



Mysticism—
The Ultimate Experience

MYSTICISM — THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE



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Dedicated

to the memory of

Camp Ezell

CONTENTS

1. The Essence of Mysticism
2. Mysticism Stands Alone
3. The Appeal of Mysticism
4. Lives of the Mystics
5. The Mystical Experience
6. Types of Mystical Experience
7. Perception of Mystical Experiences
8. Mysticism: A Basis of Idealism
9. Theism and Pantheism in Mysticism
10. Reason and Experience
11. Mysticism and Ethics
12. Personal Illumination
13. Mysticism as a Metaphysical Solution
14. The World of the Inner Self
15. Beyond Mysticism

INTRODUCTION

MYSTICISM IS A discipline which merits consideration of all individuals today. Although most of the material that is accessible on the subject deals with biography or history and is treated primarily in the past tense, its-potentialities and challenges raise interesting questions. Is there a future for mysticism? Can it help the individual today to adjust better to the circumstances about him? Can it make for a better future for humanity?

The teachings of mystics who have lived in the past are vital for our understanding of the subject, but even more important is what we can do with the knowledge of mysticism if we acquire it. What can mysticism do for us?

I have made an attempt to analyze the meaning of mysticism, not only in historical perspective from the experiences related by those who have mastered the subject but also as an overlooked subject that could be utilized in the future in a manner that can completely reorient our thinking both in our present-day living and in the centuries to come.

I am unable to trace the beginnings of my interest in mysticism. It would seem as if I have been interested in it most of my life. This interest has been influenced by the study of philosophy and related subjects. Any subject, of course, requires knowledge of its history, and the writings of recognized mystics are now our heritage. I have studied many of these sources and, as a result, have developed an outlook upon life and its circumstances that reflects a concept of mysticism and places emphasis upon its importance.

To go so far as to predict the eventual application of mysticism to the daily living of every individual is of course to take a somewhat drastic

step, but I believe it is a step in the right direction. If my conclusions challenge individuals to think in this field, there may develop a means of arriving at solutions to our social, economic, and political problems that has not been exhausted or even given a fair trial in the past. Many will say that this is my personal opinion, and that it is speculative. With these conclusions I will agree, but nevertheless proceed to offer the ideas which I have decided are worthy of consideration.

My background in the subject I owe to two principal sources other than my study of the writings of some of the outstanding mystics of the past. My interest in mysticism first attracted me to the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. In its philosophy and teachings I found the foundation upon which I have built my own interpretation and understanding of mysticism. The Rosicrucians base their philosophy upon a mystical concept. A conscientious study of their teachings will lead an individual to realize the importance of mysticism and to methods of application.

Another source, which I consider to be one of the outstanding modern treatments of mysticism, is *Mysticism and Philosophy*, by the British philosopher Dr. W. T. Stacey. His profound and analytical study of the subject is an inspiration to any who have the philosophical background and the interest in mysticism sufficient to analyze the intricacies and ideas which Dr. Stacey presents.

Although I have drawn freely on both of the above sources, my opinions are not a duplication of these sources or any other. I assume the responsibility for the opinions expressed in the following pages. They are in the final analysis the conclusions reached by my own study. Nevertheless, in many of the ideas expressed here, I reflect the principles and concepts contained in Rosicrucian philosophy and stated by Dr. Stacey. I have freely referred to him in the pages that follow. I have also used some of the identical quotations which he used to illustrate certain concepts of well-known mystics.

If any of the ideas here expressed will guide someone to give consideration to the vast scope of the subject of mysticism and to consider my proposal of the future potentiality that lies in the use of

MYSTICISM—THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE

mysticism, then this work will be worthwhile and my purpose will have been fulfilled.

I again wish to acknowledge the assistance of Mrs. Louise A. Vernon, who has edited most of my writings-over a period of many years.

Cecil A. Poole

Sunnyvale, California

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Chapter I

THE ESSENCE OF MYSTICISM

A TENDENCY EXISTS today which seems to overlook the past and emphasize the future. The basic disciplines of study which were once common in the curriculum of most institutions of higher learning are becoming less and less popular with the present generation of students. History, mathematics, languages, philosophy, and religion are studies that have categorically been put aside, or at least made secondary.

This attitude applies not only to a single age group but to the general population today. The newspapers and other forms of news media seem to give less emphasis to what has happened in the past and more speculation as to what might happen in the future. Whether or not this type of thinking is good, or whether it may have a detrimental effect upon the future, and more importantly, upon the present, is a question that neither the philosopher nor the politician has been able to answer adequately.

Regardless of what may be our individual opinion, there is evidence from the lives of many individuals who have made their mark in the world that knowledge of the past has assisted in adjustment to the present. This adjustment is the important step that we need to take. We are aware only of the present and the past. The future will develop upon the basis of the adjustments that we make to our present circumstances and the philosophies that we devise in order to fit the circumstances of our present existence.

This is not an appeal to study history nor to live entirely in the area of our memories. It simply indicates the fact that too much emphasis today is placed upon the future. Publications that one examines at the present time usually contain articles and predictions as to what is going to happen tomorrow, a year from tomorrow, or even during the next century. As we approach the end of this century, this outlook becomes more and more common. Similar trends of thought developed at the end of other centuries. Actually, very few of the predictions from a hundred, two hundred, five hundred or more years ago were true predictions of the future of the next century.

We need to be more concerned with the present. We need to develop in our own thinking the means to adjust our thought and outlook to the situations that we face in daily life. In that way we are better preparing ourselves and contributing to the preparation of society to meet whatever the future may hold. It is well to know that the future cannot be predicted accurately.

The future does not exist. Even the Infinite cannot know what does not yet exist. In our desire to know more about the future than the present or the past, we are in the grasp of a materialistic type of philosophy. We are living in a world where the physical conditions are those which predominate in our thought and in our society. These physical considerations, while important, are not the only source of inspiration, knowledge, and instruction needed for the average individual to adjust himself or herself to the needs that are immediately about that individual.

Materialism certainly has its advantages. We live in a world in which materialism has produced a situation, or, we might say, an environment that has made toil less intensive, has relieved us of much worry, has advanced theories of health maintenance, has taught us much that we utilize every day. No one, I believe, would want to give up the accomplishments of materialism which we accept as a matter of course in our daily living. Who would want a world without the conveniences that are accessible to almost every person at the present time? Thus materialism has not only made great progress in entering the lives of each individual, it has by its very nature attached itself to our thinking

and to the formation of our habit patterns in such a way as to make us dependent upon it, wanting to respond to it, and furthermore, enjoying most of our contacts with it. Therefore, materialism has made the world what it is today in many respects.

