepts traditionnels de théisme, panthéisme, et d'athéisme donne une interprétation satisfaisante pour le mysticisme dans sa totalité.

Le témoignage de plusieurs mystiques et certains analystes du mysticisme indique que l'interprétation la plus significative du mysticisme pourrait se trouver dans les concepts offerts par "Process philosophy". Cette philosophie et son "panenthéisme" représentent jusqu'ici la théorie la plus exacte et la plus instructive, décrivant en termes abstraits la même compréhension probablement vécue par le mystique pendant l'expérience mystique.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express her gratitude to the members of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University and especially to Prof., Dr. Robert W. Stevenson, Prof., Dr. Charles J. Adams, and Prof., Dr. Joseph C. McLelland under whose personal supervision this thesis was written for their courtesy, guidance and helpful criticism.



CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	11
Chapter	
I. MYSTICISM AS A NON-COGNITIVE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE...	1
Negative Treatments:	
Mysticism as abnormal psychological condition...	1
Mysticism as dangerous rival to orthodox sources of religious knowledge.....	2
Positive Treatments:	
Mysticism as non-cognitive, emotional subjective experience.....	3
Mysticism as non-cognitive, emotional experience of an objective Reality.....	11
Conclusion: characterization of mysticism on the basis of emotive behaviour of mystics....	14
II. MYSTICISM AS A COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL OBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE.....	16
"Mysticism" or "Mysticisms" Controversy.....	19
Examination of the studies of:	
Rudolf Otto.....	22
Richard C. Zaehner.....	41
Evelyn Underhill.....	52
Walter T. Stace.....	65
Conclusion: characterization of mysticism according to the cognitive "content", the information obtained from the experience. The common aim of establishing a metaphysical or theological formulation of mysticism.....	81
III. PROCESS PHILOSOPHY AND ITS USEFULNESS TO MYSTICAL THEOLOGY.....	83
IV. REVIEW OF APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MYSTICISM AND ASSESSEMENT OF THE THEORIES ATTEMPTING TO DESCRIBE THE MEANING OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE.....	107
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	117

PREFACE

Much has been written about the nature of mysticism; it is a phenomenon which has long intrigued the student of religious experience. What contribution can this present study make to that ample literature?

I am prompted to undertake this topic because I find that there exists little consensus in the literature in answer to the question: "What is mysticism?".

The student who reviews the previous analyses of mystical experience, faces what can be a confusing array of competing methodologies and claims for the understanding of the mystic and mysticism. The present work arises from a need to provide an ordering, a scheme of classification of the main approaches and attitudes for the study of mysticism.

The first aim of this thesis is to distinguish and then examine critically the main attempts to explore and describe mysticism. The desire is to be conscious of and understand the motives and presuppositions behind the proposals of certain analysts of mysticism: to be capable of appraising fairly the various claims they make for the mystic.

The primary role that I will be attempting to play in this study is that of a critic of what has been written about mysticism.

The positive value of the critique as a chosen method of procedure lies in the fact that it develops orderly thinking about a subject. It exposes the different meanings with which people may speak of the same thing. It can exhibit the weaknesses in theories, the ramifications of assumptions. Critical examination and discussion of the work of others is a necessary first step; it can then serve to furnish the point of departure from which the development of a clear and comprehensive view can take place.

The second aim of this work is to offer a basis for an understanding of mysticism and mystical vision which is comprehensive, meaningful, faithful to the mystics' own statements and capable of reconciling the antagonism and conflict between rival mystical theories.

I have found that most often in the studies of the nature of mysticism, the initial phenomenological quest, the question: "What is mysticism?" changes to: "What is the meaning of mystical experience?". That is, what initially was an effort purely to describe mysticism in terms of its intrinsic characters--the raw data of the phenomenon--becomes a description of mysticism in terms of the mystic's or analyst's idea as to what the experience means.

Due to the very nature of the mystic concern, mystical expression most often entails questions of metaphysics or theology; analysts of mysticism, and sometimes the mystics themselves, in their attempt to give expression to the nature of the experience often consciously or unconsciously slip into supplying a metaphysical or theological matrix to mystical experience. It must be made clear that once this happens, they have left a phenomenological path and purpose and have embarked upon the task of evolving a philosophy or theology of mysticism.

When the word "mysticism" is used, then, it should be clear that the term refers not merely to the actual experience of the mystic but to the combination of that experience plus the interpretation given it.

It is the interpretation (what the conceptual intellect adds to the experience in order to understand it) and the elaboration of theories which are primarily the subject of our scrutiny here.

This thesis will look at both negative and positive views of mysticism. It suggests that the positive treatments (those which regard mysticism as a valid and worthy religious experience) can be separated into two main groups on the basis of whether they allow to mystical experience a concrete and important cognitive element or not.

Our attention will focus on those treatments

affirming the cognitive nature of the experience, i.e., the belief that mystical experience can and does provide man with reliable information about the nature of Reality or Divine. It is maintained that during mystical experience man gains an acquaintance with and an understanding of the true nature of Reality.

The problem mystics and analysts face is how to portray this vision or understanding in meaningful language.

Interpreters of mystical experience easily fall prey to two erroneous tendencies in their descriptions of mysticism: the one is a narrow describing of mystical experience so that the term "mysticism" becomes, in its worst form, dependent upon and restricted to a particular religion's set of doctrines which are then made normative for the phenomenon as a whole. This leads to talk of genuine, right-seeing mystics and of aberrant or mistaken mystic types. Mysticism, then, is often used to serve the apologetic needs of the particular religion.

The second danger is the broad and vague description of mysticism. It is the result of the desire of the analyst to make the definition fit all possible cases. He settles upon a broad and vague description because he sees mystical phenomena to be either too variable and unpredictable or contradictory in nature or to be inexpressible. I find this description useless to the student of mysticism because, in the end, it

fails to distinguish between mystical experience and similar aesthetic feelings, experiences, inspirations of great artists, poets, musicians and philosophers.

In the study and understanding of mystical writings and mystical experience, interpreters of mysticism have been limited until recently to only the theoretical options of classical theism, pantheism and atheism. The conclusion given here is that none of these options is capable of providing a valid and adequate explanation applicable to the whole body of mystical phenomena.

This thesis deals especially with the inadequacy of the concept of God drawn from traditional theism in the West and its consequence for the interpretation of mystical experience.

Traditional theism is that view of the Divine largely determined by a Greek and medieval understanding of Reality; God was portrayed as the "Wholly Other Transcendental Father"¹; the Omnipotent Creator, the "Unmoved Mover", the Eternal, Unchanging, Impassive, Independent Absolute.²

This "classical" formulation of theism significantly influenced the analysts of mystical experience.

¹John B. Cobb, Jr., God and the World (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), pp.29&30.

²Walter E. Stokes, "A Whiteheadian Reflection on God's Relation to the World", in Process Theology, ed. Ewert Cousins, (New York: The Newman Press, 1971), pp.140-141.

It restrained their theoretical thinking and confused and troubled some writers who sensed in mystical experience elements contradicting those maintained by traditional theism. However, while "classical theism" was the dominate theological idea, there existed at the same time a continual history of religious intuition claiming qualities for the Divine which seemed in contradiction to those attributes maintained by "classical theism".

If it is felt necessary and desirable for the writer on mysticism to make an interpretation of the data of mystical experience and to provide an explanation of its meaning, then this thesis proposes that both the testimony of many mystics and the thoughtful analyses of certain writers point to and find their most meaningful interpretation in the conceptual framework offered by process philosophy. Process theologians have been responsible for exposing the contradiction between this traditional "classical" formulation and the message brought from religious experience.

The success of their theoretical scheme can be tested by the following criteria: (1) does the theory offer definite, intelligent, unambiguous propositions which can be defended in a logical manner? (2) does it account for and accommodate all possible types of the experience? Is it a faithful transmitter of mystic testimony. (3) does it give insight to--render more intelligent--the various existing interpretations already given to the experience?

My preference for the panentheistic explanation of Reality offered by process philosophers over other theories is based on the fact that: (1) it positively portrays Reality in a rational and logically defensible manner without claiming to fully contain the Divine Reality within its description. (2) it is a flexible yet definite theoretical scheme which can accommodate within itself the very varied and oftentimes contradictory descriptions of the mystics. It is fundamentally a reconciling, synthetic proposal which eliminates the antagonism between the traditional views of theism and pantheism. Even the vision of Reality perceived by the "so-called" atheistic mystics is not alien and in opposition to the nature of Reality proposed by process thought. True mysticism here is not limited or restricted to any particular religion or culture. (3) its understanding of Reality requires and at the same time makes clear the meaning behind the essential paradoxicality of mystical expression: i.e., the claim that the Real is both: far and near, One and Many, Eternal and Temporal, Permanent and Constantly Changing. Process thought's concept of creativity, its prominence as an ultimate, universal category with the insistence that man shares in creative activity: freely creating himself and creating God's consequent nature, vindicates and gives meaning to the mystic's intuition of and claim for an intimate sharing of Divinity, an essential identity with the Real.

Thus such mystic claims are rescued from disrepute and the condemnation often given them by Western orthodoxy.

It is my belief that by using ideas of process philosophy, we move a great step closer towards our goal of a comprehensive understanding of mysticism.

I should say that the need for a re-assessment of mystical experience in the light of process philosophy came to me during my study of the Upanishads and the two great mystics Meister Eckhart and Ibn al-Arabi. Their descriptions of Reality brought to mind immediately the proposals of process philosophers.

The original intention of my thesis project was to provide proof for this belief through a careful study of a major mystical text.

I chose the Upanishads (specifically the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad) as my text because I found them particularly well-suited for an inquiry into the nature of mysticism. They are eloquent testimonies of mystics with well-sharpened intellects concerned for the precision and accuracy of their expression. Equally important, I felt, was the fact that the descriptions of their mystical experience and understanding were not restricted or influenced by a rigid and domineering religious tradition. Thus, their expressions did not have to fit a previously defined doctrine, view or teaching. Nor was there fear of reprisal or ostracism from the religious or philosophical tradition to which they belonged. With

the Upanishads, I thought, there was an exceptional opportunity to examine mystical language in an unaffected, unviolated state.

There was wide disagreement among the classical interpreters of the Upanishads. Their positions spanned the whole range from the one extreme of Absolute Idealism to the opposite pole of strict dualism. All were alike in claiming that only one particular view predominated in the Upanishads and each spent great effort explaining away the differing and paradoxical statements of the Upanishads.

It was my conclusion that the Upanishadic mystics' message was neither that of Pantheistic Monism nor of Theistic Dualism as held by the traditional interpreters. Either one I considered limiting in its reading of these mystics.

It was not my intention to make a unified systematic philosophy out of the Upanishads but I did feel that there existed an alternative interpretation: one which would seek to form an understanding not by eliminating and explaining away the differing and paradoxical statements of the Upanishads, but could join them together to provide a meaningful view of Reality.

A defense of such a reading of the Upanishads would be achieved with the aid of process philosophy and some insights from certain writers on mysticism (particularly the ideas of R. Otto and W. T. Stace).

As my work progressed, I realized that my proposed study would result in a thesis of unacceptable length. Hence, what I am offering here is the first half of the intended study--ending at the point where the presentation and analysis of the Upanishad would have begun.

This means that the present proposal for a "panentheistic" understanding of mysticism lacks the necessary corroboration which I believe can be obtained from the mystics themselves.

However, I hope that the analysis and discussion presented here will persuade students to consider the mystics and their expressions with the aid of process philosophy. I believe that they will then gain a more penetrating and harmonious understanding of the mystical experience.

CHAPTER I MYSTICISM AS NON-COGNITIVE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

We begin this review by referring briefly to what might be called the negative approaches or treatments of mysticism. The first of these regards mystical experience as the mental construction of aberrant individuals. Mystical experience is dismissed as an abnormal psychological condition of man.

In these studies,¹ mysticism is identified as the hallucinatory behaviour of over-sensitive, unstable, highly emotional and excitable individuals. It is variously seen as "erotomania", spiritual "megalomania", the abnormal egoism of introverted, anti-social people, as escapism (a means of escape or a retreat for weak souls unable to bear the troubles and stresses of everyday life), or as an extreme form of asceticism born of a nihilistic desire to destroy the self of man.

¹Among others, this viewpoint has been held and expressed variously by the following analysts: Coe, The Spiritual Life (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900; Cincinnati: Curts & Jennings, 1900). Duprat, "Religiosité et mysticisme" Revue Philosophique vol. lxxviii, (Sept. 1909). Janet, "L'état mentale des hystériques"; "Une extatique" Bulletin de l'Institut Psychologique (1901). Leuba, The Psychology of Religious Mysticism (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1925). Selbie, Psychology of Religion (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926).

Other people saw mysticism as an offence to the rational aim and effort of man for an understanding of reality. For them, being a mystic meant being illogical. Mysticism was seen therefore as a useless and inferior experience. It was a call for irrationalism and could only represent a confused, vague, unconscious or empty state.

Another negative treatment represents a dismissal of mysticism and a denial of the validity of mystical experience in order to maintain what are seen as vital credal and theological positions. This view is present primarily in certain Muslim and Christian circles. Mysticism represents a dangerous threat to their traditional conception of God as the Absolute Unrelated Being who is the omnipotent, omniscient Ruler and Creator--self-contained, independent of and unrelated to anything but Himself. Such a theism stresses the "otherness" of God; there is a significant and permanent gulf which separates God as God and man as God's creature. Man on his own, cannot bridge this gulf and have direct contact and knowledge of the divine. Knowledge and information of God is available only through historical revelation and the institutions established to preserve their message (i.e., the historical figure of Jesus Christ or Muhammad, the Church, the Scriptures, or moral law).

Hostility and opposition are shown to the mystic because of his independence and because of his claim for immediacy--for a direct contact with and knowledge of the divine and because of his implied "pantheistic" immanence of God in the world.

Such writers are appalled by what they regard as the mystics' neglect of and dispensing with any form of mediation (e.g., the Atonement of Christ). It is believed that by the presumptuous rejection of these necessary elements, the mystic assumes an anti-Christian, or an anti-Muslim stance. He has strayed and mysticism should be condemned and denounced as the:

..."belief in access to God with ultimate absorption in him, apart from any mediation as that which the Christian Revelation bears witness"....It fails to recognize the depth of the abyss which human sin has set between God and us...mysticism lacks that depth of repentance which faith evokes and which God requires....The mystic thinks himself capable of doing alone what Christianity affirms no sinful creature is capable of doing alone....the solitary flight from man is an impossible abstraction, and the solitary flight to God is sheer presumption. The mysticism which is often praised today in more or less pantheistic circles...is one of the most subtle enemies of Christianity.¹

If we turn now to the positive treatments of mysticism and survey the numerous attempts of investigators to examine the nature of mysticism, it seems

¹Daniel Lamont in Christ and the World of Thought, quoted by T. Hywel Hughes in Philosophic Basis of Mysticism (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937) pp.416-417

that we can distinguish two main positions or approaches: the first views mysticism as a purely emotional experience--it is non-cognitive. The second (dealt with in the next chapter) regards mysticism as a cognitive and emotional experience of an Objective Reality.

The first approach includes a number of examples; all commonly agree to focus upon the emotions of the mystic and to define and describe mysticism by means of the psychological structure of the mystic and the effect of the mystical experience upon his life and personality. The universal identifying characteristic of mysticism is simply that mystical experience always effects a radical transformation in the life of man. A mystic is therefore to be recognized by his exemplary and particular behaviour (e.g., his moral stamina and discipline, his feelings of wonder, enlargement, bliss, freedom). The central identifying mark of mysticism is therefore the transformation of the mystic's outlook and activity and the feelings produced.

Basically there are two sub-classes of this first position or approach which regards mysticism as a non-cognitive experience and a wholly subjective emotional state with no real objective reference.

The first is made up of psychologists and scholars influenced by Freudian thought. For them, the religious object is illusory, and in this sense mystical experience

is similar to hallucinatory behaviour. It is a subjective creation of the individual, a projection of his mind. The "God" known by the mystic then has no real outside objective existence. The source or cause of religious ideas or objects can be traced to and completely explained by the natural physical needs of man.

In this literature, the Mystic Way, the mystical experience is tied to and explained according to one particular conception of religion. Mysticism is understood as but one method (to be distinguished from other methods, i.e., magic, sacrifice, rite, etc.) created by man for the purpose of satisfying his needs.

One psychologist representative of this opinion who can be singled out because of his interest and study of mysticism is James H. Leuba.¹

Leuba defines as mystical, "any experience taken by the experienter to be contact (not through the senses, but 'immediate', 'intuitive') or union of the self with a larger-than-self, be it called the World Spirit, God, the Absolute, or otherwise."²

¹James H. Leuba, A Psychological Study of Religion (New York: Macmillan Co., 1912).

Idem., The Psychology of Religious Mysticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925).

²James H. Leuba, The Psychology of Religious Mysticism, p.1 (my italics).