True, there are those idealists who have contributed much to the background of what has developed into scientific applications of materialism, yet we see and deal each day with the physical and material world. Most of our thought is devoted to it. Is it not time to turn from this line of thought, this type of living, and see if there is more to the world than what materialism can offer? Are there conditions, situations, and guiding lines outside the world of materialism that can help us to live better and understand better ourselves and our society?

We need not abandon the material world, but we need to complement it with those factors which can and will produce a better-balanced life, that will make us not so fearful of what the future may hold, but make us more philosophical in the acceptance of each step that we take as we proceed into the future from the present moment. Materialism has so dominated our thought and activity that many no longer turn to those factors which produced the ideals for which man has lived, for which martyrs have sacrificed their lives, and which have produced the liberty and security that exist in many societies today.

One of the symbols of materialism is wealth. Money is either loved or condemned. If extremists condemn it, they are only reacting against the forces of materialism. It is true that money cannot produce happiness, necessarily, but it does at least enable us to be miserable in comfort. It produces the means to enjoy the material world.

But what, we may ask, produces the means to enjoy the immaterial world? What are the steps necessary to reach an understanding of an idealistic life in which we can live not wholly dependent upon the material world of which we are a part but also draw upon factors that will contribute to our advancement and growth?

Mysticism can play an important part in such a program, but the words mysticism and mystic immediately raise in the minds of many

individuals a rather abrupt reaction, a reaction to a situation which they may not understand and may even fear. To the average individual, mysticism holds out a questionable type of thinking, even a form of retrogression, where one turns back to the days of superstition and practices related to magic and ignorance.

In the popular sense, mysticism is considered to be something beyond the physical world, where physical bodies may be physically perceived, and therefore beyond the reach of the man in the street. Popularly, it would seem to be of little value unless the individual was involved in a procedure of daily living, like that of our ancestors, when superstition instead of materialism pervaded the thoughts of men.

Because of an unfortunate misunderstanding of terminology, the accepted relationship of mysticism with mystery has caused the word to carry the connotation of a situation that has no practical value and no apparent use or application. Actually, the essence of mysticism concerns the ability of the human being to reach, grasp, and utilize one of the sources of knowledge.

With all our progress, whether materialistic or idealistic, whether we subscribe to a religious system of thought or not, or even if we are atheistic or agnostic, the key to living in all its phases is the attainment of knowledge. From infancy to old age, the individual lives to learn and learns to live. The ability of mankind to acquire knowledge and put that knowledge into practice so that it builds up in the individual a vast store of experience that can be applied to the process of living is the key that frees our potentialities to evolve. Without knowledge there would be nothing. Knowledge is the basic source of all experience. Experience is the process of living itself.

We have various means of acquiring knowledge, some of it voluntary and some involuntary. The infant learns, and creatures of the animal kingdom learn, by trial and error. They experiment, as it were, in various ways, and accumulate a usable knowledge related to their own experience as they store it in memory.

The physical senses, therefore, are the most used source of knowledge. We see, feel, hear, smell, and taste the world of which we

are a part. Our material self, that is, our body, which many interpret as being our individual self, is a material essence related to the physical world. The five physical senses are the five windows of the physical self through which we take in or perceive the external world. Through that process of perception we learn and accumulate knowledge. Without those five windows on the world we would never be conscious or be aware of the world, of its nature, or of any application that we could make of our knowledge that we gain concerning it through our physical senses. Therefore, these physical senses are very important. They are the key by which we adjust to the environment in which we are born and have to live. They are the means by which we learn to grow. We learn self preservation. We learn how to use other material objects beyond the body itself.

But there is more to living than physical perception. There is also a source of knowledge that lies within us. We are living beings, and that essence which gives us life is the fundamental, or we might say the nuclear force, of the entire universe. Life is the essence of the entire scope of being. Call its source the Absolute, call it the Divine, call it God, call it whatever you wish. When we come down to the final particulars, life itself, as it expresses in an otherwise physical, material body, is what distinguishes the living being from all other material substances. Without life, we would be like the stone that we find lying on the earth's surface, but life is a part of an all-over manifestation that functions throughout the universe and expresses itself within our intimate being, which we can call our Inner Self, in contrast to the objective self that receives and interprets the perceptions of the physical senses.

This Inner Self has generally been referred to in many sources and writings as being the soul, a separate entity within us. It is only separate in that it is another channel. There are five physical senses for the convenience, use, and application of the physical body. Then there is the manifestation of life itself, which constitutes the Inner Self, and which receives its sustenance, its existence from the source of all life. Since life is related to the source of everything that is, there must exist within it all knowledge, all wisdom, all understanding. This ultimate source of all knowledge is accessible to the human being who turns

his thoughts within himself and establishes a harmonious relationship with that inner being within him.

This experience constitutes real growth, the experience of being able to draw upon the ultimate knowledge. Whether we express this ultimate as the Cosmic, as the Divine Mind, as the Absolute, makes no difference. It is life, the life we can use, the life we can draw upon, the life we can live. If we use all channels of knowledge, both our physical senses and the sense of turning to the Inner Self to listen to the ebb and flow of life, we can accomplish and understand the purpose of life.

This, then, is the essence of mysticism. Mysticism is that discipline which makes it possible for us to reach and understand the source of knowledge that lies beyond the limits of the material universe. This potential ability supersedes a source of knowledge limited to the five physical senses and the material world of which our body is composed.

Chapter II

MYSTICISM STANDS ALONE

IT IS MY personal opinion that mysticism can be classified as a phase of philosophy. At the same time, we might say that every science, subject, or discipline with which the human race is familiar, or which it attempts to study, is a phase of philosophy. From philosophy have sprung the sciences and systems of thought that constitute the thinking of most present day individuals. Philosophy, as its meaning originally was given, is a love of wisdom. While the ancients studied in various areas, all were a part of philosophy. In due time, philosophy divided into various areas, some physical, some ideational, some spiritual. As a system of thought, there are many units of philosophy that can stand more or less alone, such as metaphysics, ethics, logic, and many other systems that could be enumerated in the scientific field.

Mysticism as a subject in itself can stand alone because, as already pointed out, it is the essence by which we are able to reach a source of knowledge that is otherwise unavailable. Only by mysticism can we comprehend that there lies within the scope of man's reach an area of knowledge which is not confined to the materialistic world of the physical sciences.

In my repeated reference to the material world, to the physical sciences, and to materialism in general, I want to emphasize that I am in no way attempting to depreciate the value and importance of materialism. One of the fundamental principles taught by the Rosicrucians is that one of the greatest achievements an individual can

make is to attain harmony. By that we mean balance. For the individual to be able to live in such a way that all important phases of life and existence are harmoniously related to each other is fundamental in this philosophy.

We cannot fail to acknowledge that there is a material and an immaterial world, that there is a world of thought and a world of action, a world of material and a world of ideas. They are all important. It is impossible to eliminate one without restricting the value of one or more of the others. Therefore, materialism is an important phase of our lives, an important phase of our thinking. The only problem that exists with materialism is that at the present time, and in fact in most of man's history, materialism has been overly emphasized. It has become the supreme phase of existence, rather than one of many phases.