He further writes:

They the mystics claim the objective reality of the religious objects, and the universal validity of the dogmas which chance to be regarded by them as a necessary condition of their experience.... their failure to say in what consists the objective validity of the mystical experience confirms the opinion that the only invulnerable thing in 'union with the infinite', whether it be induced by 'divine love', by wine, or by contemplation of sublime nature, is the affective consciousness--a consciousness that does not reach beyond itself.¹

The immediacy of religious knowledge is illusory. The expression 'immediate experience' can be applied only to mere sensation (sensory impressions not referred to an object) and to mere feeling.²

Here, then, is the first occurrence of a definition which is tied to (and limited by) a particular view of religion and proposes to identify mystical experience, not in terms of its intrinsic characteristics, but in terms of the analyst's personal opinion as to what the experience signifies.

The second sub-class can be represented by the famous psychologist and pragmatist, William James. His views on mysticism presented here are drawn from his Varieties of Religious Experience.³

As in the above example, James regards mysticism as a wholly emotional experience: it is purely a state of feeling and not a state where the intellect or

¹James H. Leuba, A Psychological Study of Religion, pp.238-240

²Ibid., p. 276

³William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (London: Gifford Lectures, 1902; New York: Collier Books, 1961).

conceptualizing faculty is operative. The feelings of the mystic are the important and instructive elements for the study of mysticism; and if we are to understand the essence of mysticism, we must look to the feelings produced in the mystic: the feelings of "enlargement, union, and emancipation." Although the mystical state does indeed seem to the mystic to be a state of knowledge, James concludes that it is more akin to a state of feeling than a state of intellect. The "noetic quality" or element is inarticulate, and it must be concluded that the mystical experience has no specific intellectual content. Its feelings are vivid and reliable, producing the mystic's sense of authority and certitude, but its ideas are vague, contradictory and unreliable. Mystical intuition is indeterminate and of little real importance to the student of mysticism. The so-called "content" of the experience is a mystery, an enigma, ineffable.

Is the mystical experience for James, then, an experience of something objective, or a subjective experience of man?

In contrast to other psychologist-students of mysticism who are quite clear about what they claim to be the subjective character of mystical experience, William James offers a more complex answer to this question.

First of all, it must be stressed that as a

Pragmatist and as one of the chief spokesmen of that movement, the question posed is one which James regards as irrelevant and of little importance--either for the mystic or the student of mysticism. He is interested in the fact of the experience, not in the why or how it happens.

The mystical experience is the direct contact with something perceived as objective, which has a transforming power and effect upon man. As long as the experience is found by the mystic to be effective and useful, James is satisfied, the experience has validity, and there is no need to inquire further into the truth of its subjectivity or objectivity.

The only significant fact concerning mystical experience is that something is achieved which affects the mystic so profoundly that it modifies "the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence."¹

The fact that this activity and effect exist is justification for calling the experience real and valid. But by this discussion, James is simply answering those critics of mysticism who in holding it to be a subjective experience, conclude it to be invalid. He has still not really answered our question. It is when he becomes a theorist that he faces directly this question. Here, I find he answers that mystical

¹Ibid., p.301

experience is a subjective reality which has an objective appearance with objective effects. Let us examine the hypothesis which he proposes in order to understand the mystic.

James sees the total nature of man as capable of two levels of consciousness: man is made up of a "lower" and "higher" self but is normally unaware of the richness of his capabilities.

The "higher" self of man is the "sub-conscious" realm and it:

...is obviously the larger part of each of us, for it is the abode of everything that is latent and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved....Our intuitions, hypotheses, fancies, superstitions, persuasions, convictions, and in general all our non-rational operations come from it. It is the source of our dreams, and apparently they may return to it. In it arise whatever mystical experiences we may have, and our automations, sensory or motor; our life in hypnotic and 'hypnoid'-conditions; our delusions, fixed ideas, and hysterical accidents, if we are hysterical subjects; our supra-normal cognitions if such there be, and if we are telepathic subjects. It is also the fountainhead of much that feeds religion.¹

According to James, the individual mystic is able to form a connection between his "lower" and "higher" self; he realizes that he belongs to and is in harmony with a far greater, more extensive entity, for his subconscious self is representative of a dimension of existence other than the normal " 'sensible' and merely 'understandable' world".

¹Ibid., p376

Mystical experience then is postulated as the "striking and sudden unification of discordant self" and originates in the subconscious, normally unmanifested realm of the soul. Mystical experience is: "the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come."¹

The mystical experience is valid because:

...work is actually done upon our finite personality for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change.²

So long as this operativeness is admitted to be real, it makes no essential difference whether the immediate effects be subjective or real.³

However, strictly speaking, the experience is subjective and the illusion of objectivity is explained as follows:

At the same time the theologians' contention that the religious man is moved by an external power is vindicated, for it is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances, and to suggest to the Subject an external control. In the religious life the control is felt as 'higher'; but since in our hypothesis it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden mind which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true.⁴

¹Ibid., p.398.

²Ibid., p.399.

³Ibid., p.371.

⁴Ibid., pp.396-397 (my italics).

James goes on to say that various intellectual 'over-beliefs' will always be elaborated by the mystic and connected with his experience and they will then become essential to that individual's religion. However, James wants it made clear that with the entry of these 'over-beliefs' one leaves the primarily subjective realm of mysticism and enters into the world of faith.

Only when this further step of faith concerning God is taken, and remote objective consequences are predicted, does religion, as it seems to me, get wholly free from the first immediate subjective experience, and bring a real hypothesis into play.¹

Another example of this first position can be added here: it is the view of those Christian theologians and scholars who comment on mysticism, not to dismiss and condemn it (as was the effort presented above)² but to characterize and define mysticism within the limits allowed by orthodox Christian doctrine and teaching. Here, mystical experience can be acceptable and allowed only when it is regarded as a purely emotional and non-cognitive experience. It is upon these two points that agreement with the other groups is found, and hence the assignment of these scholars to the first approach. However, there is a significant difference between their outlook and those of Leuba and James. While for these writers mystical experience is an emotional, non-cognitive experience, it is claimed

¹Ibid., p.400.

²See pp.2-3 of thesis.

nonetheless to be an objective state; it is an experience of an Objective Reality.

What these Christian scholars deny is that the mystic has a valid, independent cognitive experience. Mystical knowledge being a personal, intuitive religious knowledge is viewed as uncontrollable, unreliable, and a potential rival and danger to the traditionally established sources of information about God. Moreover, speculative, philosophical mysticism is seen as leading man necessarily towards pantheism or monism. Therefore, in the description of mysticism in this literature, the emphasis is placed upon feeling, not knowledge; the emotions of the mystic and the emotional aspect are the dominant factor ascribed to the mystical state.

The mystical pattern that emerges from these studies, that is sanctioned and commended by these scholars, is the personal relationship of love and surrender. Again the reader is made conscious of the abyss which separates the uncreated Being from the creature, the immense distance which divides the sinner from the absolute Holy Ruler and the necessity of grace, the benevolent action of God before this abyss can be bridged. Mystical experience is characterized as a union of love, a relationship of devotion, humility and surrender between the helpless, sinful, always unworthy passive soul and the benevolent Lord.

Mystical experience...is a union of love, resulting in a deeper understanding, not a new discovery....It is this knowledge of faith and doctrine which judges the experience not the reverse.¹

Mystical experience is ineffable. Correctly speaking it is not a source of knowledge, unless there comes into play a new element, distinct from the mystical experience: prophetic revelation.²

... the mystic acquires his religious conviction precisely as his non-mystical neighbor does, namely, through tradition and instruction grown habitual and reflective analysis. The mystic brings his theological beliefs to the mystical experience; he does not derive them from it.³

Common to all members of this first positive approach to the study and understanding of mysticism, is the conviction that the particular theological or philosophical framework--the intellectual content that the mystic expresses, is not an integral part of his experience. It is something which is "accidental" or "necessary" depending on the viewpoint of the analyst, but is only supplied afterwards when the mystic "returns to the world" and reflects upon his experience. The belief is that the understanding and expression given to the experience is determined by the prevailing religious or philosophical climate in which the mystic finds himself.

¹A. Léonard, "Studies on the Phenomena of Mystical Experience", Mystery and Mysticism, ed. A. Plé, (London: Blackfriars Publications, 1956) p.107.

²Ibid., p.107.

³G. A. Coe, "The Sources of Mystic Revelation", Hibbert Journal, vol.vi, 1907-8, p.360.

The highest flights of theistic mysticism, far from pretending to penetrate the secrets of the me and thou in worship, and to transcend the dualism by an act of intelligence, simply turn their backs on such attempts.¹

The fact is that the mystical feeling of enlargement, union and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own. It is capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies, provided only they can find a place in their framework for its peculiar emotional mood. We have no right, therefore to invoke its prestige as distinctly in favor of any special belief such as that in absolute idealism or in the absolute monistic identity or in the absolute goodness of the world.²

Should one of the great mystics be asked to formulate his 'intuitions', he would mention in substance those Christian doctrines in which his mystical experiences are set.³

We do find conformity in the psychological effect of mystical experience, in the transformation it induces on the personality; but as for the content of the experience itself, it is colored more often than not, by the prevailing dogma.⁴

The conclusion of the studies taking this approach then, is that the intuition of the mystic and his expression of it are not essential to the characterization of the mystical experience. They are entirely a secondary element; if we want to grasp the essence of mysticism, we must look to the feelings and conduct

¹William James, Essays on Faith and Morals (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1943) p.136

²Idem., Varieties of Religious Experience, pp.333-334 (my italics)

³James Leuba, A Psychological Study of Religion, p.238

⁴Joseph Maréchal, Études sur la psychanalyse des mystiques, (Bruxelles-Paris: 1937) vol.II p.415; transl. Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics, (Albany, New York: Magi Books Inc., 1964).

of the mystic as the only reliable criteria on which to base an understanding or definition.

The fact that mysticism is to be characterized by such feelings and by the radical transformation it effects in the life of man is not wholly satisfying.

All forms of religion claim a transforming power for man, and the emotions produced by and identified with mystical experience are not unique to that experience; in what manner is mysticism to be then distinguished as separate?

CHAPTER II MYSTICISM AS COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL, OBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

The second approach to the study of mysticism operates with the notion that mystical experience is both a cognitive and an emotional experience. In contrast to the first approach it stresses that mysticism must above all be characterized as a cognitive and objective experience. It finds the first approach in error, as having reduced the phenomenon of mysticism to an emotional experience where non-verbal behaviour is sufficient to characterize mysticism. The criteria thus proposed are inadequate and fail even to distinguish mysticism from other similar emotional, inspired states which can also effect a profound change in the life of man.

Those who share this second view of mystical experience defend their opinion by the assertion that a considerable proportion of mystical literature recounts experiences that are of a decidedly cognitive and not merely emotive nature, and that this fact stands against that view which regards mysticism as primarily an experience of feeling. They contend that an adequate description of mysticism can be formulated only when

the peculiar mystical intuition is probed and understood.

The special characteristic of mystical experience is that of revealing a transcendental truth determined in a state of consciousness.¹

"Mystical intuition, in its final form, cannot then be a pure feeling which, after his return to normal life, the mystic would justify with the aid of a rational doctrine. He feels very clearly that there is a bond, a communion between his intuition and this doctrine, a natural relation; the proof is that he does not consider all or any doctrine capable of being adapted to this intuition; for this is not a confused and passive sensibility which may adapt itself to the first theology that comes its way; it has a real activity; it dislikes certain concepts, and has affinities with others..."²

The second approach assumes then that associated with this cognitive experience is an identifiable, concrete "content" of a peculiar character which imparts a certain information about both the mystic and Ultimate Reality. To assert otherwise is to neglect or disregard two things: the constant sense of certainty of knowing common to mystics and the fact that mystical doctrines have appeared which contrast sharply with and even oppose dominant traditional religious and cultural beliefs.

The nature of mystical "knowledge" then, is very important for the investigator of the second position and the nature of the mystical goal becomes the

¹W. R. Inge, Mysticism In Religion (London: Hutchinson, 1947) p.55.

²R. Bastide, Les problèmes de la vie mystique (Paris, n.p., 1931); cited by A. Léonard, in "Studies on the Phenomena of Mystical Experience", Mystery and Mysticism, ed. A. Plé, p. 102.

deciding factor in the determination of a mystical or non-mystical experience.

It should be made clear that the opposition of this second approach to the first just described is not as great as it seems. Usually, representatives of this second position incorporate many of the same emotional distinguishing characteristics into their descriptions of the mystical state. These are treated as qualities which are normally a part of the mystical state but are seen as subordinate to the more primary, more informative distinguishing characteristic which is the nature of the cognitive "content", the propositions that the mystic maintains.

For the students of mysticism who recognize the vital significance of this "special characteristic" for the mystical experience, the primary concern of study becomes the elucidation of the nature of mystical information. In contrast to the efforts of those faithful to the first method, the latter students are less attentive to the actions and non-verbal behaviour of the mystic and look more to the mystic's message. The analysis of mysticism shifts towards a preoccupation with language, the descriptions given by the mystics.

As the probe of mystical experience and language proceeds, it is quickly evident that among the mystics there is no unanimity of voice. There is in fact, a great variation in the way mystics speak of their

experience, of the truth they have perceived.

Confronted with this variety of voice, the following question then arises for the student of mysticism: is mystical experience at all times and all places the same experience or are there really different and many mysticisms? This question produces two opinions: on the one hand is a belief that, phenomenologically speaking, mysticism is everywhere essentially one and the same, implying that there is also one pattern or doctrine necessarily corresponding to, or best expressing that one experience. On the other hand is the belief that there are indeed different mystical experiences which necessitate the different mystical interpretations or doctrines.

For those holding the former opinion, the diversity of mystical expressions and doctrines can be accounted for largely by factors which are extrinsic to the mystical experience. The following reasons are proposed for the failure of the individual mystic to express adequately or interpret his perception: (1) A simple carelessness or heedlessness with language, (2) An insufficiently trained and developed philosophical intellect, (3) A conscious or unconscious acquiescence to pressure from cultural, religious or historical circumstances.

The diversity of voice can also be explained by the theory that the expressions merely represent

lesser stages of the one mystical intuition. Or that it is caused by the variety of mystic temperaments and the "reaction" of that temperament upon the Absolute Reality.

The claim is made that if one carefully studies the diverse mystical expressions one can distinguish between what was the nature of the mystic's experience and what was the interpretation the mystic made of that experience. Such an exercise would result in the ability to isolate the one universal mystical experience and one true expression.

For those holding the second view, mysticism is seen as capable of great diversity and since it is held that the accompanying expression accurately mirrors the experience, then one must speak of divergent "mysticisms" and never of "mysticism". In general, this view holds that the mystical Object involved in the relationship is of a different nature in each of these contrasting experiences, thus producing a different mystical knowledge and a different mystical relationship.

With these two opinions in mind, let us look at a few studies of mysticism and examine the ways in which such beliefs are established and defended.

What we will notice now as a new element in this second approach to the study of mysticism is the questioning of the validity of the descriptions and doctrines of the mystic. The investigator is led,

sometimes almost in spite of himself, upon a search for the true mystical expression or doctrine. He is forced to make a valuation of the mystical descriptions or experiences. What we will see in these studies is the increased importance of the role of mystical theology or mystical philosophy. Rather than remaining a descriptive, phenomenological work, the study of mysticism becomes an effort towards establishing a theological formulation.

RUDOLF OTTO

The first major comparative study of mysticism was Rudolf Otto's Mysticism East and West¹. It was a pioneering work, a perceptive and significant study which had a great impact upon the scholarly world. Not only did it serve as a stimulus for additional studies but it had a continuing influence. The debt that later scholars owe to Otto is obvious from the constant reappearance of his insights and theories in the later studies.

The aim of Mysticism East and West is threefold: first, Otto wants to show that mysticism is a universal phenomenon, a basic "primal" need and urge of man and that its occurrence is independent of climate, culture, race and time. Second, Otto seeks to prove that the claim of scholars that "mysticism is always just mysticism, is always and everywhere one and the same quantity"² is false. His opinion is that mysticism has within it as "many varieties of expression" as does any other product of the artistic consciousness. Third, he maintains

¹Rudolf Otto, Mysticism East and West, transl. B. L. Bracey and R. C. Paine (New York: Macmillan, 1932; Macmillan Paperbacks, 1970).

²Ibid., p.14

that these variations of expression cannot be accounted for by racial divisions or geographical situations. In fact, they are often found to be dwelling together within the same race or cultural group.

At this point, it is not evident which of the two positions referred to above¹ Otto supports. His term "varieties of expression" makes his stance ambiguous. No scholar of mysticism would dispute the fact that within the world-wide tradition of mysticism there exists a great variety of expression. It is not upon this fact that the holders of the two positions are divided. What divides them is the explanation they offer for the diversity's having come about. It would seem pointless to deny the existence of the varieties of mystical expression independent of culture, time and place. Those scholars who maintain the first viewpoint referred to above (in the discussion of the second approach) recognize this variety. However, they claim that if mystics do not always say the same thing, they all mean the same thing. The scholars' aim is then to work with the variety of expression in order to show and explain the incidental reasons for the variation of language and to isolate the bare, common content identical to all mystics--the identical intuition which all mystics mean to express.

¹See pp.19-20.

Although not clearly stated at the outset, it is Otto's belief that there are mysticisms of widely differing content which exist out of necessity. This opinion is based upon his unquestioning conviction that the words of the mystic are:

...certainly not mere accident...not things of chance but arise of necessity out of the subject matter itself and give it expression. In their resemblance or even identity is mirrored the resemblance or identity of the matter which they have to express.¹

Otto sees therefore an indissoluble link between mystical experience and the mystical language employed by the mystic, the latter being a truthful representative of the former.

Even though, for Otto, mysticism is not "one and the same quantity always", it still must have a general meaning in order to be of use. He therefore suggests what might be called a genus definition of mysticism (which would still allow within it a number of very differing species).

Before presenting his notion of the general meaning of mysticism, Otto first reacts strongly against the way that mysticism is usually separated from all other religious experience. He rejects what he sees as a common tendency to characterize mysticism by contrasting it with the usual theistic religious experience.

¹Ibid., p.14.

Mysticism then becomes defined as an "experience of the immanence of the divine, and of the unification and unity in essence with it", over against the theistic religious experience which emphasizes the wholly transcendent divine. Otto finds such a definition inadequate and erroneous because the two objects (the "divine" in each case) are of a totally different character thus completely invalidating the comparison which assumes them to refer to the same entity. Otto maintains that it is this difference in the conception of the object which necessitates the difference in the relationship and not the other way around. The point of focus is then not upon the attainment of a new and different relationship, e.g., union with God, but upon a new and different conception of that "God". The definitive characteristic of mysticism which marks it off from other religious experiences is the peculiar character of the object of the experience. This is to be the determining factor.

It is the wholly non-rational character of this conception of God with its divergence from the intimate, personal, modified God of simple theism, which makes the mystic....Mysticism enters into religious experience in the measure that religious feeling surpasses its rational content...to the extent to which its hidden, non-rational, numinous elements predominate and determine the emotional life.¹

Where this core reveals itself in its non-rationality (for that which is indicated in the words 'to have God himself' is already non-rational, it escapes

¹Ibid., pp.158-159.

every attempt at formulation) there, so it seems, the *intuitus mysticus* appears with a certain inevitability, breaking forth out of the depths of the soul, with its vision of unity, its peculiar dialectic, its bold and daring ideographs.¹

Mystical intuition is not an inferred or derived consciousness--it is the immediate and direct apprehension of the objective Reality, the "Numinous". While the numinous character of the object is to be the determining characteristic, it must be made clear here that the mystical belief is different from adherence to other abstract beliefs. For the mystic, associated with the numinous idea of Reality, is also, necessarily, a feeling that he is intimately and essentially related to the Truth or Reality that is directly perceived.

In Otto's proposed theory, the mystical object is not tied to terms such as "God" or "Godhead"; the "numinous sphere" essential to every mysticism also includes the "Deus sine modis", "Brahman", "Ātman", "the One", "the All", "Śūnyatā", etc.; man is a mystic as soon as he has a vision of and lives in this numinous sphere. The experience of union, a personal encounter and intimacy with "God", may indeed be present, but it should not be made the indicator of the general phenomenon of mysticism which includes a wider range of experience.

To refute the claim that mysticism is always

¹Ibid., pp.147-148.

and everywhere the same experience, Otto quite early in his book establishes two major types of mysticism found both in the East and West whose difference, he feels, is easily apparent even to the most casual student: the mysticism of nature and mysticism of the spirit.

There are, it is true, certain traits which are common to both types, and therefore they are both called mysticism: for example, the impulse toward unity, the feeling of identification, the disappearance of the sense of otherness of the contrast between the particular and the general, the whole mystical 'logic' of the 'second way' as opposed to rational logic. But nevertheless, each has an entirely different content....Nature Mysticism, is the sense of being immersed in the oneness of nature, so that man feels all the individuality, all the peculiarity of natural things in himself.¹

Spiritual mysticism in contrast, "...views things and the essence of things from the standpoint of the significance and value of the divine, in absolute contrast to nature. This is a spiritual, not a natural nor an aesthetic valuation."² Spiritual mysticism again, can have many forms. Among the many major types singled out by Otto are: Soul-mysticism and God-mysticism.

Soul-mysticism is the "development of the numinous sense of the 'soul'", meaning, "to know and find in one's self: to know one's own soul in its true

¹Ibid., pp.92-93. (Walt Whitman would be for Otto a classic example of a nature mystic).

²Ibid., p.94.

nature and glory, and through this knowledge to liberate and realize its divine glory; to find the abyssus, the depths within the self and discover the self as divine in its inmost depth"¹

God-mysticism occurs as man comes to regard God as a "Deus sine modis"; that is, when a concept of God as complete non-rationality predominates. Various types of God-mysticism can further be distinguished, differing in the personal-suprapersonal content ascribed to the object God. In certain kinds of God-mysticism, the mystic attains a union with God. He is in some manner 'deified', joined to God, yet at the same time, always retaining his individuality, his separate creaturely 'otherness'. In contrast, other God-mysticisms find talk of 'union' inappropriate and search for more apt expressions for the unity discovered. Most often it is then spoken of as a 'sort of' identity where the mystic no longer exists as a separate entity. His individuality destroyed, he disappears into the divine. Occasionally the intuition expressed sounds like a simple tautology: God=Mystic, but it can also take a more mysterious form where the mystic is identified with what he perceives as a larger, more all-inclusive Real.

In order to illustrate that these basic types

¹Ibid., p.98.

of mysticism do indeed exist, (e.g., "God-mysticism" and "Soul-mysticism") and stand in sharp contrast with one another, Otto compares a Yogin, a Buddhist and Shankaracarya.

...this contrast between a Yogin and a Śankara is very difficult to define. Very often, even by Indologists, it is overlooked. Or the contention is sometimes made that although the Yogin does not recognize a Brahman, his mystical experience is at bottom the same as that of a Śankara. I have heard the same argument put forward regarding Buddha's Nirvāṇa. But the belief in the 'oneness of all mysticism' here deceives the eye of the observer, Śankara as well as Buddha would have abhorred such a claim. It is true that the difference is very hard to make clear in words, for the very verbal expressions of the two opponents seem to disavow it, so alike are they. Both appear to be striving after the same thing, or at least after something extraordinarily similar....In both cases the final state is governed by those feelings of infinite liberation and exaltation of which it is customary to speak in any religious-psychological discussion of mysticism; in both we are dealing with liberation from the bonds of self-consciousness, in both the Ātman is pure jñāna without the distinctions of Knower, known and knowing; in both it is complete consciousness. Nor is there any doubt that the degree of blessedness of those who have reached the kaivalyam of the Yoga is not less nor less important than those who have achieved Brahma-nirvāṇa. The distinction here is in no way one of mere quantity...Brahman mysticism is qualitatively different from Ātman mysticism, however much the terminology of the two seem to agree. Their respective contents are separated by a great gulf which can be distinguished by any painstaking observer. The difference between them however, is itself as non-rational as the difference in character of the two mysticisms; it is not to be reproduced in intellectual conceptions and is only comprehensible in mystical experience itself. I must again remind my readers how insufficient to any treatment are the usual terms--'feeling of exaltation', liberation, and expansion, or infinity'. All these terms would apply also to pure Yoga and describe it tolerably well. But the

sense of Brahman is obviously something different from all this.¹

Otto adds that his typology does not always exist in simple, clear-cut cases; it is more complex as additional variety results because all of these simple types (nature, Soul, and God-mysticisms) can and do combine, thereby producing another striking different type.

A second typology is elaborated by Otto in order to demonstrate again the diversity within mystical experience. What it reveals is two main ways of mysticism: "the Mysticism of Introspection" and "the Mysticism of Unifying Vision". Each is shown as a clearly distinct method having a separate and differing origin, incentive, technique or path and finally, most importantly, a different mystical intuition.

With the "Mysticism of Introspection" or "Inward Way", the mystic reaches a state of intuition by separating himself from the outside world. He turns his attention inwards to probe the depth of his nature and being. What he obtains is "self-knowledge", the discovery of man's true self or nature. Often the intuition also includes the perception that the true self is akin to that which is the 'Infinite', the 'Eternal', 'God', or 'Brahman' (illustrating the com-

¹Ibid., pp.162-164.

bination of two mysticisms, God-mysticism and Soul-mysticism).

What characterizes this as a distinct way is the isolation of the mystic from the surrounding world, the fact that he has no need of it, that it adds nothing to foster his intuition. The result often is, then, that the mystic has an anti-world attitude; the physical world is an obstacle for him, necessitating a withdrawal, denial and detachment. The elaboration of a doctrine of the Soul or Self is also essential to this Way: the mystic finds his true being in contrast to the earlier erroneous understanding of his nature.

The second Way of mysticism: the "Mysticism of Unifying Vision" is in direct opposition to any "inwardness". The mystic's attention is directed outward to the world of things and during the contemplation of physical nature, an intuition bursts in upon him. He finds in the outward multiplicity a wondrous unity of all being. He has a "glimpse into the eternal relationships of things" which destroys the previous mistaken idea of the separateness of individual beings and things.

This second Way is also completely different from the first in that there is no need for a "doctrine of the Soul". Also particularly characteristic of the Vision of the second Way is a series of ascending stages: perhaps one could call it a continuing refinement

of the initial intuition. In any case, to each stage of this second Way there corresponds a different mystical object resulting in a different type of mysticism.

In addition to establishing a methodology with which to understand better mystical phenomena, Otto has another goal in Mysticism East and West, that is: the comparative study of Eastern and Western mysticism.

For this comparative study he chooses two mystics: Meister Eckhart and Shankaracarya. He has a number of reasons for this choice: first of all, he finds that despite the differences of culture and tradition, Eckhart and Shankara as mystics bear striking resemblances to each other. In their chosen mode of expression, both are mystics of the "cool" intellectual type in contrast to the "hot" excited and emotional mystic. Both regard the acquiring of knowledge as the key to salvation. Both represent a teaching mysticism, that is, they are teachers to whom the elaboration of doctrine from their mystical experience is of great importance (although never diminishing the primary necessity of having the experience itself). Finally, Otto makes the claim that they represent "the two principal classic types of Eastern and Western mystical experience".¹

¹Ibid., p.5.

While Otto's study examines the differences as well as the similarities of these two mystics, the real aim of the comparison is to establish and emphasize the "common theistic foundation" of Eckhart and Shankara.

This is in reaction to what Otto finds is the usual (erroneous) interpretation of Indian religion as "monism, pantheism, impersonal mysticism". He wants to show that there are theistic elements in Shankara's conception of Brahman which closely parallel Christian theism.

The impersonal Brahman rests...on a theistic basis and this basis is not unimportant for the conception of Brahman itself.¹

The interpenetration of the theist and the mystic is much more marked in Eckhart than in Sankara. Yet the greatest mystic of India is himself a witness that theism is not an accident of Western development but somehow arises out of the deep necessity of mankind in general.²

This is an important and interesting interpretation and deserves a closer examination of its purpose and foundation. At first glance it may look like but another Christian scholar's apology for the superiority of his own Christian theism and his desire to see its truth mirrored in all religions. The likelihood of this motive is strengthened by the fact that in Mysticism East and West, Otto shows a greater sympathy for and higher admiration of the mysticism of Eckhart.

¹Ibid., p.121.

²Ibid., p.140.

I believe, however, that such would be an erroneous reading. I suspect a different intent in his words and I would like to hazard an interpretation more in harmony with his other statements.

First, it should be stressed that Otto appears to be uncomfortable with the term 'theism'. He seems anxious that the reader not misunderstand him, for he does not mean exactly the "personal theism" of the Christian type but a form which "towers above a theistic basis".¹

The Brahman conception rises beyond a personal God and yet bears the fragrance and color of the ground from which it springs.²

Thus we realize close resemblances between Śankara and Meister Eckhart. In both men mysticism rises above a personal theism.³

It is true of him [Śankara] as of Eckhart, that his teaching leads to a kind of supertheism...⁴

What does Otto really mean by a mystical conception which "towers above personal theism"? What is this "supertheism"? Here, we must admit that Otto remains somewhat enigmatic; he is never explicit about these terms, yet I believe that one does find sufficient clues in his discussion of Eckhart and Shankara to

¹Ibid., p.153.

²Ibid., p.123.

³Ibid., p.140.

⁴Ibid., p.129.

hazard the following theory.

I would propose that Otto is hinting here at a dipolar, "panentheistic" conception of the Divine¹ and is suggesting that it represents the ideal of mystical experience.

To support this belief, let me cite some passages from Otto's discussion of the mystical intuitions of Shankara and Eckhart:

The former [Nirguna-Brahman] does not deny the latter, [Saguna-Brahman] but the latter is taken up into the former....the significance of this process of samuchchaya is obviously to assure to the highest Brahman all conceivable divine values of theism and include them in the conception of the Brahman.²

The Nirguna-Brahman is not the exclusive opposite of the Saguna-Brahman, but its superlative and a development of the tendencies which lead to the Saguna-Brahman itself.³

Eckhart's position is neither mystical quietism nor secular activity, but an identity of the deepest unity and the most vivid multiplicity, and therefore of the most vital motion.⁴

...Eckhart establishes a polar identity between rest and motion within the Godhead itself;...the one aspect is as necessary for Eckhart as the other. This diastole of the original One in the multiplicity of its elements, and the systole of its manifoldness back into the eternal resting

¹The elaboration of the "panentheistic" theory has been most clearly developed by Charles Hartshorne and will be presented in full below.

²Ibid., p.128.

³Ibid., p.127.

⁴Ibid., p.191.

unity, is the eternal life-process of the God-head.¹

And again in discussion of Eckhart:

...these relations we have described as polar, but even that is not quite adequate. We have to proceed to the paradox: because one, therefore many, because eternal rest in God, therefore movement, because complete non-action, therefore most vigorous will. Thus also: because one with God, and God with God before time was, therefore, nothing, dust, humility...

These are certainly not relationships conceived by the power of logic; even Eckhart has to express them paradoxically. But undoubtedly, to his vision they were no paradoxes, but the most obvious necessities.²

Otto's preference for Eckhart's descriptions over Shankara's has nothing to do with a choice of West over East, or Christian over Indian theology but can be traced rather to the role of logic, or the measure of paradoxicality in each mystic's expression. Shankara hesitates at the border of "Dipolarity" and retreats in order to maintain strict logic while Eckhart is bold:

Both masters seek and behold unity and the Eternal One in contrast to multiplicity, but with this difference: the relationship of the One to the Many is for Śankara one of strict exclusion, but for Eckhart one of the most live polarity. Śankara --in his parā-vidyā--is a strict monist, but not like Eckhart, a philosopher of identity, as regards the One and the Many.³

For Śankara these opposites are exclusive. For Eckhart the one demands the other...⁴

¹Ibid., pp.191-192.

²Ibid., pp.200-201 (my italics).

³Ibid., p. 191.

⁴Ibid., p. 200.

While Śankara and his school try rather to rationalize the paradoxes of mystical language...Eckhart on the contrary excites his listeners by unheard of expressions and makes the conventional terminology of scholasticism pulsate again with the old mystical meaning.¹

I think that this same idea (the Dipolar conception of the Mystical Object) is again hinted at in Otto's final discussion of his methodology.

While the initial purpose of Otto was to distinguish, separate, and examine the different types of mysticism, (due to his conviction that it is only through an analysis of this kind that the non-mystic will come to see and understand the richness, the complete character of mysticism) once the uniqueness of the Ways had been established, Otto's attention turned to sketching the curious, somehow necessary affinity, the intertwining of the two Ways; the combining, interpenetrating of the various types, and the fact that one often provokes or calls forth the other.

The inner uniting of these two ways and elements evidently takes place under the compulsion of a strongly felt need....If this correspondence (corresponding synthesis) does not point to a hidden law of necessity, it at least indicates a powerfully constraining inward element.²

To discover in the inwardness of the self the divine miracle in the soul, or the indwelling Ātman, and on the other hand, behind and beyond the mul-

¹Ibid., p. 196.

²Ibid., p. 277.

tiplicity of things to behold the One that is the essence of all things and of the self--these are, we say, two absolutely different experiences, and as non-mystics we cannot conceive how they can slip into one another and become indissolubly bound together.¹

For those of us who are not mystics, this interpenetration of the two ways is always puzzling, and to those who misunderstand their fundamental difference it is very necessary to point out the enigma of their union, and to make clear the peculiarity of each in sharpest distinction. True, for the mystic himself there is no riddle; to him the necessity of their combination is obvious. He knows nothing of the twofoldness of the ways, but from the peculiar quality of the objects he experiences both unfold clearly before him. He does not relect on their difference...he would probably not be able to explain in clear-cut conceptions the necessity of their combining. It is to him an immediately felt necessity, and he has no need to analyze intellectually what is given as a certainty in feeling.²

The conclusion of Otto's study may be found in his statement: "Perhaps only in their combination do they represent the ideal of mystical experience."³

Otto sees the importance of his methodology for the study of mysticism in enabling the student, the non-mystic outsider, to perceive the different mysticisms, to recognize the interpenetration of the ways and the coincidence of the types and thereby to appreciate the achievement of a few mystics and gain a glimpse of the Comprehensive Mystical Reality.

¹Ibid., p.276.

²Ibid., p.275.

³Ibid., p.59.