The accumulation of material objects, the accumulation of wealth, and the accumulation of material or scientific knowledge have superseded all other activities of man to the point that materialism has become out of balance with man's other potentialities. A balance between materialism and idealism, between all other unrelated conditions with which we must cope in life, is the ideal way to look at this matter in general. Therefore, any reference to materialism that appears to be a criticism is a criticism of an over-emphasis, not a criticism of the area of thought itself.

Mysticism, as will be examined in more detail later, lies in the area of idealism. It springs from the world of ideas. It cannot be restricted to the material world. In fact, only by its results in men's behavior can we find a relationship that would justify classifying mysticism in any way with a material condition or substance. Mysticism does not treat the material world, just as physics does not treat the mystical world. They are separate, and yet they can be harmoniously balanced within the lives of individuals, as many scientists and philosophers have well illustrated by their own lives, having reached a balance and understanding of both.

In terms of definition, I defined mysticism in previous writings as "a doctrine that the knowledge of reality, truth, or God is attainable by direct knowledge." In this definition I used the word God. That word

can be substituted with other words and still carry the same concept. I used the word simply because it is understandable by most individuals, but what I mean in the definition is that mysticism is a source of knowing the ultimate, whatever that may be. Call it God, call it the Divine, call it the Cosmic, call it the Transcendental, or the Absolute, it makes no difference what term is used. It is, as I have already pointed out, the basis of life, the fundamental part of our being that is real and is related to a force that supersedes and transcends everything else in the entire universe.

In the popular sense, mysticism and religion are usually accepted as being related to each other, but I wish to deny the principle that mysticism and religion can in any way be considered to be synonymous. I was somewhat surprised to read in an accepted dictionary of philosophy published by the Philosophical Library the following definition of mysticism: "Mysticism in its simplest and most essential meaning is a type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, direct and intimate consciousness of divine presence. It is religion in the most acute, intense, and living stage."

To me it is doubly surprising that a reliable dictionary of philosophy should define the word mysticism in such a manner. If mysticism is truly a religion or a phase of religion, its definition technically does not even belong in a dictionary of philosophy. It should have been omitted altogether.

I disagree emphatically that religion and philosophy are so related that they cannot be separated. I cannot agree that mysticism must always be considered as a phase of religion. Nevertheless, it has been a common assumption of many individuals who have studied or written on the subject that mysticism is a religious phenomenon. I believe that part of this is traceable to the fact that there were, have been, and probably still are many individuals with profound religious beliefs who are mystics. This being the case, it has been generally accepted that all mystics are of a devout religious nature associated with some specific religion, because many of the religious mystics have also been great writers.

Much of the literature on mysticism that exists today has been written by individuals associated directly with a religious movement, denomination, or organization. The Western religions, particularly Christianity, have emphasized this fact. Many Christian writers of a mystical inclination have left these records, but this does not mean there were no mystics for hundreds of years, or even thousands, before Christianity even existed. It is impossible to conceive that during the period prior to the existence of Christianity there were no mystics. Christianity existed as an organized institution about two hundred years after the time of Christ. In spite of the accumulation of knowledge that man has attained in the present century, it is inconceivable to think of Christianity having dominance over or even controlling the concept of mysticism.

Most mystics who were members of a Christian organization related the mystical consciousness as being a state of union with God. This is not always the essence of the mystical definition, although the same experience has been repeatedly given or interpreted non-theistically in Buddhism. Furthermore, Plotinus, who also wrote on mysticism as a mystic, was not associated with any religion which we know of today. His system of thought and experience was philosophy, and yet his mysticism and his report of mystical experiences are in essence as substantial and as important as any of those given by religious leaders.

The state of mystical consciousness does not necessarily come through association with any one world religion. It is a state of consciousness that exists independent of any system of religious thought. The mystical experience of an individual arises within the inner consciousness and is not necessarily related to an association with any group or organization. However, the experience may be interpreted to a degree in terms of such a relationship because the person was associated with a particular group or a particular religion and expressed the mystical experience in terms of the vocabulary of the religion with which this individual was associated.

Frankly, I agree with some other writers on the subject who question whether or not Jesus himself was a mystic. He was a teacher and became the founder of a great theistic religion, but his statements, as

they are recorded in the literature that we have, give little indication of any mystical tendency. In all of the Christian writings we find that the strongest tendency toward mysticism is in the Gospel of St. John, which we are confident was written a good many years after the time of Jesus himself. It was probably the writer who was mystically inclined and not those about whom he wrote.

Christianity has become a mystical religion to a degree because of the interpretation of various adherents to the organized Christianity that has developed from the teachings as they were handed down to us and not by the statements Jesus himself made. The historical Jesus does not seem to have uttered many phrases that could be considered as having their roots in mysticism. On the other hand, the teachings of Buddha and the teachings found in the Hindu religions are more closely related to the individual's belief in the relationship that exists harmoniously between the Inner Self of the individual and the Ultimate Source of all things, the oneness of being to which all mystics refer.

It might also be remembered that of all the leading Western religions, Judaism is the least mystical of the three great theistic religions, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as many other religions. Jesus was born and, as a child, was reared as a Jew. Therefore, he was not exposed to the teachings of mysticism as early in life, as was, for example, Buddha. Mohammed, too, was associated with those groups in the East and became familiar with the important relationship that can exist between the self and the ultimate source of all knowledge.

The mysticism in Christianity can be traced more directly to Greek philosophy, rather than to the originator of the religion itself. As I explained before, this is not a criticism of religion. It is simply a statement that mysticism can stand alone, that it is a means of reaching, without the use of the physical senses, into an area of wisdom, knowledge, and inspiration that goes beyond the grasp of the physical being.

I am fully in accord with the statement of W. T. Stacey, who wrote, "The general conclusion regarding the relations between mysticism on the one hand and the area of organized religions on the other is that mysticism is independent of all of them in the sense that it can exist without any of them. But mysticism and organized religion tend to be

associated with each other and to become linked together because they look beyond earthly horizons to the infinite and eternal, and because both share the emotions appropriate to the sacred and the holy.”

There are many ways that our emotions enter into all phases of life. To be influenced by what we hold sacred or look upon as being holy is to be influenced by the highest forces of the universe. These bring about an emotional response which is peculiar to the human being and which makes it possible for him or her to be so associated with forces that lie beyond the ordinary scope of day-to-day routine so that he or she is able to rise above the cares and demands of everyday living.