It could be said that one of the aims, or perhaps the real aim of Mysticism East and West is the establishment of a valuation of the different mystics' expressions. Such mystics as Eckhart, Plotinus, al-Hallāj, for Otto, achieve and represent this "ideal of mystical experience".

In his study, Otto equates the "intuitus mysticus" with a non-rational concept of the Divine or Reality and yet maintains that the mystic apprehends (in a conscious state) an objective Reality. He states that for the mystic there is no paradox, nor riddle: he is one who knows. What Otto doubts and denies is the ability of the mystic to express his certainty intellectually: it "escapes every attempt at formulation". However, in spite of this, Otto went quite far in formulating a conception--a "theology" of the mystic's full realization of the mystical Object. Because the description was paradoxical (and therefore for him illogical) Otto claimed the Object to be non-rational, incapable of being "reproduced in intellectual conceptions".

I contend that if the mystic is conscious and knows, if for him there is no paradox truly, then there will exist a rational theory able to interpret his certainty. The problem, I find, lies not in the non-rationality of the Object but in a mistaken idea of the rules governing the logic of its description.

One should equally be willing to reconsider and redefine these rules and concepts in order to remove or explain the illogic or paradoxicality. In the last chapter such an effort will be presented and a theory proposed.

RICHARD C. ZAEHNER

Another scholar who has published a number of works on the comparative study of religions and mysticism is R. C. Zaehner.¹

We will find in examining Zaehner's work that his objectives, premises, and basic categories are much the same as those of Otto; yet, the final result is decidedly different.

Zaehner, like Otto, holds the second viewpoint and denies that all mystical experience can be reduced to one pattern; the phenomenon of mysticism is not to be regarded as an "identical expression of the selfsame Universal Spirit"². A number of mystical types are distinguished and like Otto, Zaehner insists that they occur in each major religious tradition throughout the world. Zaehner feels that to claim that the different expressions are merely due to the conditioning of the religious or philosophical environment, denies the all too obvious fact that "original geniuses"

¹Richard C. Zaehner, Mysticism Sacred and Profane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

Idem., Hindu and Muslim Mysticism (London: The Athlone Press, 1960).

²Richard C. Zaehner, Mysticism Sacred and Profane, p. 198.

existed: mystics whose teachings were in direct opposition to the dominant religious mood of their day, whose messages emphatically contradict each other within the same cultural or philosophical situation.

If we are told that the experiences [mystical] are such that they cannot be described and that all descriptions are only approximations to the ineffable experience--the variety of those approximations being explicable by the supposed fact that the One Truth is viewed from different angles,--then plainly there is no point in discussing the matter further. Unless, however, we are prepared to concede that the descriptions are utterly meaningless and therefore not approximations at all, we are surely entitled to study the evidence and draw what conclusions we can.¹

The comparative study which Zaehner then felt justified to undertake led him to conclude that there are three distinct experiences of mysticism (which are singled out by means of the terminology used by the mystics).

As the title of Zaehner's major work on mysticism suggests, these three "radically different" experiences can be divided into profane ("Natural") mysticism and sacred ("Religious") mysticism. In the exposition of the types which follows, the first two types correspond to the "profane" realm while only with the last do we enter the sphere of religious mysticism. In contrast to Otto, Zaehner extends the category of mystical experience somewhat.

¹Ibid., p.30.

The three types of mystical experience are:

(1) "pan-en-henic" mysticism, (2) "monistic" mysticism, and (3) "theistic" mysticism.

"Pan-en-henic" mystical experience is essentially nature mysticism, and literally the term means the "all-in-one-ism". It is an experience of unity or rapport with the multiplicity of nature: "You are all and All is you". In other words, it is the blissful realization of the oneness of nature. This type includes but is not to be equated with the pantheistic mystical experience. The pantheistic experience specifically finds that: "All is God and God is All". Whereas in the more general grouping of pan-en-henic mysticism, the concept of God, in the usual sense of the word, has not always been evolved and identified.

Zaehner sees the pan-en-henic realization as an experience commonly occurring both to mad and sane men.

Let us look at a few of his examples to see precisely what he means. One of the classic examples of this type of experience comes from the literary world¹ and is reported by the Irish novelist Forrest Reid: "It was as if everything that had seemed to be external and around me were suddenly within me."²

¹Other examples being: William Wordsworth, Walt Whitman and Tennyson.

²Richard C. Zaehner, Mysticism Sacred and Profane, p.41.

Certain Hindu and Sūfi writers are also included in Zaehner's pan-en-henic category.¹ Also included is the experience of Aldous Huxley induced by the drug mescaline.² And if Huxley's experience is to be admitted, then, Zaehner maintains, one must also include certain manic experiences.³

In all the above examples and in all pan-en-henic experience, Zaehner finds that there is an expansion of man's vision: an enlargement of consciousness which takes either of two forms: an "absorption of the natural order into the experiencing self..." or "...the dissolution of the latter in the spirit that pervades all nature."⁴

It is a blissful perception which the mystic believes to be an intensely real state, much more real (true) than what he perceives in his normal consciousness. In addition he also has the conviction that the insight obtained transcends both space and time.

The second category devised by Zaehner is "monistic" mysticism, an interior experience of undifferentiated One-ness which can have various philoso-

¹Zaehner mentions certain Upanishadic verses, and the writings of Ab'ūl-Qāsin al-Qushayrī and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.

²Zaehner was prompted to write Mysticism Sacred and Profane in order to criticize Huxley's claims.

³Rimbaud is chosen by Zaehner as an example of one such manic experience.

⁴R. C. Zaehner, Mysticism Sacred and Profane, p.61

phical interpretations. According to Zaehner, it is a totally different experience, and in some ways, the complete opposite of the pan-en-henic. The pan-en-henic experience is a perception of the Unity of Multiplicity whereas the "monistic" experience denies the reality of multiple things. It requires an arduous ascetic training and a complete withdrawal of the senses from all the physical, transitory, ultimately illusory things of nature. Whereas, with the pan-en-henic mystical intuition one speaks of a Unity of Multiplicity, in the monistic experience there can be no talk of a unio mystica. Strictly speaking, even such a term as "Undifferentiated Unity" is misleading; where there are no real multiple members there can be no relationships and there is neither an experience of reconciliation nor of union.

Zaehner also terms this experience the "isolation of the Eternal Self" or the "integration of personality" (complete realization of the self) : "...the state of pure isolation of what we may now call the uncreated soul or spirit from all that is other than itself!"¹

In speaking of Patañjali and Shankara, Zaehner explains: "The final goal is in each the same, the 'companionless loneliness of self-illumination', the experience of one's own soul as pure light, utterly

¹Ibid., p.168.

independent, autarchic, deathless, because beyond time, eternal and alone....The final experience is always one of isolation."¹

...the rounding off of an individual personality in both past and present, and in eternity. It is the realization of the individual soul as something other than the ego, something of which the 'other self'...is the imperishable center. This is quite distinct from the pan-en-henic experience; it is simply the felt realization of one's soul as immortal.²

The representatives of this type of mysticism presented by Zaehner are Proust, the schools of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, and Advaita-Vedānta. Although these three are seemingly quite different in their beliefs, Zaehner explains that they all share the same aim: "Whether you call your soul an individual purusha or the Absolute Nirguṇa or qualitless Brahman makes no difference. All you achieve is the isolation of your essence, thereby denying the presence of God."³

It is when the mystic acknowledges the being and activity of a God that we encounter what Zaehner calls the third type of mysticism: "theistic mysticism" or the "interior experience of union with God through love".⁴

In contrast to the other types, while the pro-

¹R. C. Zaehner, Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, p.10.

²Idem., Mysticism Sacred and Profane, p.61.

³Ibid., p.146.

⁴Ibid., p.168.

spective mystic must concentrate his mind, will and actions upon God, the theistic mystical experience occurs only because of God's initiative. The difference in outlook and understanding is clearly reflected in the mystic's assertion: "It is God's doing and not my own". It is God who works and makes one fit for union.

The theistic mystical state is perceived as a reconciliation, a "return of the 'self' to God"; the "...return of the spirit to its immortal and infinite ground which is God."¹

At the same time, Zaehner also speaks of it as a "total Surrender" and as the "loss of the purely human personality"² and of the "...absorption of the uncreate spirit, the 'self' into the essence of God, in whom both the individual personality and the whole objective world are or seem to be entirely obliterated."³

Zaehner seems to be unsure of what exactly happens to the self in the theistic mystical experience; he writes: "the individual is not annihilated, though transformed and 'deified'...it remains a distinct entity though permeated through and through with the divine substance."⁴

¹Ibid., p.169.

²Ibid., p.168.

³Ibid., p.168.

⁴Ibid., p.29.

It seems clear that for the mystic of this third type, the God he perceives is always a Being utterly and incomparably greater than he. It is on this point that Zaehner sets the dividing line between theistic mysticism and the two types presented earlier:

No theistic mystic could lay claim that his union with God is so close that he can lay claim to attributes like the power to create which is specifically divine.¹

...when the mystic claims attributes that are necessarily divine and demonstrably not human, --such as omnipotence,--it is fairly clear that he is not enjoying union with God, but rather some sort of natural mystical experience.²

I find the typological scheme of Zaehner too limited and inflexible. There is none of the intermingling, combining, interfusion of types as described by Otto.

Zaehner distinguishes two main categories of mysticism: personal mysticism and impersonal mysticism: the Sacred and the Profane; and he views and establishes them as opposing and antagonistic. They are exclusive and cannot coincide within the same mystic or mystical experience.

I cannot agree with this interpretation and with the reading that Zaehner has made of certain mystics and his dismissal of certain so-called "monistic" mystics and "pantheistic" mystics of the natural type.

¹Ibid., p.184.

²Ibid., p.193.

Did Zaehner indeed understand these mystics or were their experiences perhaps richer and more complex than he interprets? Are his interpretation and understanding hampered by his declared theological bias?¹

Zaehner's study is clearly an apology for the primacy of the theistic mystical experience. It is considered the highest form of mystical achievement and the only one worthy of being called "religious". The other types are in some manner or other regarded as misguided experiences and Zaehner is very categorical in his judgment of the impersonal mysticisms. They represent "misguided conceit",² a clear danger and error of selfish introversion, an "introverted narcissism".³

Divested as they are of all their mortal trappings they are content to rest in the quiet contemplation of their own souls; having reached the immortal they can conceive of nothing beyond. They are blinded by their own self-sufficiency, for having conquered desire they cannot rekindle desire itself and direct it to its proper goal which is God.⁴

Any mystical state which is one of undifferentiated oneness is the experience that one individual soul enjoys of its own individual self; it has nothing to do with God. Thus in any form of mystical experience from which love is absent, there can be no question of God: he is absent too.

To interpret the experience as being identical with the One or the All is absurd; beguiled by the beauty and apparent infinity of its own deep nature, the liberated soul...mistakes the mustard seed for Mount Meru, the drop for the sea.⁵

¹Ibid., p.xv.

²Ibid., p.188.

³R. C. Zaehner, Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, p.10.

⁴Ibid., p.15.

⁵Ibid., p.85.

Because of this conviction, Zaehner sees the history of Indian religion as evolving in one direction only, towards the primacy of love, the development of a Personal God in a position over and above the "earlier" impersonal concepts. Therefore, Zaehner embraces and commends Indian theism and the bhakti sects and literature while frowning upon the "impersonal trend" in Hinduism. So also Zaehner gives Orthodox Islam a sympathetic treatment, while critical of what he sees as the monistic tendencies of Sufism.¹

Above all, Zaehner's characterization of the alternative theistic experience is inadequate and unsatisfactory. His emphasis upon the duality of the mystic and God, and the wide gulf separating the two, the ultimate "otherness" of God, the necessity of God's saving act of Grace for mystical achievement, the necessity for love (the nature of which is not sufficiently described), the stress upon the Personal God over and against the Impersonal conception, the denial that the mystic has any true sharing in divinity; all these descriptions remind one more of the formulations of Western orthodox theology than the expressions of mystics. When Zaehner makes a statement like, "...of the monotheistic creeds it is only Christianity that builds a bridge between God, the Eternal, and man, the

¹Ibid., pp.109 and 188.

temporal..."¹ he exposes his dogmatic and apologetic approach and purpose and his closeness to the traditional Christian theology.

In the end, Zaehner's Mysticism Sacred and Profane, instead of being a step forward, seems indeed a step backward from Otto's Mysticism East and West and any unbiased contribution to the understanding of mysticism.

EVELYN UNDERHILL

Another scholar of mysticism who deserves our attention is Evelyn Underhill. Her work, Mysticism: A study in the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness¹ is the classic textbook for the study of mysticism. It remains, despite its age, the most detailed and comprehensive exploratory study in existence.

Underhill's Mysticism is divided into two parts: the first is a study of the content of mystical intuition, and an examination of mystical doctrines from the varying perspectives of metaphysics, psychology and symbolism. The second part explores the Mystic Way. It looks at the practical life of the mystic and the development of his mystical consciousness. It describes the methods used by the mystic and the stages passed through in his journey to "enlightenment".

We will not venture to deal with the whole of such an extensive and rich analysis; for the purposes of the present study, we can direct ourselves primarily to that portion of Underhill's book where she undertakes

¹Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: a study in the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness (London: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1916; 13th ed. rev. and enl. Meridan Books, New York: The New American Library Inc., 1955).

the elaboration of a satisfying mystical philosophy or theology.

It must be stressed that Underhill's examination of mysticism is limited mainly to Christian mysticism in the West. Occasionally there are brief and general comments about "oriental mysticism" or "Indian mysticism" as opposed to Christian mysticism, but these opinions reveal an inadequate acquaintance with the material. "Oriental mysticism" is made by Underhill into a much more homogeneous entity than it is generally seen today and is then represented as an extreme or one-sided, distorted, nihilistic form of mystical intuition.¹

In this study, mystical experience is regarded as an objective experience; and Underhill maintains that to view it otherwise, as predominately a 'feeling state', a subjective experience with no objective validity, is to have misunderstood the mystic. Man as mystic becomes aware of, has an intense vision of an objective Something. Mystical experience is a state of consciousness which touches and affects the whole being of the mystic. Mystical intuition is not a partial or indefinite vision; there is present a certitude which can be translated only as the perception of Truth.

But as mystical intuition transcends the sphere of emotions, so also does it transcend man's intellect

¹See Mysticism pp. 40; 434; 170-171.

and the capacities of his language. The experience, while being objective, eludes objectification. It is ineffable, indescribable; and all efforts to express it are merely approximations. Underhill explains the predominance of emotional language in the mystical expression by the fact that when faced with the difficulty of expressing his experience intelligently, the mystic resorts to describing how the experience "made him feel" rather than what it is. Yet while intelligent descriptions never can describe conclusively, they often can be extremely good and accurate hints or "maps" of the mystical Object.

In general, Underhill sees the mystic as an acceptor of the credal assertions of his native religion. That is, he usually tries to harmonize his intuition with the surrounding beliefs; he is not a "religious or spiritual anarchist". However, Underhill adds that the mystics' descriptions, because of the nature of their expression and sense of certitude, seem to derive from the experience and not from the religious tradition. Underhill emphasizes that the language of the mystics must be taken as symbolic; it will say something partly true about the Object but also will reveal a lot about the individual mystic. And this latter fact must never be lost sight of when analyzing mystical language.

Underhill speaks consistently of "mysticism"

and never of "mysticisms". There is only one mystical Object that is seen, not different or many mystical objects. The different mystical descriptions or mystical doctrines (always dealing with the one same Mystical Reality) occur because of and are to be explained by the variety of mystic temperaments. All "describe the same process seen 'through a temperament', and represent the reaction of that temperament upon Absolute Reality."¹

Underhill explains that if we regard the testimony of the mystics, the variety seems at first endless. However, the many descriptions can be reduced finally to one of two main "forms of symbolic expression": "mystics of the transcendent-metaphysical and of the intimate-Personal type."² The essential difference between the two visions and the mystical doctrines they entail is described as follows:

The metaphysical mystic for whom the Absolute is impersonal and transcendent, describes his final attainment of the Absolute as deification, or the utter transmutation of the self in God....The mystic for whom intimate and personal communion has been the mode under which he best apprehended Reality, speaks of the consummation of this communion, its perfect and permanent form, as the Spiritual Marriage of his soul with God.³

These two fundamental ways of apprehending

¹Ibid., p.335.

²Ibid., p.415.

³Ibid., p.415.

and viewing Reality give rise to what Underhill calls:
the "'emanation-theory' and 'immanence-theory'".¹

The first view:

declares...utter transcendence...[He] is therefore conceived as external to the world which He illumines and vivifies....This theory postulates, under normal and non-mystical conditions, the complete separation of the human and divine; the temporal and the eternal worlds....The soul's ascent to union with the divine must be literally a transcendence, a journey 'upward and outward', through a long series of intermediate states or worlds till, he at last arrives...at the Crown: fruitive knowledge of God, the Abyss or Divine Dark of the Dionysian school, the Neoplatonic One....such a temperament constructs from its perceptions and prejudices the concept of a material world and a normal self which are very far from God.²

For the mystics of the second view: the immanence theory,

the quest of the Absolute is no long journey, but a realization of something which is implicit in the self and in the Universe....The Absolute Whom all seek does not hold Himself aloof from an imperfect material universe, but dwells within the flux of things....According to the doctrine of Immanence, creation, the universe, could we see it as it is, would be perceived as the self-development, the self-revelation of this indwelling Deity. The world is not projected from the Absolute, but immersed in God.³

For the mystic of the first type then, the Mystical Object is Impersonal, far, to be largely described in negative, "arid" language. The emotions characteristically felt are awe and fear. The mystical

¹Ibid., p.96.