We strive to master our environment, to be greater than our physical selves. We hope to be able to conceive those thoughts and subscribe to those ideals that raise consciousness to a level where we can be truly human and rise out of the realm of the vegetable or the lower animal. This is the significance of mysticism. It stands alone in that it can be the key. It can be the way toward relating ourselves to ultimate reality, to truth, to goodness, to love, and to the understanding of all that lies beyond the reach of our physical senses.

Chapter III

THE APPEAL OF MYSTICISM

MYSTICISM WILL APPEAL to all who look beyond what is self-evident and perceived through the physical senses. References to mysticism have been made by various outstanding writers - contemporary as well as those in the past - in the fields of science and philosophy. Some have been in favor of its principles; others tried to substantiate a case against it. Still others, of course, refused to consider the subject matter of mysticism or to take its phenomena seriously. To them, mysticism is nothing more than an adolescent phenomenon or condition attracting only the nervously disordered, emotionally unstable, or even the mentally abnormal individual.

One writer stated in effect that when life becomes too complicated, or unsurmountable problems face an individual, it is easy for the unbalanced personality to take refuge from the problems of actual environment by turning to the field of mysticism or to speculative philosophies and trying to exist as a personality free from the problems and obstacles which are faced in the actual environment.

Consideration of these points of view raises the following questions: What is mysticism? Is mysticism an escape mechanism? What is the relation of intelligence to mystical experience? What are the findings and ultimate ends of mysticism?

As background, we must be aware that the viewpoint of a materialistic science cannot be the final judgment on the subject. If

one's viewpoint on all phenomena is based purely upon objective proof and upon the foundation of belief in a mechanistic universe and a materialistic philosophy, there is little by which the individual can judge the true merits of anything which falls into the classification of idealistic philosophy or subjective phenomena.

Few individuals are capable of passing upon the validity of all knowledge. Many fields of study have their specialization. Doctors, for example, specialize in various fields, including the limiting of their practice to certain organs of the body. We would not have complete confidence in a veterinarian, however skillful, to make a diagnosis and prescribe treatment for human ills. Regardless of how skilled or how efficient an individual is in his own field it will not necessarily qualify that person in another area. We would not call a plumber, for example, to repair a valuable electronic instrument. These may seem extreme illustrations, but they nevertheless illustrate that what we are capable of doing is the area in which we have learned to do by acquisition of knowledge, coupled with experience within the scope of the subject matter with which we are involved.

To the materialist, the phenomena of mysticism lie outside his experience because he refuses to recognize as valid any knowledge or any proof of phenomena which do not make themselves self-evident to the physical senses. Therefore, when the materialistic philosopher or scientist refuses to admit the value of a mystical philosophy, he is honestly basing his decision upon his own experience, which has entirely closed the field of idealistic philosophy to him.

This is not a question of right or wrong. Materialistic science has great achievements to its credit, but as Rosicrucians recognize, there is value in both the objective and subjective fields of phenomena. Tolerance should be the guidance on the part of those who have not interested themselves to the extent of learning whether or not there is validity in mystical experience or other subjective phenomena.

A definition of mysticism has already been given, but we will from time to time reconsider mysticism in terms of definition. Briefly, to repeat, it is considered to be a process by which the knowledge of the absolute, or the universal, and truth is obtainable through intuition or

insight in a manner differing from ordinary physical sense perception.

Mysticism does not deny the existence of a materialistic world, but it states that we may see beyond the material world, that there is in existence knowledge and good which can be conceived by a human being and which makes him a living creature, thereby different from other material objects. The human being is able to maintain a connecting link with the source of this life force, which we conceive is a phase of an absolute or universal force. As the result of the mystic's concept that this life force flows through the universe, it is presumed and has been proven to the satisfaction of those who have investigated this phenomenon that we are able to contact an ultimate and fundamental source of knowledge and good through the channel of intuition and insight.

It is not important to define the actual state and manifestation this knowledge takes, nor does it make any difference in regard to our personal beliefs concerning the existence of a supreme being. Mysticism is concerned only with the principle that regardless of what this fundamental reality or original source of the universe may be, we are a part of it and are able to direct our thoughts to it and with it.

The next question concerns whether mysticism is a doctrine worthy of our consideration or whether it is only a means of escape from the problems of living. It was mentioned that some materialists saw it as a principle or concept to which the unbalanced mind or immature individual could turn in order to escape from being bound by the realities and stress of environment. It is true that there are those who do try to find in some types of mystical teaching a means of avoiding their responsibilities. The answer to such critics is that mysticism can be one of a number of means of escape used by those who have neither the fortitude nor the ability to face environmental adjustment.

Commonly known escape mechanisms are found in such simple devices as giving all attention to pleasure rather than to responsibility. There are actually many people, more than we might ordinarily presume, who use various forms of pleasure as a means of escape. Those who project themselves into a novel or its presentation as a motion picture or television program are trying to create a different

life from the one that they actually lead. They project themselves into the circumstances that are imaginary and find an escape from their individual responsibilities for a few hours.

The use of an escape mechanism becomes more extreme and more serious to well-being when people resort to the use of drugs as an escape from reality. Habitual drunkards or drug addicts are doing little more than doping their physical being with a drug to keep from being conscious of the realities which they must face when they are sober or when their minds are clear. Even tobacco, in a lesser sense, is also an escape mechanism for those who use it as a momentary interruption of the reality of a situation about them and a means of relaxing or directing their attention toward something else.

In fact, we all may use escape mechanisms at one or another time during our life. Some may be harmful to health and others not. From time to time the individual turns to something different from the realities of life, and this can be a normal procedure. Danger lies with the individual who commits himself to something outside of reality, who actually reverses his personality and makes the escape mechanism result in serious personal disturbances or disorders, be it liquor, drugs, or anything else. The choice makes no difference insofar as the results are concerned. The use of anything as an escape mechanism does not condemn its use for a more worthwhile purpose under other circumstances.

Another criticism of mysticism concerns the degree of intelligence of an individual with mystical experience. Extreme materialists infer that the mystical experience is accompanied either by low intelligence or illiteracy. There is an old saying that ignorance is bliss, that the less we know the easier it is for us to live contentedly, because we are shutting out a part of the realities of which we should become aware. On the other hand, there have been illustrations of the fact that the lack of knowledge has made individuals capable of receiving mystical insight, which has been a means of bringing knowledge and hope to others.

This is beautifully illustrated in the novel *The Song of Bernadette*. The heroine of this story was looked upon as possessing little

intelligence by the other inhabitants of her native village. She was the only one who could drop the artificiality and the inhibitions that blinded the others to the vision that she alone could see. If those who looked down upon her lack of intelligence had been able to take from their eyes the very parts of their biased beliefs that had hindered them from seeing beyond the physical realities about them, they could also have experienced the ecstasy that was hers alone.

However, merely because some have had glimpses into the world beyond physical phenomena whom we in our rather smug capacity of judging would claim to be ignorant, it certainly does not mean that only the ignorant have experienced the reality of mystical phenomena. If we go back through history and examine the great philosophers and religious leaders and others who have contributed to the thought and welfare of mankind, we will find those who had the best of all instruction available in their era of history, as well as those whose inspiration was apparently all of their education. Here again we see that mystical phenomena are not disposed to favor either the wise or the ignorant, the poor or the wealthy, the perfectly adjusted individual or the maladjusted personality.

To those who have personally experienced the meaning of mysticism, it is a phenomenon and a reality, just as real and existent as anything that can be perceived with the physical senses. Furthermore, just as the wise or ignorant, or rich or poor, can behold both beauty and evil, so can they perceive with their inner senses beyond the physical world and gain a knowledge which is ordinarily called unknown.

Finally, we must be able to point to the findings and the ultimate purposes of mysticism. In all things, whether it be a system of ideas or the physical proofs of science, the final accomplishments, ends, or the proofs of the usefulness or validity of the process or system of thought are the ultimate test of value. It might seem impossible for us to analyze the ends to which the various mystics have arrived in a few significant points. Mystics living in ancient and modern times and in different places have had experiences in terms of their own understanding and interpretation. If we assemble all the facts and the essence of the teachings lived by these individuals as they affected

those about them, we find that these individuals have all upheld a few fundamental principles with which they have been in complete agreement, as have investigators in various fields of scientific endeavor.

The following are the conclusions to which the mystics generally agree. The greatest who have lived have contributed to these principles. First, the universe is a manifestation of a unity, and therefore all apparent existing separation or states of differences, such as those which exist between mind and body, between one mind and another, between life and its source, between appearance and reality, are all illusory. Second, evil, although it is related to the physical world, is not the reality that it seems to be, but is in fact an illusion which exists in the finite minds of men because of their ability to view only a part of the whole Cosmic scheme. Third, time is only an illusion, a concept of the objective mind. All that is real is eternal and exists outside of time. Fourth, the true and fundamental reality of all things is based upon the existence of a universal, Cosmic Consciousness which embraces the Absolute and all things which have been brought into existence and constitutes the Cosmic.

The mystics may disagree as to whether this ultimate, supreme consciousness is personal or impersonal, but that it is an all-pervading force throughout the universe is generally agreed. In these four principles we see that mystics have offered a solution to some of the fundamental problems of philosophy and of our existence. It is true that the mere fact that the majority of mystics uphold these ideals and arrive at these conclusions is not proof of their validity, but even the most severe critics of mysticism can hardly deny the sincerity of many who have contributed to these thoughts. It is not possible for us to claim these conclusions as entirely without evidence or support of our contentions.

In mysticism we are dealing with truths that lie beyond the realm of finite reason. The characteristic feature of knowledge with which we are daily concerned presupposes that there will be both a knower and that which becomes known. The former is separated from the latter. If I hold a pen in my hand, I am fully aware that the pen is one thing and I am another. There exists no relation between the two other than

the use being made of the pen at the moment.

Knowledge which is mystical reaches across the gulf which separates the knower from the known. When the soul truly becomes conscious of an experience which is of a universal force or of a fundamental reality, the soul ceases to be a separate entity from the Absolute or the entire Cosmic scheme. The thing known and a condition of oneness is achieved where the knower, that is, the self or soul becomes one with a universal unity.

From the point of view of the mystic, the soul is ever striving to reunite itself with the fundamental reality of which it is a part, and in so reaching out to contact this force, which it may know as the Absolute, or as God, the emotional responses of reverence and love are brought into manifestation. As in the experience of earthly love, the self feels a state of Attunement and oneness with the Absolute, that is, the beloved. So it is that the relation of mankind to mystical phenomena and truth is never purely intellectual and separate from the thing known but is always a part of and related to the actual experience which comes to be the prime motivating force in the life of the mystic.

Chapter IV

LIVES OF THE MYSTICS

IT IS NOT my purpose to present a history or biography of those considered to be mystics but rather to direct attention to certain fundamentals that are common to the lives of all mystics. This may make it possible for us to understand the message taught to us by their lives. Although it is true that there are many biographies of mystics, there are also many mystics whose lives have gone unrecorded. We know nothing about them. We do not know who they were or who they may be today.

We do not know the scope of their experiences or exactly what it was that they had contributed or are contributing to the welfare of humanity and to the world in general. We do know that these individuals have existed. We know that they lived in centuries that were torn apart by economic and political upheavals, that brought devastating wars to the people of many lands, and that had many other adverse effects upon the general welfare and activities of human beings. In looking about us, we can only conclude that the circumstances of life today are in many ways better than they were in many other periods of the past.

We seem to have advanced in spite of the physical difficulties that have been man's burden to bear. Therefore, I hold this principle to be a degree of proof that the lives of the mystics, known and unknown, have so contributed to the universal knowledge and experience of all human beings that a degree of balance has been maintained. They have consciously or unconsciously influenced every living human being and influence each of us today, even if we are not conscious of the exact way in which that influence takes place, or exactly how it affects the thinking and actions of each of us.

In an excellent biography written some years ago entitled *Men Who Have Walked with God*, Sheldon Cheney examines the lives and philosophies of selected mystics from ancient to modern times. His presentation makes it possible for us to have a general picture of the ideas that these individuals have contributed to the history and welfare of mankind.

He also explains his own philosophy in his commentaries on the general principles of mysticism. For example, he says, "there are many men who believe that the apprehension of spiritual values in mortal things is the real substance of living." There is an effectiveness resulting from the lives of those individuals who have looked toward the higher values in the universe, have attempted to teach them, and furthermore, as a result of their own lives, have made those principles applicable to the lives of all human beings as they exist today.

Cheney further emphasizes the importance of mysticism in the life of every individual. He states, "Mysticism is pure spiritual experience, the actuality of vision, the foretaste of the soul's perfect rest." He goes on to say that one of the purposes of mysticism is "to illuminate everyday living with the light of divine understanding. I conceive the mystic life to be less a forsaking of reality than a search to discover that which gives the lustre of reality to all; and, after the mental discovery, a constant detection of eternal values in every object and facet of mortal life."

These quotations give us a picture of the all-over principle of mysticism functioning in the mortal world, where men and women partake of the experiences of the physical environment and yet are capable of drawing upon the experience of the Absolute within their own lives. Furthermore, we are capable of drawing upon and sharing the experience of the mystics who have lived and who have made some record of their ideas and philosophy as these ideas have evolved as a result of the mystics' contact with higher forces.

Today, however, many of the principles that have been taught by those in the past have been commercialized and used for personal gain. If some of those who reached the state we designate as masters should enter certain meetings held in their names today, they would be

amazed, to express it mildly, at the procedures they would witness, the demonstrations and exercises that are performed for the purpose of bringing humanity into contact with them.