²Ibid., p.97-99.

³Ibid., p.99-100.

attainment is the realization of a State. The mystic of the second type pictures the Real as Personal, near, describing Him in positive terms and using often amorous language. Reality is perceived not as a State but as a Person.

While these two views appear to be opposing and contradictory, Underhill maintains that in truth they are complementary, mutually explanatory: the one demands the other. If taken alone and held, they are incomplete, dangerously misleading, and account for the negative reactions and just criticisms of many investigators of the mystic type.

Underhill reminds us, "It must never be forgotten that all apparently one-sided descriptions of illumination --more, all experiences of it--are governed by temperament."¹ They are "opposite aspects of one whole: the complementary terms of a higher synthesis beyond our span."²

Obviously both these terms are but the self's guesses concerning the intrinsic character of a state it has felt in its wholeness rather than analyzed: and bear the same relation to the ineffable realities of that state,...the language of 'deification' and 'spiritual marriage', then, is temperamental language: and is related to subjective experience rather than to objective fact.... Hence by a comparison of these symbolic reconstructions, by the discovery and isolation of the common

¹Ibid., p.252.

²Ibid., p.304.

factor latent in each, we may perhaps learn something of the fundamental fact which each is trying to portray.¹

The function of a mystic teacher or the investigator of mysticism is to create a "good map", a "good mystical philosophy" which;

will leave room for both these ways of interpreting experience. It will mark the routes by which many different temperaments claim to have found their way to the same end. It will acknowledge both the aspects under which...Truth has appeared to its lovers; the aspects which have called forth the theories of emanation and immanence.²

Mystical literature shows us that often in the mystic, one side, or one aspect of the Truth tends to awaken first. It may then give rise to the other aspect, or may remain a one-sided and extreme view, depending on the temperament or genius of the mystic. To develop a true mystical philosophy one must compare the two types as Underhill says, but one can also rely upon the testimony of certain "great mystics". The latter are the rare human beings in whom mystical consciousness did reach the state of fullest development.

Though philosophy has striven since thought began and striven in vain--to resolve the paradox of Being and Becoming, of Eternity and Time, she has failed strangely enough to perceive that a certain type of personality has substituted experience for her guesses at truth; and achieved

¹Ibid., p.415.

²Ibid., p.103.

its solution, not by the dubious processes of thought, but by direct perception. To the great mystic the 'problem of the Absolute' presents itself in terms of life, not in terms of dialectic. He solves it in terms of life: by a change or growth of consciousness which thanks to his peculiar genius--enables him to apprehend that two-fold Vision of Reality which eludes the perceptive powers of other men.¹

The full spiritual consciousness of the true mystic is developed not in one, but in two apparently opposite but really complementary directions. On the one hand he is intensely aware of, and knows himself to be at one with that active World of Becoming, that deep and primal life of the All, from which his own life takes its rise....On the other hand, the full mystic consciousness also attains to what is, I think, its really characteristic quality. It develops the power of apprehending the Absolute, Pure Being, the Utterly Transcendent; or as its possessor would say, can rise to 'passive union with God'. This all-round expansion of consciousness, with its dual power of knowing by communion the temporal and eternal, immanent and transcendent aspects of reality--the life of the All, vivid, flowing and changing, and the changeless, conditionless, life of the one--is the peculiar mark, the ultimo sigillo of the great mystic...²

Underhill's study clearly ceases to be a descriptive account of mysticism; what she is doing is offering a theological formulation. The only metaphysical portrayal adequate to the mystical Object must speak of it:

...as Being and Becoming, as Eternity and Time, as Transcendence and Immanence, Reality and Appearance, the One and the Many--these two dominant ideas, demands, imperious instincts of man's self will reappear; the warp and woof of his completed universe. On the one hand is his intuition of a

¹Ibid., p.37.

²Ibid., p.36.

remote, unchanging Somewhat calling him; on the other is his longing for and as clear intuition of an intimate, adorable Somewhat companioning him. Man's true Real, his only adequate God, must be great enough to embrace this sublime paradox, to take up these apparent negations into a higher synthesis.¹

In these two forms of perception we see the growing consciousness of the mystic stretching in two directions, until it includes in its span both the World of Being and the World of Becoming; that dual apprehension of reality as transcendent yet immanent which we found to be one of the distinguishing marks of the mystic type.²

In the beginning of her book, Underhill proposed a broad definition of mysticism as:

...the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order; whatever be the theological formula under which that order is understood.... Whether that end be called the God of Christianity, the World-Soul of Pantheism, the Absolute of Philosophy, the desire to attain it and the movement towards it--so long as this is a genuine life process and not an intellectual speculation--is the proper subject of mysticism.³

While at times Underhill appears to deal with and describe Mysticism and the mystical experience generally (without regard to a mystic of a specific culture or religion), her study should be seen as a study of Western mysticism. More precisely, it is not a study of Western mysticism, but of Western theistic mysticism and most of her analysis and typology fits

¹Ibid., p.41.

²Ibid., p.240.

³Ibid., p.xiv-xv.

only this case. I would be happier with this study if somewhere Underhill referred to it as restricted in this sense.

As in the studies of mysticism previously presented, Underhill's analysis early and consistently establishes a valuation of mystical doctrines within her broad category of mysticism: there are true and untrue (or misleading) mystical forms. Now, as seen above, the true mystical doctrine has been described as the "two-fold Vision of Reality". "Nature-mysticism", "Soul-mysticism", pantheistic interpretations, nihilistic claims of annihilation of self, deification or complete identification with the Divine, are some representatives of extreme and erroneous mystical forms.

I have no dispute with Underhill here and very much applaud her insistence upon the two-fold "Dipolar" character of the Real. But I am uneasy with Underhill's claim that Christianity is the best vehicle for the accomplishment of a healthy mystical philosophy.

Now without prejudice to individual beliefs and without offering an opinion as to the exclusive truth of any one religious system or revelation--for here we are concerned neither with controversy nor with apologetics--we are bound to allow as a historical fact that mysticism, so far has found its best map in Christianity.¹

Hence the Christian system or some colourable imitation of it has been found essential by almost all the great mystics of the West. They adopt

¹Ibid., p.125.

its nomenclature, explain their adventures by the help of its creed, identify their Absolute with the Christian God.¹

Whether the dogmas of Christianity be or be not accepted on the scientific or historical plane, then, those dogmas are necessary to an adequate description of mystical experience--at least, of the fully developed dynamic mysticism of the West.... No one needs, I suppose, to be told that the two chief features of Christian schematic theology are the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation.... The history of mystical philosophy is the history --still incomplete--of the demonstration of their meaning in eternity.²

I do not believe that the dogmas of Christianity or "some colourable imitation" of them are necessary and essential to the full mystical philosophy. If this were so then it would follow that we must deny to certain great Sufi mystics (e.g., al-Hallāj, Ibn-al-Arabi, who as far as I can judge did not rely upon the Trinity and Incarnation dogmas) that full two-fold mystical Vision of Reality. I maintain that this would be to contradict these mystics' own descriptions.

That certain great Christian mystics were able to adapt successfully the dogmas of Christian theology to their full mystical intuition is one thing, but then to make those dogmas necessary for all fully developed Western mysticism or latent in all fully developed forms is I believe an error on Underhill's part. In defense of Underhill, it must be noted that

¹Ibid., p.106.

²Ibid., p.107.

at the time she first wrote her study of mysticism, almost nothing was known of Sufism in the West and she could not have been familiar with the writings of the great Sufi mystics.

Since Underhill chooses to comment upon Indian mysticism, why does she not acknowledge the existence of the Personal-Impersonal Real found in certain Indian mystics and clearly described by Otto? Why does she continue to treat Indian mysticism as "nihilistic"? Why did she not reassess her statements in the light of Otto's study and in the light of the new scholarship of Sufism (which her annotated bibliography¹ shows her to be familiar with) for the revised editions of Mysticism ? Since this book is still widely used and relied upon today, these deficiencies must be underlined and corrected.

While I find Underhill's description of the necessary elements in the full mystical understanding² of Reality satisfying, I suspect that she is not ready to give equal status to the two aspects of Reality.

In the introduction to her twelfth edition³, Underhill discusses changes she would make if she were now writing her book for the first time:

More emphasis would be given (a) to the concrete,

¹Bibliographical note to the 13th edition of Mysticism, p.507.

²See pp.57-60 above.

³Ibid., pp.viii-ix, my italics.

richly living yet unchanging character of the Reality over against the mystic....that these facts Absolute-Contingent, Being-Becoming, etc., involved the existence in him too [the mystic] of a certain doubleness, a higher and lower...

While for Underhill the opposite aspects are indeed both attributable to the Divine, one wonders about the manner in which each is seen as indicative of the Divine Reality. Are the complementary qualities given superior and inferior positions in their relation to each other? Or are both aspects to be attributed in the same degree and held in the same esteem? We are unsure of an answer here as Underhill does not explain how both aspects are simultaneously held as properly indicative of Divine Reality. Since the mystical picture of the Divine that she proposes seems to contradict the classical formulation of Christian theology, more explanation is desirable.

While it is proper and good that she base her mystical theology upon the mystics' own statements, what also is needed is a clear, unambiguous metaphysical framework to explain, support and defend this view from the other views.

W. T. STACE

W. T. Stace is a philosopher who has devoted himself to the study of mysticism. In his major work, Mysticism and Philosophy¹, Stace focuses on the following questions: Is there a universal mystical experience, essentially the same through all the ages and in all cultures and religions? What characterizes the mystical experience? Is the mystical experience one of some objective reality or is it purely a subjective feeling of man? What is the correct interpretation of the mystical experience and what does it claim about the relationship between man, the Universe and the "Divine"?

The wording of this very last question (the correct interpretation rather than interpretations) reveals immediately one point of view of Stace. He believes that the fully enlightened mystic, whether he be Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, or Muslim, etc., living in the 2nd, 10th, or 20th century, has essentially the same mystical experience; that is, that the "content" of the full mystical experience, as it happens, is identical despite any difference of time, place and

¹W. T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy (London: Macmillan, 1960).

culture.

Stace argues that one can distinguish (through a careful examination) between what was the nature of the mystic's experience and the interpretation made by the mystic of that experience. By subtracting the latter from the former one isolates the universal "core" or content of mystical experience.

Throughout his book, Stace carefully and continuously distinguishes between the mystical experience as it happens--the mystic caught up in mystical vision, and the mystical experience remembered--the mystic as he tries to explain, to conceptualize and communicate what was perceived.

Having discussed the distinctions which he sees between mystics who are (in varying degrees) either of the emotional type or the intellectual speculative type (where the emotions are strictly under control), the mystical experience which occurs spontaneously (an experience which was unsought) and the mystical experience which is "acquired"¹, Stace settles upon two phenomenological categories of mysticism, the "introvertive" and the "extrovertive" types (a typology adopted from Otto).

¹that is, that the mystic consciously with much effort strives for and seeks the mystical experience and employs at times, long established, traditional methods towards this end.

In his study, Stace examines the accounts of both these mystical types, coming from a variety of cultural sources and he finds in them a basic agreement, a "universal or general concurrence" and this fact enables him to propose a set of common characteristics which make up the mystical experience.

Stace asserts that the mystic of either type experiences an undifferentiated unity. This perception of unity is the "inner essence" or "inner nucleus" of the whole set of common characteristics belonging to the mystical experience. Although he does suggest that the "unifying vision" of the extrovertive type lies on a lower level than the "unitary consciousness" of the introvertive type (the former being a sort of incomplete version of the latter), Stace firmly maintains that the "One" of both mystic types is identical--since "both are empty of content" and therefore nothing can exist which would constitute a distinguishing mark between them. He explains that although the extrovertive mystic perceives "Oneness" by means of many distinct objects, the multiplicity of the objects does not enter into the One: "The Oneness as such has no multiplicity and no distinguishing items in it."¹ "...the sense objects which the extrovertive experience perceives to be "All One" are not themselves parts of

¹Ibid., p.146.

the extrovertive One, which is therefore in itself undifferentiated and contentless."¹ "Indeed it is, in the mystic's view, the very same oneness as is perceived in the introvertive experience"².

The conclusion of Stace is that with "this experience of an Undifferentiated Unity, which the mystics believe to be in some sense ultimate and basic to the world, we reach the heart of all mystical experience in all the advanced cultures of both the East and West."³

In the set of universal characteristics determined by Stace (and applied to both the extrovertive and introvertive experiences) the characteristic which is singled out in particular is paradoxicality.⁴

To Stace, paradoxicality is the central indicator of the mystical experience and when it is recognized and admitted by the mystic and philosopher,

¹Ibid., p.152.

²Ibid., p.146.

³Ibid., p.230.

⁴the other universal characteristics distinguished by Stace are: (1) the difficulty that the mystic has with language (expression of the experience), (2) Bliss, joy, a feeling of sharing in the holy or divine or a sense of knowing that which is of supreme value. (3) Certainty--the mystic's absolute certainty of the objective reality of his mystical experience (although Stace, in the philosopher's role, points out that neither the term "objective" nor "subjective" best describes what the mystic reports of his experience. The mystic experience is transsubjective and the mystic experiences self-transcendence)).

paradoxicality becomes the key to the proper interpretation of the mystical experience.

The distinction referred to earlier between the mystical experience "as it happens" and the mystical experience "as it is remembered" is especially important here. During the mystical experience, words and thoughts are impossible since the experience is by nature completely unitary and undifferentiated. Stace asserts that there is no multiplicity, no separate objects which could allow concepts to be made. At the time of his enlightenment, the mystic cannot conceptualize it, or speak of it or classify it. He cannot say that it is "undifferentiated" or "Unity" or "One" because these terms immediately establish a duality and distinguish It from the differentiated, multiplicity and the Many.

The mystical experience is completely incapable of being conceptualized and this is, according to Stace, the testimony of all great mystics. (Plotinus, Eckhart, Buddha, Nagarjuna, and the authors of the Upanishads etc.).

One can never hope to have a theoretical understanding of or to solve intellectually the mystical apprehension. The only solution lies in the experiential realm--man must move beyond time, space, subjectivity-objectivity to reach the mystical Ultimate.

One soon realizes that there are two separate spheres of consciousness: the extraordinary "mystical" consciousness and the ordinary, "empirical" consciousness. The mystic knows both realms but lives mostly in the latter. When he moves from the former to the latter, that is, when his experience is no longer actual but is remembered, he needs to speak about it, to communicate his perception to other men. This is where paradoxicality becomes evident.

Whereas the sphere of ordinary consciousness is subject to and ruled by the laws of logic (which are valid there), in the realm of mystical consciousness, the laws of logic have no validity and usefulness. The explanation given by Stace is that the mystical consciousness is the experience of the "One", of "undifferentiated Unity". "...the Many is the sphere of logic, the One not so...the logic and the illogic occupy different territories of experience."¹

When he strives to communicate his experience the mystic finds himself in logical difficulty. That is, the assertions that he is compelled to make in order to express best the truth of his experience end up to be contradictory, but for the sake of not distorting his perception he insists that he must continue to assert both the statements of the contradiction: "A is

¹Ibid., p.270.

B and A is not B" or "A is neither B nor not-B". He thus becomes the speaker of paradox, but this paradox is not meaningless. The language of the mystic is paradoxical because his experience when translated into the terms of ordinary consciousness is paradoxical. To the intellect, to the understanding, the experience of the "One" is actually paradoxical; logicalness can have no application.

The conclusion is then, that the very best expression of the mystical experience must be paradoxical in order to mirror correctly that experience.

The mystics are driven by powerful inner compulsions to utter paradoxes. These are not the product of thought or intellect but rather of inspiration... their mysticism drives them to paradox, their logical natures to logical explanations....Hence they vacillate between the two.¹

Often, the mystic frustrated by the contradiction of his language, retreats into a declaration of ineffability. But Stace maintains that the mystical experience is not ineffable. The mystic has correctly expressed his experience, he just "confuses the paradoxicality of mystical experience with ineffability".

According to Stace, mystics must "seize...the essential paradoxicality of their experience." When the mystic is bold and does not hesitate to use paradox, he speaks of the Ultimate in terms of the "Vacuum-Plenum"

¹Ibid., p.261.

paradox¹ or that which neither is nor is not.

The most important conclusion that we receive from Stace's examination of mysticism is the fact that mystical thinking always is and always must be (when correctly expressed) a series of logical paradoxes.

Now we may ask, what significance does the paradoxicality of the mystical experience have for the elaboration of theories about the relation of the mystical Ultimate with the world and man? Stace poses the problem in this manner: are God and the world identical, or are they wholly distinct, or is there some other possibility?