In examining a few of the traits or life characteristics of the masters to whom we refer as mystics, we shall not only become familiar with their lives, purposes, and ideals, but we shall also gain a better understanding of what constitutes a mystic. One of the outstanding traits exemplified in an individual who seeks mastership is presented in one of the early degrees of the Rosicrucian philosophy, and that is making the ego or personal "I" secondary to the real "I" or Inner Self.

According to all natural and mystical laws, as development of a psychic nature increases, as we become more aware of our subjective selves, the thoughts of self, the thoughts of personal glory diminish in direct proportion to inner growth. Inversely, personal development is not attained until we overcome the dominance of the objective self, which is concerned entirely with the material world which surrounds us.

Many who were considered mystics gave up the life that seemed to be obvious. This was particularly true in the case of Buddha and may also be true to a degree in the case of Jesus and Mohammed. These individuals did not concern themselves with their personal desires or wishes in the physical world but devoted themselves to the propagation of the message which they had developed as a result of their inner experience.

Mystics bring into the world of common experience the ideals which were theirs in the world of the Inner Self. They devote themselves to a life that expresses the forcefulness of the power that exists outside their physical abilities and characteristics and makes it possible for them to devote their efforts to ideals so important to them that they can give up all the material values which may have been offered to them. In this trait of devotion we also find many other characteristics of the mystical life. Although it is impossible to segregate and examine them one at a time, we analyze them as all a part of a great zeal or determination to live fully.

With devotion we find the element of sacrifice. Every great mystic, every teacher who has attempted to teach man to live had met the great demand of sacrifice. There has come across the path of all who attempted to minister to mankind the shadow of the cross. As far as their earthly existence was concerned, the lives of the mystics have frequently ended in crucifixion, either literally or figuratively. We see devotion to an ideal which is not of a material nature.

We see love of a principle so deep that the physical discomforts are insufficient to destroy the love of ideals that are not material but which hold the key to a fuller life. For each of these individuals life became not only a physical existence but one in which his very being, the mind with which he taught, caused his soul to expand and embrace the Cosmic Mind and the Universal Soul of which it originally was a part. Such a life illustrates the complete attainment of Cosmic Consciousness. Devotion, sacrifice, and love seem to be the triangle of qualities and characteristics upon which the ministrations of these teachers were built.

However, they did not live in an imaginary world, as some today would have us believe. We therefore turn to the actual, earthly existence of these people to consider for a moment how they lived. We find that with all the development and abilities of the mystic, such an individual was still a rational, human being. It is logical to presume that if we met a great mystic today, we would find him to be very much a human being in all our contacts with him. It is quite possible that we have met a mystic at various times in our lives, that there are among us those who have attained great understanding and mastery, but the ones who have come nearest to living the life of a mystic are those who do not flaunt or attempt to make known to their fellow man the qualities or super qualities in their development.

Certain forces and powers have become part of the existence of these individuals, not as gifts but through effort, through knowledge, and through application of their understanding of the laws of the universe and nature. These forces are to be purposefully directed, as they have been in the past by other mystics, pointing the way to the eventual attainment of a status of life on the part of mankind that will reunite him with the source from which he sprang.

Then we might ask, "What is a mystic? What is the eventual attainment that mankind should seek?" Both of these questions have been defined in various phrases and in many forms of terminology. In the present age we find the term mystic interpreted in so many different ways that it is often difficult for us to grasp for ourselves the complete meaning. It is not easy to put into words just what the mystic is. After all, the mystic is a human being, no different from other human beings.

In fact, we are all potential mystics. We have the foundation upon which to build in order to be all that the mystic can be. Mystics of the past taught that the ultimate attainment of man is to reunite himself with the Absolute from which he came. However, religious creeds have become so confused with theological doctrines of salvation and redemption that what is vital or would benefit man is frequently lost in the dim recesses of theological dogma.

Can we believe that man's ultimate attainment is the process of the outer man, that it is the process of reciting creeds decided upon by other men, or the performance of a ceremony, the real meaning of which may not be evident at all to the majority of participants? Attainment and growth as offered by the mystics was not a formula, not an idle ritual in which people participated while wondering what the real meaning of it was. Instead, it was a ritual in which man was brought closer in communion with the Cosmic host, so that he might raise his true being, his own soul, above the level of his physical existence and bring it into contact with the source which would so nourish it that the soul itself would realize its potential power, its domination over the body, and its part to play in the Cosmic scheme.

Through such an insight as this, and this alone, can the message of the mystics be heard and the lives of the mystics continue to live in the lives of us today. When we too have lifted our being to the point of full embrace with the great Cosmic scheme, we shall find that the bitter problems which now so involve us in our social, political, and economic life will be of very small importance in comparison to the true life which we should be able to live if we will but see through the eyes of the Inner Self.

Chapter V

THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

IN THE CONCEPT of mysticism, time is unreal and space is considered an appearance only. In our daily lives as physical beings, time and space play an important part, in some way or another affecting our lives practically all the time. We are in a continual state of adjusting ourselves to the existence of time and to the demands of space. We have to make appointments, we have to carry out certain routines, we have to work or we wish to play, and all of these activities will be affected to a degree by a time schedule. In addition, every move that we make will be affected by the fact that we will have to cross over the intervening space in order to adjust ourselves from one area to another. What this means is that time and space are vital, physical conditions. When we are completely in a physical state, we are influenced by them. We have to take their consequences into consideration in practically everything that we do.

Leaving the area in which time and space are so binding, where these factors are no longer the hindrance or the aid that they appear to be under physical conditions, we enter an area that is unknown to most individuals, an area that has not been experienced. Immediately the question is raised as to what kind of adjustments and what kind of experiences take place in a situation where time and space are no longer vital factors. Therefore, the question arises as to whether or not the mystical experience truly exists. The materialist who devotes his or her entire life and efforts to matters that concern the physical world may doubt that a mystical experience is anything more than mere

imagination. Materialists have even gone so far as to criticize those who claim to have had mystical experiences.

The mystical experience is no more or less than becoming conscious of an area that lies outside the normal range of our physical senses. It is the area in which the physical senses take second place, and knowledge comes into consciousness through the awareness of the Inner Self because the life force within us manifests itself and registers upon our consciousness.

As to whether or not every mystical experience that has been referred to or recorded by anyone is valid is something that we cannot determine. Only through introspection can we examine the mystical experience that happens to be ours. Therefore, I cannot judge what you report to be a mystical experience; neither can you examine mine or that of anyone else.

Throughout all time, throughout man's history there have been those individuals who have reported having an experience in which the physical and the material become completely subordinated. They become aware of sensations, of knowledge, and of events that come to them as clearly and as plainly as if they were perceiving physical objects through the physical senses.

Those who hold that there is no experience that can validly be defined as mystical believe that those who claim to have had such experiences are merely reporting what has been the result of imagination, dreams, or hallucinations. Actually, we can analyze the difference between objective realizations on the one hand and dreams and hallucinations on the other.

Objective realization is usually a clear-cut experience. We will not here go into the metaphysical argument as to what is real and whether or not what we perceive is actually a duplication of what exists in the external, physical world. We will accept at least as a working hypothesis the naive philosophy that realization and actuality of the physical world are identical. This is a matter of question, of course, but it is one upon which most people will find a degree of common belief.

On the other hand, dreams and hallucinations lie in an entirely different area of realization. I may go to bed at night in my home and during the night dream that I am in a foreign country. I carry on a conversation, possibly, with a stranger or a friend. I perform certain acts. I do things that are similar to those that I do in my waking hours, but I awake and find myself in my own bed. I have not moved. Space has evidently disappeared in my dream experience, because I seemed to have moved, for example, from the area in which I live to another country, but at the same time remained in my own bed. I had experiences that were logical, but yet I did not actually meet the people with whom I seemed to have carried on conversations.

In other words, while my experience was parallel to that of an objective experience, I know that it could not have been a true physical experience, because the physical circumstances and environment had not changed. I had gone through a mental enactment of a condition that duplicated to a degree the physical realizations that I have, but yet could not have physically happened.

Hallucinations are even more extreme experiences. Those who experience hallucinations may be suffering from a disease, from an overdose of drugs, or from some other physical condition that has upset them mentally and physically. The hallucination ceases to have reason or order in comparison with a physical experience. This situation also sometimes exists in dreams, but it is always an accompaniment of hallucinations. It is entirely different from that of our objective realization.

Down through the ages, those who have reported their mystical experiences report that they did not dream, that they did not hallucinate, that their experience was a logical and a factual one. They come out of it, as it were, with a realization of something that had taken place that had significance and meaning. It could not be confused with a dream or hallucination. I consider the mystical experience to be the individual's ability to use mysticism practically, to be put in touch with the source of life, with the Absolute or Universal One existing within the universe and known to us only through the expression of life as an entity or force manifesting within a physical body.

There are certain psychological characteristics of the mystical experience that make it identifiable as an actual experience and not merely a segment of imagination, a dream, or hallucination. Of these characteristics, the first is that the mystical experience is immediate and direct. It is an experience as certain as my now perceiving the top of the desk at which I sit is an experience. It is complete. The mystical experience parallels the physical experience in that sense. There is nothing about it that leaves a doubt as to its existence. It is a direct realization that comes to the individual, who is immediately aware that he has in a sense touched a source of energy, power, or realization.

A second characteristic of the mystical experience is that it is unifying. It is complete and consistent. It is comparable to a physical, perceptive experience, in that the perception makes sense, has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Critics might say that such an interpretation is inconsistent with the statement that most mystical experiences are ineffable. What we are necessarily acknowledging here is that the inferences derived from the experience make it possible for the individual who has had such an experience to be able to draw upon it as if it were a whole. It is complete and not a haphazard experience of events or thoughts that might occur, for example, in a dream. Such unification of experience helps give a feeling of authority. It can be brought into consciousness and applied in a manner that is useful and that is a part of the individual's total life experience.

A third characteristic of the mystical experience is that it intimately unites the outer and Inner Self, in turn creating a new concept of the subject-object relationship. In our ordinary world of existence, there is always a question in regard to the relationship of the subject to the object. The metaphysical question arises as to whether the subject ever truly perceives or not. When I look around me, I believe I am perceiving a physical environment, but all that I really know is the interpretation that takes place within my mind. The mental states that exist within me are the reflection of the perceptions that I have of my environment.

Berkeley, the famous philosopher of idealism, made the claim that external perception is to a degree an illusion, that perceptive experience

is completely within our own minds. We only think we perceive the physical environment which becomes the subject of perception. His concept was that the universe is without existence, that perception does not agree with the object believed to be perceived. While there is a degree of validity to his argument, most idealists do not accept this extreme concept. They are usually associated with the thinking of objective idealism, that is, that the mental perceptive process substantially agrees with the physical world which we perceive.

Through experience, most of us believe that what we perceive physically is substantially a duplication of what actually exists outside of ourselves. However, in the mystical experience, the subject-object relationship disappears entirely. There is no duplication of the physical experience, where the individual as a subject is perceiving an external condition, event, or object as a unit in itself, separate from the subject. In the mystical experience there is a complete realization that events are taking place, and that what is taking place is true and valid, but there seems to be a correlation or unification of the object and subject. The whole experience is absorbed in a manner that does not detect a distinction between the subject and object. This impression, which is one of the unifying effects of the mystical experience, leaves no doubt within the mind of the individual as to the existence of the events and the knowledge that is acquired as a part of the mystical experience.

A fourth characteristic of the mystical experience is that it is usually considered to be ineffable. It is difficult to communicate in words. Some years ago, one school of psychology known as behaviorism made the definition of thinking as being no more or no less than sub vocal talking; that is, we simply talk to ourselves, and this sub vocal talking is the process of thought. While most psychologists do not accept this theory, it nevertheless has a degree of truth. Most of our thinking is formulated in words. We live our daily lives depending on words. We think in terms of the language with which we are most familiar. Words are used as a constant means of conveying our own thoughts and gaining the thoughts of others. Expression in words is such a common fact and common experience that we give little consideration to it.

If we have an experience that is not expressed in words, it becomes, first of all, rather vague, possibly even misunderstood. That is why many individuals when first having a mystical experience are somewhat surprised if not stunned by the fact that they have become aware of the existence of an actual experience taking place, but since it is not in terms of language, they are unable to completely understand it, and even less able to express the content and nature of their experience in terms that are ordinarily intelligible to themselves and to others.

The mystical experience lies outside the field of man made things, including language. Therefore, it is something to be learned. The first experiences may be vague and transitory. For example, as soon as a vision is perceived, before it can be comprehended or grasped, the curtain that hides it from our ordinary sight is dropped and the vision is gone. However, one fact remains. The individual who has such an experience immediately feels that he has become related to a situation, a series of events, or a source of knowledge with which he was once familiar and which has been lost to him in the interim. This feeling of nostalgia seems to be ever present with the mystical experience. Just as beauty can be beheld momentarily and then seem to be gone, so the mystical experience may be like a flash that registers upon the consciousness. Before it is completely grasped, we have passed on to thinking of other things. As we reflect, we are unable to put into words what our experience was. That these experiences will at first be momentary and transient is typical of the mystical experience.

It is only the individual who devotes himself to the necessary exercises, practices, and concentration upon the meaning of mysticism who is able to grasp these experiences and make them more permanent. Such growth consists more of feelings than expression in words, which only later can condense into ideas and form a part of our total consciousness.