The options open to the mystical theorist according to Stace are three: pantheism, dualism, and monism. It is the first of these three, pantheism, which in Stace's mind forms the correct expression for the mystical relation of the Ultimate, man, and the world. The next question is: what is pantheism--what distinguishes it from the monist interpretation which Stace rejects, and why does Stace dismiss dualism and monism as improper interpretations--what reasons does he give to support the correctness of the pan-

¹Vacuum-Plenum paradox: the proposition that the Ultimate is: Pure Unity-Multiplicity, Independent-Contingent, Dynamic-Static, Qualified-Unqualified, Impersonal-Personal, Eternal-Temporal, Motionless and Unchanging-In perpetual flux, etc.,

theistic attitude?

First let us examine the meanings that Stace gives to the terms dualism and monism: dualism is "the view that the relation between God and the world, including the relation between God and the individual self when in the state of union is a relation of pure otherness or difference with no identity."¹ Monism is "the view that the relation is pure identity with no difference."²

Stace feels that when either dualism or monism is used to express the mystical experience, it indicates an undeveloped mysticism.

The dualist formulation is, in Stace's eyes, absolutely contrary to the "whole spirit of the mystics' spontaneous words." Stace outlines the necessary elements to characterize the mystical consciousness: In its "fully developed" and "completed" form, when expressed in the logical plane of consciousness, the mystical consciousness becomes: (1) "...that there are no distinctions in the One, (2) that there is no distinction between object and object...and (3) that there is no distinction between subject and object."³

¹Ibid., p.219.

²Ibid., p.232.

³Ibid., p.232.

If any of these three characteristics is denied, then according to Stace, it is a "diminished, stunted or undeveloped mysticism."

According to the mystics themselves, the essential element of the introvertive experience is the disappearance of distinction between subject and object. The extrovertive experience also insists that to all the various objects of the world, there is an "existential" Oneness--which denies duality. Following these criteria, dualism for Stace, is plainly incorrect or "undeveloped" because it holds that the object God and the subject "I" (even during the mystical experience) are two realities, separate and radically different. Man is outside of the undifferentiated unity that he perceives.

Why then do mystics opt for the dualistic interpretation when it seems clearly contrary to many of their expressed feelings of the mystical experience? First of all, only very few mystics are also great philosophical minds and theorists and moreover, the mystic is not usually interested in theories but in the actual living of his spiritual life. Stace believes that one reason may be the mystic's difficulty to carry his apprehension to its logical conclusion; in part this could be due to his not understanding other philosophical alternatives (Stace has in mind specifically what the pantheistic alternative offers).

Or, and perhaps more importantly, the mystic (especially the Western mystic) is subject to the great cultural and historical (and ecclesiastical) pressure of theism, and often the interpretation of the mystical experience is "stunted" to retain these theological beliefs.

Stace rejects monism as an interpretation because he can find no monistic theory which does not end in nonsense. Monism is defined by Stace as the pure and simple identity of God and the Self of man. Monism claims that there is only One Reality and that it is non-diverse. The diversity of individuals, the numerous finite objects of the world, and the phenomenon of change, ultimately are unreal. The reality that man normally and erroneously ascribes to these things is the fault of his "ignorance", they are his "false imaginings". The pure, undifferentiated One is the whole of reality. Stace rejects the monistic theory because while it claims to be "self-consistent", it cannot maintain its position. It can be refuted easily in the following manner: when monism explains the apparent multiple existences of things as "illusion", we must then ask who is it that has illusion or ignorance? Illusion implies a ground upon which the illusory belief can take place. If some individual "I" is regarded as having ignorance then Stace must ask the Cartesian question: "How can I have illusions

or ignorant ideas if I do not exist?"¹ Even if there is only a momentary "I" which has the illusion, there is at least one other being which exists independently of the "One". If on the other hand, one proposes that the illusion is not in the mind of a finite being but is in God (or the One) the monistic theory is immediately invalid; illusion must be regarded as real (for an unreal illusion is a contradiction in adiecto) and when illusion is introduced into the Undifferentiated One, the result is multiplicity in that which one claims is without multiplicity.

The conclusion of Stace is that neither the theistic separation of God and the world nor the monistic denial of the world's reality can provide a true interpretation of the mystic's perception: each is an extreme position, one-sided, and needs to be balanced by the other. The correct or "most nearly correct" expression proposed by Stace is his concept of pantheism which joins both the monist and dualist positions in paradox.

Pantheism is usually described in one of two ways: that "God is all and All is God", meaning that all living things are God--which is an atheistic idea no different from materialism. "God" becomes a term which is interchangeable with the term "world" or

¹Ibid., p.238.

"nature". Alternatively, pantheism is defined as the identity of God and only certain elements in nature, for instance, the "self" of man. But this leads us back to the position of monism dealt with above. Since Stace finds neither of these two descriptions meaningful, he proposes that pantheism be viewed as "the philosophy which asserts together both of the following propositions: (1) the world is identical with God and (2) the world is distinct from, that is to say, not identical with God."¹ With Stace's definition there is neither dualism's separate being existing outside of the Absolute, nor monism's dichotomy between the pure undifferentiated One and "Illusion". Ultimate Reality is One, but It is an identity with the retention of difference, an assertion readily admitted to be an alogical or antilogical position. Pantheism as "identity in difference" is paradoxical and meant to be that, for the pantheistic paradox is the expression of the non-rational element of the human mind which has its source and maintenance in the mystical experience. Since, as earlier stated, paradoxicality is "one of the universal characteristics of all mysticisms", it seems reasonable to expect that the "high level interpretations of mysticism" will also have paradoxicality as their essential nature.

Ibid., p.212.

Stace tries by philosophical methods, i.e. arguments and proofs, to establish a correct description of the universal mystical intuition. One could contend (as Underhill does) that such a philosophical endeavor is doomed to failure from the start. In this case, Stace's arguments and proofs fail to convince. His theory breaks down as it identifies the convergence of the two types of mystical intuition in the concept of the Undifferentiated One¹.

Stace's citation of mystical texts in support of this idea is too brief; in addition, many verses cited are pulled from their original context and given a questionable reading²; also the evidence used is sometimes obtained from secondhand sources. In brief, Stace's proof is wholly insufficient to establish such

¹See above pp.67-68; Also W. T. Stace, "Buddhist Mysticism", Religious Studies I., pp.163-175 : "...most important central characteristic in which all fully developed mystical experiences agree, and which in the last analysis is definitive of them and serves to mark them off from the other kinds of experiences, is that they involve the apprehension of an ultimate nonsensuous unity in all things, a oneness, or a One to which neither the senses nor the reason can penetrate."

²Two examples can be given, the first found on p.88 of Mysticism and Philosophy, is Stace's translation and interpretation of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad verse 7, to be compared with R. E. Hume's translation of the same verse. Also p.109 of Mysticism and Philosophy, Stace's equating of the Zen Buddhist idea of Sūnyatā with his idea of Undifferentiated Unity, misusing a quote of D. T. Suzuki. Another understanding of Sūnyatā is given on p.241 of D. T. Suzuki's Zen Buddhism ed. William Barrett, (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956).

an important claim. In a similar fashion, quite a persuasive case could be drawn up from the mystical texts in support of the opposite point of view¹. But then, of course, Stace would maintain that those chosen texts represent the writings of mystics strongly influenced or determined by previous or present religious or philosophical environments, and not the mystical experience in its immediate, unspoiled state. This is a very loaded interpretation to set oneself up as judge of tainted and untainted mystical expressions.

Because the Mystical "Object" is undifferentiated, contentless, Stace claims that the mystical experience is also entirely without content and multiplicity. Mystical experience is then an unconscious state and ultimately is indescribable in any terms. Yet while the One is indescribable, it is not ineffable. According to Stace, mystical experience is remembered and it is only then it is given a "content" : either erroneous content or paradoxical content. However, if mystical experience is, as Stace says, "contentless" and unconsciousness then what does the mystic remember? He could remember the experience as a state of bliss or Love but Stace says that not even the senses operate

¹For example, to counter Stace's interpretation drawn from the Upanishadic text, Māṇḍūkya 7, we could cite other Upanishadic verses: Muṇḍaka 2.2.1-2; Prasṇa 6.6; Isā 4; Katha 5.9-11; Kaushītaki 4.20.

there. But then on what can the mystic make propositions--even paradoxical ones? What is his certainty?

To say that the experience is contentless and without multiplicity and that the "Object" is undifferentiated, contentless are two separate claims. There is no evidence that the one necessarily follows from or entails the other. If the Object is undifferentiated, without multiplicity, this does not mean that the experience need then be contentless and without multiplicity and vice versa.

There is an important reason for Stace's insistence upon the absence of multiplicity in both the "Object" and experience, as it is upon this basis that he establishes: (1) the claim that mystical experience is neither objective nor subjective and (2) the essentiality of the Pantheistic Paradox.

The validity of the paradoxical language rests upon the assertion that the laws of logic have no application in a sphere without content, without multiplicity. The fact that the laws of logic are violated when the mystic speaks of the Vacuum-Plenum Paradox does not nullify the mystic claim, for the laws of logic only have validity in the sphere of the many, and according to Stace, the mystical "Object" is, in reality, the contentless One.

Stace's claims and arguments are thus based on a false premise for which he does not have the evidence to convince his readers. However, the failure of Stace's theory does not cancel other valuable contributions which his work brings to the study of mysticism:

(1) the analysis of and emphasis upon the nature of paradoxical expression and its essentiality in the mystical experience. (2) the recognition that the monist and theist (dualist) positions must (and can) be asserted jointly in mystical doctrine.

To conclude this account of the investigators of mysticism loyal to the second approach, we will say by way of summary that: (1) their goal is not merely a descriptive account of mysticism. While they at first claim that the mystical experience is completely incapable of being conceptualized, nonetheless they produce with confidence an intellectual formulation which claims to describe adequately the mystical vision. Their common aim is to study mystical statements in order to elaborate a metaphysical portrait of that Mystical Object; (2) they all show allegiance to and faith in the application of mystical or religious philosophy. This means a belief that one can consider the alternatives presented, (the various mystical expressions), estimate the validity of the conceptions, and finally determine what is true. All develop a

methodology toward this end: to determine and establish the ideal mystical experience, the true mystical expression. However, I maintain, that when determined, such a true image or description must be able to answer successfully to philosophical demands for cogency, logicality and meaning while at the same time coinciding with the descriptions consistently reaffirmed by mystics in the immediacy of mystical experience.

CHAPTER III PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

In this last chapter, we leave briefly the studies specifically aimed at investigating the nature of mysticism and examine the ideas of process philosophy in order to consider their usefulness for an understanding of mystical experience.

Process philosophy cannot be seen as the creation of any one man. Among others, the ideas of Fausto Sozzini, F. W. von Schelling, G. T. Fechner, J. Lequier, O. Pfleiderer, C. S. Pierce, B. Varisco, H. Bergson and N. Berdyaev nurtured and developed the new perspective of reality that came to be known as "process thinking".

One man however, stands out as having furnished to process thought its first full and explicit expression, Alfred North Whitehead.

For our purposes, the discussion here will be limited to some basic ideas of Whitehead, sketched very briefly, and will rather focus on the attempts of writers such as Charles Hartshorne, John Cobb and Schubert Ogden to adapt Whiteheadian metaphysics to fit the needs and purposes of philosophical theology--that is, to produce a logical, consistent and detailed process theology.

While process theologians do not particularly consider the mystic and his mystical 'knowledge', nor undertake an explicit analysis of mystical experience, their "neoclassical theism" or "panentheism" is presented here because I feel that the theory carries to completion the view which Otto, Underhill and Stace try to establish through their studies of mysticism.

The first thing to be noted about the efforts of process philosophers is their opposition to the idea that the "Divine" is indeterminate, indescribable, indemonstrable--beyond the reach of predication--ultimately incomprehensible to man. They are convinced that man can speak rationally and meaningfully about the "Divine": that metaphysics has a role and a right to operate.

Religion requires a metaphysical backing; for its authority is endangered by the intensity of the emotions it generates. Such emotions are evidence of some vivid experience; but they are a very poor guarantee for its correct interpretation....The foundations of dogma must be laid in a rational metaphysics which criticizes meanings and endeavors to express the most general concepts adequate for the all-inclusive universe.¹

...we must investigate dispassionately what the metaphysical principles, here developed, require on these points, as to the nature of God. There is nothing here in the nature of proof. There is merely the confrontation of the theoretic system

¹Alfred N. Whitehead, "Religion and Metaphysics", in Process Philosophy and Christian Thought, ed. D. Brown, R. E. James Jr., G. Reeves (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1971) p.67.

with a certain rendering of the facts....

Any cogency of argument entirely depends upon elucidation of somewhat exceptional elements in our conscious experience--those elements which may be roughly classed together as religious and moral intuitions.

In the first place, God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification.¹

While there is a confidence in the rational approach and method to handle ultimate questions, this confidence does not lead process philosophers to a presumptuous over-estimation of the capability and accomplishments of rationalism.

Rationalism never shakes off its status of an experimental adventure. The combined influences of mathematics and religion, which have so greatly contributed to the rise of philosophy, have also had the unfortunate effect of yoking it with static dogmatism. Rationalism is an adventure in the clarification of thought, progressive and never final. But it is an adventure in which even partial success has importance.²

Metaphysics is nothing but the description of the generalities which apply to all the details of practice.

No metaphysical system can hope entirely to satisfy these pragmatic tests. At the best such a system will remain only an approximation to the general truths which are sought....no language can be anything but elliptical, requiring a leap of the imagination to understand its meaning in its relevance to immediate experience. The position of metaphysics in the development of culture cannot be understood without remembering that no verbal statement is the adequate expression of a proposition.³

¹Iidem, Process and Reality (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933; Free Press Paperbacks, 1969) p.405.

²Ibid., p.12.

³Ibid., pp.16-17.

It must be remembered that process philosophy is a movement which tries not to make a dogmatic claim for the certainty of its propositions. It will never claim to say "all there is to say" about Reality, claim to have fully grasped or to wholly contain Reality by its description.

The goal of process philosophy is to reconcile, to show the convergence of religious and philosophical thinking about the Divine. The theory proposed to accomplish this does not arise directly from an acquaintance with mystical experience but from the radically new understanding of reality brought by process thought.

Briefly, process philosophy sees the base, the fundamental character of reality as dynamic. It is continuous creative change; all worldly experience attests to the primacy of process, process being the universal, all-inclusive condition.

Without doubt, if we are to go back to that ultimate, integral experience, unwarped by the sophistication of theory, that experience whose elucidation is the final aim of philosophy, the flux of things is one ultimate generalization around which we must weave our philosophical system.¹

The starting point of this system then is the recognition of creative becoming--the "creative advance" as the universal fact of experience. It is this recognition and emphasis which separates process thought from the traditional philosophy of Being. Becoming

¹Ibid., p.240.

is chosen as the fundamental concept and regarded as a more inclusive category than Being.

However,

...it is a misconception to suppose that process philosophy, siding with becoming, rejects being. Rather, it is the doctrine of being in becoming, permanence in the novel; by contrast, philosophies of being are doctrines of becoming in being, novelty in the permanent. The trouble is to insinuate anything new into the permanent is to make it a new thing. The old with the least new factor is, as a whole, new.¹

The universality of process is not sufficient to characterize "process philosophy". An essential idea, the key to an overall interpretation of reality, is "creativity".

"Creativity" is something present in every individual reality. It is the ultimate metaphysical principle and expresses the way in which past occasions come together under a new aim and provide the potential for the formation of a new occasion, a new concrete unity or, in Whitehead's term, a "concrescence".

Creativity is without a character of its own in exactly the same sense in which the Aristotelian 'matter' is without a character of its own. It is that ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality. It cannot be characterized, because all characters are more special than itself. But creativity is always to be found under conditions, and described as conditioned.²

¹Charles Hartshorne, "The Development of Process Philosophy" in Process Theology, ed. E. H. Cousins (New York: Newman Press, 1971) p.62.

²Alfred N. Whitehead, Process and Reality, p.37.

"Creativity" is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity.

"Creativity" is the principle of novelty. An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the "many" which it unifies. Thus "creativity" introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The "creative advance" is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates....The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction.¹

The significant contribution of this worldview for theology is the insistence that that which underlies and supports all human and material existence, also must know and be itself in process. "God" is not static and without change, he is not the unchanging subject of change. "God" knows and is influenced by worldly process and undergoes a corresponding change.

The true metaphysical position is that God is the aboriginal instance of this creativity, and is therefore the aboriginal condition which qualifies its action.²

In this sense God is the principle of concretion; namely, he is that actual entity from which each temporal concrescence receives that initial aim from which its self-causation starts.³

¹Ibid., pp.25-26.

²Ibid., p. 263.

³Ibid., p. 286.

The primordial created fact is the unconditioned conceptual valuation of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects. This is the "primordial nature" of God. By reason of this complete valuation, the objectification of God in each derivative actual entity results in a graduation of the relevance of eternal objects to the concrescent phases of that derivative occasion....This divine ordering is itself matter of fact, thereby conditioning creativity. Thus possibility which transcends realized temporal matter of fact has a real relevance to the creative advance. God is the primordial creature; but the description of his nature is not exhausted by this conceptual side of it. His "consequent nature" results from his physical prehensions of the derivative actual entities.¹

Thus analogously to all actual entities the nature of God is dipolar. He has a primordial nature and a consequent nature. The consequent nature of God is conscious; and it is the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The primordial nature is conceptual, the consequent nature is the weaving of God's physical feelings upon his primordial concepts.

One side of God's nature is constituted by his conceptual experience. This experience is the primordial fact in the world, limited by no actuality which it presupposes. It is therefore infinite, devoid of all negative prehensions. This side of his nature is free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient, and unconscious. The other side originates with physical experience derived from the temporal world, and then acquires integration with the primordial side. It is determined, incomplete, consequent, "everlasting", fully actual, and conscious.²

What process thought gives theology is a bold re-thinking of the nature of reality and the nature of God. Its new understanding provides another way of relating the God of religion, the object of worship with such philosophical concepts as "absolute", "immutable",

¹Ibid., pp. 36-37.

²Ibid., p. 407.

"eternal", "impassive". In reconceiving these ideas, it removes contradictions but at the same time places itself in direct conflict with the main stream of Christian theology.

What process philosophy insists upon, then, is a revision of traditional thinking about Divine Reality. It argues that theological thinking must be sensitive to and compatible with the changing view of the world brought by modern man's radical discoveries and advances in the closely related fields of science. At the same time, it stresses that metaphysics must continue to do justice to the original intuition, the intent and needs of religious man.

The traditional metaphysical description of the Divine derived from the Christian theological tradition has, according to process philosophers, failed to do these two things. It "fails to include the 'practice'"¹ and it entangles itself "...in verbal expressions which carry consequences at variance with the initial intuition..."²

According to Hartshorne, earlier philosophers and theologians, when faced with the problem of describing the nature of God, fell into the error of oversimplification. They chose to ascribe to God only one member of the pair of opposing or contrasting ultimate concepts (e.g., Immutability-Mutability;

¹Ibid., p.16.

²Ibid., p.409.

Eternity-Temporality; Being-Becoming; Uniformity-Diversity; Independence-Contingency.)

To attribute both members (both "poles" in Hartshorne's terms) was unthinkable for these writers; that was regarded as unfitting the Divine state and moreover an illogical position. Therefore the most commendable and desirably regarded member of the pair (in its supremely realizable form) was attested as properly indicative of the Divine. The opposite member (the other "pole") was then seen as inferior and deficient and was stringently denied as belonging to God.

Hartshorne sees the above description and method (which he calls "Monopolarity") as having dominated religious speculation, producing what he calls "classical theism" and "classical pantheism".

Process theology exposes "monopolarity" as an intellectually facile method based upon an erroneous premise and bearing consequences quite different from and incompatible with the intent and claim of its proponents.

Not only does "monopolarity" deny a true reciprocal relationship between God and the World¹, it

¹Pantheism and classical theism "...share...a common monopolar denial that God can be in any way conceived as genuinely temporal or related to others". Schubert Ogden, "The Reality of God" in Process Theology, ed. E. H. Cousins. p.125.

leaves us only the discomfoting choice between: (a) the traditional view of theism in which one admits of a reality outside of God (all the real properties deemed inferior and unsuggestive of Divinity) thereby creating a superior, more all-inclusive Real in which God is reduced to the lesser status of a mere "constituent": He becomes only a part of the greater Whole: "Deity-and Something else"; or (b) the view of pantheism where the Supreme is the "total real", the "fully real", the "only real", and the side of the polar opposites that is denied as unrepresentative of the Absolute is necessarily made into an illusory condition or concept.

"Pantheism does nothing to diminish the difficulties which may be thought to accompany theism. It involves one in denying or explaining away or in falsifying the foundation from which all our metaphysical reflections must start, namely the real multiplicity of distinct finite things with which we are acquainted in experience". The truth, however, is that neither of the traditional choices offers the least hope of permitting us to solve what another Roman Catholic theologian has recently called "the central problem of Christian philosophy--the problem of the co-existence and coagency of the infinite and finite, the necessary and the contingent, the eternal and the temporal, the absolute and the relative."¹

The aim of process theologians is to save theological thinking from the logical contradictions and absurdities of its traditional formulation. Their first task is to identify the source of monopolar thinking

¹Schubert Ogden quoting Frederick C. Copleston in "The Reality of God", Process Theology, ed. E. H. Cousins; p.126 (my italics).

or classical theism and pantheism as the product of a desire to unite pure religious intuition with Greek metaphysics; they will then expose that desire and effort as futile since it tries to amalgamate what are two opposing understandings of the relationship, God and World.

The problem lies in the Greek idea of perfection and in Aristotle's concept of relation. Aristotle views relation as involving change and dependence and hence imperfection. As a result, the Aristotelian-Thomist school holds that the world can be related to God because it is dependent on him, but God cannot be really related to the world. If he were, then he would be dependent on creation and would not be the unmoved mover required by the Greek idea of perfection. This image of an aloof and distant deity, process thinkers maintain, is supported neither by the experience of human value nor by the testimony of Biblical revelation.¹

A corollary to this conviction was the prevailing opinion that the ancients--who in this particular context were the Greeks with Cicero and Plotinus--had said if not the final, at least the most authoritative word in this as in so many other fields, and that the Christian thinker's task could be achieved by a study either of Plato or of Aristotle or an amalgam of the two, eked out by such further discussion as might be made necessary by the higher wisdom of the Christian revelation.²

For indeed Aquinas stood the system of Aristotle on its head or, to speak more carefully, supplied the lack of higher metaphysics in Aristotle by framing a conception of the deity which was in part drawn from Judeo-Christian revelation and which then proposed in Thomist terms embodied

¹Ewert H. Cousins, "Process Models in Culture, Philosophy, and Theology" in Process Theology ed. E. H. Cousins; p.15.

²David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York: Alfred Knopf Inc. and Random House Inc.; Vintage Books; 1962) p.335.

all that was valuable in the metaphysic of Platonism.¹

It is this general metaphysical outlook bequeathed to the Western world by Greek antiquity, which provided the first fundamental concepts for the full theological explication of the Christian witness. Beginning with the Church Fathers, theologians undertook to conceive the God attested by Holy Scripture as the wholly absolute Being of the philosophers. That this was a difficult, if not indeed impossible, undertaking had already been made evident by the parallel efforts of the Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria, who has perhaps the best claim to be the founder of classical theism. His writings leave no question that the God of Israel, whose very being is his involvement in the creatures of his love, can in no wise be simply identified with the Absolute of classical metaphysics. Even so, the whole tradition of, what is usually called "Christian philosophy", whose most admirable expression is, doubtless, the imposing system of Aquinas, is but a series of attempts to make the identification; and the profound influence of that tradition, even on those who now declare its God to be dead, is proof that these attempts have enjoyed some kind of success. So far as most Western men have conceived God at all, in distinction from believing in him or merely picturing him in the manner of mythology, they have done so in the concepts of the Greek metaphysics of being.

Just this, however, enables us to understand the major stumbling block which classical theism places in the way of many of our contemporaries. Not only have such men long since become convinced of the essential incoherence of this theism in its efforts to combine the religious insights of Christianity with the philosophical wisdom of the Greeks, but they are also deeply repelled by the central claim of Greek wisdom, that this world of time and change is somehow inferior or not fully real.²

¹Ibid., p.258.

²Schubert M. Ogden, "Towards a New Theism" in Process Philosophy and Christian Thought, eds. D. Brown, R. E. James Jr., G. Reeves; pp.179-180.

The alternative to classical theism and pantheism brought by process philosophy and described clearly by Charles Hartshorne is "Dipolarity" or "panentheism". The dipolar method, as the term suggests, claims that both poles are attributable to the Divine without contradiction and loss of meaning. Hartshorne maintains that the paradox of the "two-fold vision of Reality", the predication of opposite attributes, first of all, should not be regarded as a negative exercise to convey that the Divine is "contentless", inconceivable, or ineffable and the Void.

...the famous paradoxes, or contradictions...of metaphysics and theology are not, as is claimed, the inevitable result of human limitations, of the finite or relative or conditioned trying to understand the infinite or absolute or unconditional, nor of the meaningless of the latter, but the natural yet avoidable result of haste and inattention to exact shades of meaning.¹

There is much, in a sense infinitely much, that we cannot know about the universe and God; but, as I shall try to show, it does not lie in any insolubility in principle of the conceptual problem of infinite and finite, or of absolute and relative.²

If the Divine is to be both the "categorically supreme" and the total all-inclusive Real, then Hartshorne and the other process theologians maintain

¹Charles Hartshorne, The Divine Relativity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948) p.4.

²Ibid., p.5.

that the categories previously denied to God by metaphysics: Becoming, Passivity, Relativity, Dependency, Change, Temporality, must be understood and defended as necessary and essential elements of the Divine nature. Then and only then will there be coherence in our metaphysical proposal.

Hartshorne draws support for this view from the realm of logic and from Morris Cohen's Law of Polarity.

That God should be the perfection of wisdom and goodness, yet in all respects infinite, changeless, and absolute, this is if anything a more hopeless rebuke to all our rational insights than that there should be threefold personality in God. Wisdom and Goodness are essentially relationships, and the wholly nonrelative or pure absolute can in no intelligible sense, know or intend anything; more obviously, if possible, it cannot love anything. Moreover, if God were wholly absolute and immutable, he would be less, not more, rich in fullness of being than if he were relative and mutable; for modern analysis has shown, more and more clearly, that the relative includes the absolute and more besides, and that becoming includes being as well as something additional. We have come to see that by abstracting from relations and change we can indeed conceive the absolute and the changeless, but only as something abstract and deficient in actuality or concreteness. The concrete God that metaphysics finds reason to accept must be described as supreme both in relativity and in absoluteness, both in becoming of novel value and in permanence of values once achieved, both in activity and in passivity, both in simplicity and in complexity. The concrete includes the abstract, it can perfectly well constitute an aspect of a being which concretely or as a whole is relative and mutable.¹

¹Charles Hartshorne, Reality as Social Process (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1953) p.167.

Morris Cohen's Law of Polarity establishes that the two ultimate poles are "not rivals in merit but complementary poles of a unity"¹. The "ultimate contraries are correlatives", not contradictory opposites. They are "mutually interdependent", for "nothing real can be described by the wholly one-sided assertion of simplicity, being, actuality and the like, each in a 'pure' form, devoid and independent of complexity, becoming, potentiality and related contraries."²

A one-sided assertion, as made by the monopolists, destroys the sense, it "robs" the "superior pole" of all its meaning. The polar relationship is essentially correlative. Hartshorne insists that the interdependent relationship of the two poles be recognized and maintained in order to preserve meaning, the sense of the quality to be attributed. No contradiction is involved since both poles bear the possibility of a supreme and an inferior condition (each is able to have positive or negative value). God is necessarily the integration of both poles in their richest, most highly positive state. He is the supremely passive, supremely independent, supremely potential, supremely actual.

¹Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, eds., Philosophers Speak of God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) p.13.

²Ibid., p.2.

God is seen as the definitive Being, the definitive Becoming, the definitive Eternality, the definitive Temporality.

There is no paradox to Dipolarity, to the fact that the Divine is both immutable and mutable, both self-sufficient and derivative from his creation, because these attributes apply to different aspects of the Divine Reality.

The dipolar predication can also be defended on the basis of the essential nature of existence--verified by experience. The coexistence of permanence and change, of concrete and abstract aspects in the same entity is not a questionable or unusual condition. It is something familiar and accepted by us in our everyday experience. A river as it flows is an ever-changing state. However, the way in which a river is identified, the fact that it always flows is its constant and unchanging aspect. A man sad yesterday, happy today, is a man changed--he is no longer exactly the same man he was yesterday, yet he also testifies to the permanence, the unchanging abstract aspect when he says, I was sad but now I am happy.

Just as in our case, our defining characteristics are but abstract elements in our concrete experiences, so in the case of God, his attributes are really only abstractions. As such, they define that sense of his eminence or perfection which is indeed statically complete, an absolute maximum. But, because they are in themselves nothing more than abstractions, they are far from constituting the

whole of his perfection. That, to the contrary, is nothing merely abstract, but something unimaginably concrete: the ever new synthesis into his own everlasting and all embracing life of all that has been or ever shall be.¹

It is, then, only a dipolar predication which gives to the ultimate categories their ultimate meaning and the unique way in which God is able to combine the two poles in the best manner, in this supreme fashion, discloses the full measure of divinity.

In what manner is man included in process philosophy's understanding of Divine Reality?

Since creativity is recognized as a universal condition, the power of creation is not limited to God alone. Man is also assured of his share in creativity. He is self-creating: assured of his freedom to create his own being and of the freedom to choose his own destiny. In addition, because of his effect upon the consequent nature of God, man influences and determines the creative advance of God. God and the World, each is seen as necessary to the other.

Opposed elements stand to each other in mutual requirement. In their unity, they inhibit or contrast. God and the World stand to each other in this opposed requirement. God is the infinite ground of all mentality, the unity of vision seeking physical multiplicity. The world is the multiplicity of finites, actualities seeking a perfected unity. Neither God, nor the World reaches static completion. Both are in the grip of the ultimate

¹Schubert Ogden, "The Reality of God" in Process Theology, ed. E. H. Cousins; pp.124-125.

metaphysical ground, the creative advance into novelty. Either of them, God and the World, is the instrument of novelty for the other.¹

However, while man and the universe are seen as an essential part of God, necessary to his nature, what is meant as essential and necessary is not this or that particular individual creature, not this universe. Here is shown the independence as well as the dependence of God. The occurrence of this particular individual is "accidental". Man has to be content with being an "accidental" part of God, an accidental divine reality. In this way, Hartshorne's dipolar God is not just the sum of all things--He is this and more and here we perceive both his independence and his contingency.

God is not just the all of (other) things; but yet all other things are literally in him. He is not just the whole of ordinary individuals, since he has unity of experience, and all other individuals are objects of this experience, which is no mere sum of its objects; moreover, his identifying 'personality traits' are entirely independent of any set of ordinary actual individuals whatever. To be himself he does not need this universe, but only a universe, and only contingently does he even contain this particular universe.²

What is the significance of the process world-view for the religious purposes and needs of man?

First of all, process philosophy can explain

¹Alfred N. Whitehead, Process and Reality, p.411.

²Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, eds., Philosophers Speak of God, p.22.

satisfactorily how God has knowledge of the world and man and then, most importantly, how God cares for mankind.

Whitehead identifies two existential worries of man which have a religious importance. The first of these is the anguish and terror which man feels as he faces the relentless passage of time and the loss of actualities which it always entails.

The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil. It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a 'perpetual perishing'.¹

Man in the world longs for an escape from time, he seeks another order where there is permanence and not continual loss.

The second worry of man is his need to establish his sense of worth as somehow extending beyond the individual self.

Process philosophy can answer such "worries" or needs of man in the following manner. Man's immediate thoughts and actions which perish, are made "everlasting" by their objective immortality in the consequent nature of God. In the process scheme of reality, this is the ability and purpose of God, that in his nature all is retained in a harmonious unity without loss or obstruction. This is what Whitehead calls God's tender, preserving care:

The image--and it is but an image--the image under

¹Alfred N. Whitehead, Process and Reality, p.401.

which this operative growth of God's nature is best conceived, is that of a tender care that nothing be lost.

The consequent nature of God is his judgment on the world. He saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved.¹

Each actuality has its present life and its immediate passage into novelty; but its passage is not death. This final phase of passage in God's nature is ever enlarging itself. In it the complete adjustment of the immediacy of joy and suffering reaches the final end of creation. This end is existence in the perfect unity of adjustment as means, and in the perfect multiplicity of the attainment of individual types of self-existence.²

The theme of Cosmology, which is the basis of all religions, is the story of the dynamic effort of the World passing into everlasting unity, and of the static majesty of God's vision, accomplishing its purpose of completion by absorption of the World's multiplicity of effort.³

Not only is the transient nature of life overcome but individual existence is recognized as:

...a contribution to the future world society, the entire life and value of which is destined to be appreciated and enjoyed forever by the Eminent or Divine creativity, this immortality in God being the creatures' only value in the long run.⁴

The understanding and conviction attested to by so many mystics (along with other religious men and women) comes immediately to the reader's mind as

¹Ibid., p.408.

²Ibid., p.412.

³Ibid., p.411.

⁴Charles Hartshorne, "The Development of Process Philosophy" in *Process Theology*, ed. E. H. Cousins; pp.61-62, my italics.

Hartshorne continues:

Egocentric motivations essentially consist in metaphysical confusion. And this is why a Buddhist termed the egocentric view 'writhing in delusion'. For it involves one in an utterly vain and painful attempt to make reality ultimately a contribution to oneself; whereas the final destiny and value of all nondivine life lies beyond the particular self.¹

As mentioned earlier, Hartshorne and the other process writers give little direct attention and consideration to mysticism. Whitehead in his discussion of the inadequacy of the traditional metaphysical description of God (specifically those ideas which result in a gulf or abyss separating God and the World: "God was necessary to the World but the World was not necessary to God"²) says:

The worst of a gulf is, that it is very difficult to know what is happening on the further side of it. This has been the fate of the God of traditional theology. It is only by drawing the long bow of mysticism that evidences for his existence can be collected from our temporal world.³

Hartshorne does state an opinion (unfortunately not pursued further) that mystics are seeking to express religious values which are omitted in classical theist and pantheist doctrines. He writes that "their cloudy and often fantastically fanciful language do seem closer

¹Ibid., p.62.

²Alfred N. Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933, Mentor Books) p.173.

³Ibid., p.173.

to panentheism than to any other clearly defined doctrine".¹

This last statement becomes clearer when seen in conjunction with the suggested pattern that Hartshorne finds revealed by an over-all view of the history of man's experience and rational speculation of the Divine. This pattern shows a development characterized by the following stages: (1) a primitive theism; that is, an "emotional" and "practical" experience and understanding of the deity. The choice of the word "primitive" here indicates that this is a "pre-analytic form"; that religious man, at this stage, has little interest or concern in establishing a consistent, an exact and carefully defined "logical" description of God. The much valued side of this experiencing of the Divine is the "wealth of expression...a richness of insight into the fundamental experiences from which alone a meaningful idea of God can be derived". Hartshorne finds that at this stage, "everything" is represented; there is a wonderful catholicity, nothing being "wholly excluded". While Hartshorne admits of hints of monopolar ideas, he nevertheless insists that such early expressions "almost by necessity involve dipolar metaphysics and panentheistic motifs."²

¹Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, eds. Philosophers Speak of God , pp.163-164.

²Ibid., p.32 .

In other words, Hartshorne's claim is that within the very rich early or first consciousness of God, a genuine dipolar insight is present and evidence of its existence can be found in diverse religious traditions.

The second stage of the pattern seen by Hartshorne is determined by the birth and growth of man's rigorous rational inquiry into the nature of God. Here men took the first steps towards the goal of establishing as rational, as logical and complete a view of the Divine as possible. The over-all direction and aim of these efforts was to seek simplicity and consistency. According to Hartshorne, it is this natural inclination which led to their downfall. They were satisfied with their formulation and did not mistrust the simplification; their error occurred through seeking logical "non-contradictory" descriptions; they over-simplified, ending with inconsistent and illogical conclusions.

The third stage of the pattern (and Hartshorne contends that it is not to be held up as the final or last stage) is brought about by the new understanding of reality introduced by process philosophy.

Now if we return to our study of the nature of mysticism, consider the descriptions and theories derived from Otto, Underhill and Stace, and try to fit them into Hartshorne's pattern, we may conclude that:

true mystical experience and its spontaneous, unthought, paradoxical expression correspond to the first stage. It is panentheistic. Hartshorne's second stage would correspond to all mystical experience reflected upon and translated into logical, theologically one-sided doctrine (i.e., "Monopolarity"). It is always a poor indicator of the mystical experience and intuition.

Finally, with process philosophy, mysticism is provided with a metaphysical framework which both guarantees and interprets the fundamental insights of the mystic.

It was said earlier that process philosophy's theological ideas bring to a satisfying conclusion the mystical theories of Otto, Underhill and Stace. I think that this is evident in two ways: (1) Process philosophers offer a more complete and clear image of the Divine (altogether consonant with the image deduced by Otto, Underhill and Stace from their study of mystical statements); and (2) they succeed in providing a cogent philosophical defense for their theory, a goal which Stace attempted but failed to achieve.¹

¹Proof for the validity of the Vacuum-Plenum paradox which Stace fails to establish, is accomplished by Hartshorne with his theory of panentheism and its basis in the "Law of Polarity" which, faithful to the best tradition of logic, provides the only assurance for the continuance of meaning: in the Divine case, the one pole demands the other to preserve meaning. Further proof is provided on the basis of man's experience, that this theory seems to support best what is found in "practice".

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

In order to weigh the worth of the various analyses of mysticism and the theories which they have produced, let us review the variety of claims made by scholars for the mystic and mystical experience.

(I) First, we considered those writers for whom the mystical experience is subjective. For them, there is no valid objective reference in mystical experience; the mystical object as something "here and beyond" is illusory. The mystical experience is not a reliable source of knowledge of the Divine; it does not produce indubitable information. The mystics' expressions therefore are not an integral part of mystical experience. They are secondary products and always involve a degree of interpretation. In reality, the descriptions are expressions of faith, always derived from the cultural, religious, philosophical surroundings or are due to the peculiar psychological make-up of the individual mystic. No valid or credible theory about Divine Reality can be derived and established from the mystical experience. Mysticism is a state of feeling. The essence and important characters of that experience are the emotions and the conduct that results.

(II) Next came the writers for whom mysticism is an objective experience but, again, an experience where no information or knowledge of the Divine can be gained. Such knowledge is supplied to man only through channels traditionally recognized and sanctioned by the Church for this purpose: e.g. the Scriptures and the writings of the great theological Fathers.

Problems arise here only when mystical experience becomes tied to and limited to a personal love relationship with the traditionally conceived God of Christianity and when any other proposed form is seen as mistaken error.

(III) Finally came the category which includes the largest number of writers on mysticism. For them, mystical experience is the immediate discovery of and encounter with Something which is present in the spirit of man but also has objective reality outside and beyond that spirit. It is particularly the nature of that more-than-human Object which makes the mystical experience significant, unique and important and not the psychological or emotional characteristics.

Mystical experience is regarded as a source of knowledge of the Ultimate Reality or Divine. Mystical experience is a state of consciousness. First-hand, immediate, unmediated information is imparted during the mystical experience. This information can be

positively conceptualized and expressed. Here, the writers maintain, we must pass beyond the limits placed by psychology and deal with metaphysical theories about the Divine. In general, two theories are proposed: (1) there exists one identical intuition which all mystics have and all mean to express. It is assumed that there is but one mystical True, one mystical experience, and therefore, if mystical intuitions be true and real, they then equally must be One and of identical nature. The variation in mystical language is due to incidental, extrinsic causes. The mystical literature, then, requires a careful reading and evaluation because there are many mystics who wrongly interpret or inadequately describe their "knowledge". (2) there are different mystical intuitions, different mystical "contents" due to a different nature of the mystical object. Each of these intuitions is valid and true in its "mirroring" of the mystical object and all are "equal in their degree of blessedness". Nevertheless, one expression is found to be better than all the rest and is said to represent the "ideal of mystical experience".

All of these writers believe that the student of mysticism is able to determine the relative validity or truth of the mystical statements, that he can either isolate the common "content" or recognize what should be the true full expression. They believe their task

to have been facilitated by the existence of certain great mystics from whom we have reliable and valid accounts of Objective Truth. The validity of their vision is verified by one or all of the following: the conscious immediacy of the intuition, the universality of intuition testified to by the unanimity of report, the "orderliness" or the metaphysical cogency of the description.

Do any of the above approaches satisfy the need for an accurate and comprehensive understanding of mysticism?

We can eliminate immediately the studies which seem to distort the data of mysticism. This would mean all those views which portray mysticism and the mystic as abnormal pathological conditions. It would also include all theories about mysticism which (either consciously or unconsciously) try to limit the valid mystical experience to a particular religious creed or tradition. This mistaken effort has most commonly occurred in the Christian West. To the group of Christian scholars mentioned in (II), we must add the analysis and theory of R. C. Zaehner. In the end, it also is an apology for a particular credal position over that of others: i.e., the superiority of a "Christian-like" mysticism.

The above writers have given us studies where such terms as "self-surrender", the necessity of Grace, "a relationship of love and union with a Person", "reconciliation", "personal communion with God", are exclusively used to describe the mystic and mysticism. All these terms are seen as tied to a particular religious tradition; they are narrow and limiting and do not always fit when applied to the whole sphere of mystical experience.

Similarly, the opposite narrow opinion is to be rejected:

Mysticism...always ends in impersonal immortality.¹

Those who take the trouble to train themselves in the arduous technique of mysticism always end, if they go far enough in their work of recollection and meditation, by losing their intuitions of a personal God, and having direct experience of a reality that is impersonal.²

Such views only serve to incite and continue the strife between religious traditions. They are an effort to polarize mysticism into two separate exclusive and antagonistic mystical ideas: the description of the mystical object in personal terms vs. the impersonal description.

¹The opinion of Keyserling quoted by W. R. Inge in Mysticism in Religion (London:Hutchinson,1947), p.162.

²Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means (London: Chatto and Windus,1948) p.163.

Rivalry develops, warnings are issued about the dangers of soul-mysticism or against the lower worship of a personal God. Attacks and condemnations result and a fair assessment of mystical experience is left behind in the heat of the apologetic battle.

The source of this opposition lies not in the mystical life and intuition; it arises from the speculation of the theorists and theologians of mysticism. Enough evidence is available (from both Eastern and Western religious traditions) in the mystics' own words to convince us that mystical experience, far from creating the antagonism, in fact resolves the above personal-impersonal viewpoints. The two separate ideas both appear and coincide in a satisfying harmony.

When the above descriptions and theories are rejected, we are left with two alternatives for an understanding of mysticism: (a) the viewpoint of William James and other psychologists of religion where mysticism is a beneficial subjective experience of man.

Does such a view represent a valid understanding of the mystic and mysticism?

We have no guarantee of the ontological reality of the religious or mystical object, nor proof that mysticism is an independent cognitive experience bringing Truth. Absolute certainty and Absolute Truth cannot be established either by dialectical reasoning, or by

a theorist's claim of a continued recurrence or unanimity of a particular doctrine throughout experience.

For this reason, the interpretation of James and Leuba is permissible as the opposite understanding of someone like Evelyn Underhill. While the views of James and Leuba may be valid theories, it could still be questioned whether they are indeed adequate representations of mysticism. One wonders whether their methodology might not have limited their observations and interpretations of the experiences of others. For it seems that they impoverish the phenomenon of mysticism by taking away, by declaring as illusory and invalid an element universally attested to and claimed by the mystical literature. It is just this quality (the conviction that the World is founded on and finds its ultimate meaning in something beyond mere transient fact) which gives mystical experience (and also religion) a certain uniqueness among the experiences of man.

(b) The second alternative for an understanding of mysticism is one which proposes a comprehensive metaphysical theory about the nature of the mystical Object and its relationship to man and the World. The conclusion here is that the most satisfying theory available so far to the student of mysticism is the panentheistic proposal of process theology.

We have seen that an a-theoretical, "phenomenological" inquiry or description of mysticism does not exist. Rudolf Otto's analysis and typology come the closest to being an impartial, even-handed description and treatment of mysticism and mystical claims as they have appeared in history throughout the world. His study does justice to the fact that very differing mysticisms have occurred, can exist and be valid. Yet even Otto did not escape theorizing--he was not able to avoid the temptation of making a value-judgment about mystical doctrines. While he did not dismiss mystical descriptions as erroneous, "egotistical" or bad interpretations of the experience, he still proposed one expression which was claimed as better than all the rest, which represented the "ideal of mystical experience". Otto's contribution was his discernment of and insistence upon the unusual and unique character of the mystical conception of "God": a "supertheism" where opposing attributes are not exclusive, but conjoined, and ultimately necessary to the mystical vision and understanding.

Evelyn Underhill's study is a splendid portrayal of the Western mystic, but her mystical theory while heading in the right direction, hesitates and does not go far enough toward a dipolar conception. She may be falling back on the traditional Christian theological

requirements which, at the same time, would contradict her analysis and understanding of mystic statements. She is perhaps an excellent example of the irreconcilable tension, described by Whitehead and other process philosophers, which exists between the interpretation drawn from the data of religious intuition and experience and the interpretation based on the theological ideas influenced by Greek thought.

While in her analysis of the mystics' expressions she comes close, very close to describing the panentheistic doctrine, she hesitates and appears to be limited by traditional Christian theology.

If we believe that a study of mysticism should provide not only the impartial presentation of the data of mystical experience but also an interpretation of this data--should evolve a metaphysical theory-- then process philosophy is seen as an indispensable aid towards this goal.

The panentheistic theory of process philosophy is preferred because not only does it easily accommodate the paradoxical nature seen as essential to mystical expression, it requires it. Panentheism provides a concrete, informative metaphysical proposal which meaningfully interprets the mystical paradox and uses an interior understandable logic which can be supported philosophically. It denies that the mystical Object is irrational. The

Divine Real "escapes every attempt at formulation" only in the sense that it will never be fully contained by its description. However this does not imply that the Divine is therefore non-rational. It is the process thought proposal which can assure to the mystic his characteristic as "one who has a certainty of knowing". It removes the gulf or abyss between God and the World and explains in metaphysical terms how man can feel his creatureliness and at the same time identify and feel one with Something which extends beyond him and which is he yet more than he.

Most important, panentheism eliminates the antagonism and clash of the rival mystical ideologies. With the understanding of reality which panentheism brings, it is no longer necessary to choose between an impersonal, pantheistic or atheistic conception and a personal, theistic conception of the Divine Real. It is my feeling that the process theistic proposal is a reconciling comprehensive statement and so far represents the closest theory describing in abstract philosophical concepts the same understanding which is known concretely, experientially during mystical experience.

The next step would be to test this proposal against the writings of the "great mystics". It is my belief that one finds there much to support a process interpretation of reality.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bastide, R. Les problèmes de la vie mystique.
Paris: n. p., 1931.
- Bennett, C. A. A Philosophical Study of Mysticism:
An Essay. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923.
- Brown, D.; James, R. E. Jr.; Reeves, G., eds, Process
Philosophy and Christian Thought. Indianapolis
and New York: Bobbs-Merrill & Co. Inc., 1971.
- Cobb, J. B. God and the World.
Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969.
- Cousins, E. H. ed, Process Theology.
New York: Newman Press, 1971.
- Delacroix, H. Études d'histoire et de psychologie du
mysticisme. Paris: n. p. , 1908.
- Ghose, S. Mystics and Society.
New York: Asia Publishing House, 1968.
- Happold, F. C. Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology.
London: Pelican Books, 1953.
- Hartshorne, C. The Divine Reality.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.
- _____. Reality as Social Process.
Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1953.
- _____. and Reese, W. eds., Philosophers Speak of
God. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Hughes, T. H. The Philosophic Basis of Mysticism.
Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1937.
- Huxley, A. Ends and Means.
London: Chatto and Windus, 1948.
- _____. The Perennial Philosophy.
London: Chatto, 1946.

Inge, W. R. Mysticism In Religion.
London: Hutchinson, 1947.

James, W. Essays on Faith and Morals.
New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1943.

_____. The Varieties of Religious Experience.
London: Gifford Lectures, 1902; Collier Books,
New York, 1961.

Jones, R. M. Studies In Mystical Religion.
London: Macmillan & Co., 1909.

Leuba, J. H. A Psychological Study of Religion.
New York: Macmillan & Co., 1912.

_____. The Psychology of Religious Mysticism.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925.

Maréchal, J. Études sur la psychoanalyse des mystiques.
Bruxelles-Paris: n. p., 1937.

Otto, R. Mysticism East and West.
New York: Macmillan & Co., 1932.

Plé, A. ed. Mystery and Mysticism: A Symposium.
London: Blackfriars Publications, 1956.
transl. La vie spirituelle.

Spencer, S. Mysticism In World Religion.
London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963.

Stace, W. T. Mysticism and Human Reason.
Riecker Memorial Lecture, University of Arizona
Bulletin, XXVI:3, (May 1955).

_____. Mysticism and Philosophy.
London: Macmillan & Co., 1960.

Stiernotte, A. ed. Mysticism and the Modern Mind.
New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1959.

Underhill, E. The Essentials of Mysticism.
London: n. p., 1920.

_____. Mysticism.
London: Methuen & Co., 1916; New York: The New
American Library, Meridan Books, 1955.

von Hugel, F. The Mystical Element of Religion. 2 vols.
London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1908.

Whitehead, A. N. Adventures of Ideas.

New York: Macmillan & Co., 1933; The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., Mentor Books.

_____. Process and Reality.

New York: Macmillan & Co., 1929; The Free Press, 1969.

_____. Science and the Modern World.

New York: Macmillan & Co., 1925; The New Library of World Literature, Inc., Mentor Books.

Zaehner, R. C. At Sundry Times.

London: Faber & Faber, 1958.

_____. Hindu and Muslim Mysticism .

London: The Athlone Press, 1960.

_____. Mysticism Sacred and Profane.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Findlay, J. N. "The Logic of Mysticism"

Religious Studies 2 (1929):97-121.

Gilbert, J. "Mystical Experience and Public Testability"

Sophia 9 (1970):13-20.

Gale, R. "Mysticism and Philosophy"

J. of Philosophy 57 (1960):471-481.

Fletcher, G. K. "Agreement Among Mystics"

Sophia 2 (1972):5-15.

Organ, T. "The Language of Mysticism"

Monist 47 (1963):417-443.

Smart, N. "Interpretation and Mystical Experience"

Religious Studies 1 (1965):75-87.

_____. "Mystical Experience"

Sophia 1 (1962):19-25.

Stace, W. T. "Buddhist Mysticism"

Religious Studies 1 (1965):163-175.

Wainwright, W. J. "Stace and Mysticism"

Journal of Religion 50 (1970):139-154.

Werblowsky, R. J. "Mystical and Magical Contemplation"

History of Religions 1 (1961):9-36.

_____. "On the Mystical Rejection of Mystical Illuminations"

Religious Studies 1 (1966):177-184.