Still another characteristic of the mystical is that it produces a sense of unreliability with respect to time and space. Having been so dependent upon these factors in our general living experience, we immediately feel that we have lost our contact with them. The experience may be

fleeting and difficult to grasp but leaves a deep sense of authority and universal meaning when it is impressed upon the consciousness of the individual.

Hundreds have testified to these facts. It is not an imaginative condition. It is a transient event in which we are put in touch with forces that lie beyond the physical world but one in which we are united, even though temporarily, with the Absolute.

Chapter VI

TYPES OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

“I HAD SPENT the evening in a great city, with two friends reading and discussing poetry and philosophy. I had a long drive home to my lodging. My mind was calm and peaceful. All at once, without warning of any kind, I found myself wrapped in a flame-colored cloud. For an instant I thought of fire somewhere in that great city; in the next I knew that the fire was in myself. Directly afterwards there came upon me a sense of exaltation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things I did not merely come to believe but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living presence. I became conscious in myself of eternal life. I saw that the cosmic order is such that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation of the world is love. The vision lasted a few seconds and was gone, but the memory of it and the sense of reality it left has remained during the quarter of a century which has since elapsed. I knew that what the vision showed me was true. That conviction has never been lost.”

The experience referred to in the above quotation by Dr. R. M. Bucke happened about a hundred years ago. It seems to me to be an important example of a mystical experience because of the details reported and because the experience provided an influence that endured in consciousness. It also has the characteristics listed in the last chapter of the typical mystical experience. It is an excellent example

of an experience that was not influenced by a theological or a religious background in the sense that Dr. Bucke was associated actively with or advocating any religious organization or group.

From his own words, Dr. Bucke had apparently never before experienced anything of a similar nature. It had come to him very suddenly. The background of Dr. Bucke's training was, for the days in which he lived, scientific. He was not known to have flights of imagination or to be in any way related to a type of group which would influence him to have an imaginative experience. The experience was specifically that of Dr. Bucke. It was individual. We must, of course, acknowledge that the statement quoted above was his interpretation.

In the study of mysticism the area of individual interpretation is very important. The mystical experience, considered by many to be ineffable, is difficult to put in to words. Many individuals have stated that their experience was impossible to express then proceed to explain it in words. Although the cynic or the agnostic might say that all experiences of which we have record are merely the imaginative ideas that the individual stated as being the experience, the interpretation of the individual is sincere.

W. T. Stacey classifies mystical experience in two general categories, the extrovertive and the introvertive. One of the classic examples that Stacey gives of the extrovertive experience is a statement by Meister Eckhart, in which Eckhart said, "All that a man has here externally in multiplicity is intrinsically one. Here all blades of grass, wood, and stone, all things are one. This is the deepest depth." Eckhart's statement that all things are one, that there is no substantial difference between anything if we are able to perceive the heart of things is the basis upon which the extrovertive experience is interpreted.

Another example of the oneness of all that is was referred to in the quotation by Dr. Bucke, in which he saw the universe as "a living presence." The individual looking out into the world in such an experience, or in his interpretation of the experience after it is past, has found this expression of oneness, which Stacey classifies as an example of extrovertive experience.

Another example, somewhat typical of the same type of experience, was that of Santa Teresa, who said, "One day being in prayer it was granted to me to perceive in one instant how all things are seen and contained in God. I did not perceive them to be in their proper form, and nevertheless the view I had of them was of a sovereign clearness, and has remained vividly impressed upon my soul." Santa Teresa was neither the philosopher nor the scientist who has been the source of many other experiences. She was, shall we say, more naive, but in her simple experience, she too experienced a oneness which indicates the same principle that many other mystics have experienced, that is, a oneness in the universe, or, we might say in reverse, a universal oneness that underlies all manifestation.

Still another experience indicative of the same principle was that of Rudolf Otto, who said, "they see all not in a process of becoming, but in being, and they see themselves in the other. Each being contains within itself the whole intelligible world. Therefore all is everywhere. Each is there all and all is each." This is simply another example of the perception of oneness in which the individual participating in the experience of a mystical nature is perceiving a universal fundamental, a oneness that pervades all.

In all these experiences as they have been interpreted there exists a revelation that the universe is alive, that it is in a sense an expression of the fact that we can never consider anything in the universe as a mass of dead matter but rather a manifestation of a universal force that exists throughout all creation. Wordsworth expressed the same idea in lines from one of his poems:

A sense sublime of something far more deeply infused,
 A motion and a spirit which impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

The extrovertive mystical experience as Stacey outlines it is repeatedly a continuation of these statements of Universal Oneness. However, the introvertive experience, in his classification, is one that

has no similarity with physical perception; that is, it is an experience that seems to supersede physical perception. Furthermore, the introvertive experience, as it has been described, seems to be universal in the sense that it has occurred to individuals in many parts of the world. These occurrences have taken place regardless of the cultures, the religions, the philosophies, the locations, the time, and the experience of the ones who have had experiences of a mystical nature.

These experiences have occurred even though it may seem that the physical senses and all physical sensations have been excluded from consciousness. Stacey says, “The paradox is that there should be a positive experience which has no positive comment -- an experience which is both something and nothing.”

Our normal day-to-day experience relates itself to objects in our environment, to the physical world. Furthermore, we also are able to live within our own mental capacities and to perceive the nature of our mental states introspectively. If we were to eliminate or cancel from consciousness all mental states, the self would be purely an entity in itself and nothing more. That entity would exist without physical contact or internal introspection and would be the difference between the individual who lives in a physical experience and the one who lives purely in a mental experience as being a manifestation of the ability of the individual to enter into a universal oneness. The pure ego of the self would then be the one entity that holds together all objective and subjective phenomena within the mind of the individual.

In the Upanishads, one of its writers states that there are three kinds of mental conditions: a waking consciousness, which we would call objective; a state of dreaming, which is completely subjective, and a dreamless sleep. It is written, “The fourth, say the wise, is not the knowledge of the senses nor is it relative knowledge, nor yet inferential knowledge. Beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression, is the fourth. It is pure unitary consciousness wherein awareness of the world and of the multiplicity is completely obliterated. It is ineffable peace. It is the supreme good. It is the one without a second. It is the self.”

This statement in the Upanishads seems to separate the mystical experience from anything except the self. The self is the one that both experiences and interprets what has occurred within the Inner Self. The experience as it was stated was “beyond all expression.” It was impossible to put into words. It was ineffable. This, we find, is one of the common characteristics of the introvertive mystical experience, regardless of where it occurs or the background of the one who reports the experience.

One of the great mystics of the Catholic Church, was John van Ruysbroeck, who writes, “The God-seeing man can always enter, naked and unencumbered with images, into the inmost part of the spirit. There he finds revealed an eternal light. His spirit is undifferentiated and without distinction, and therefore it feels nothing but the unity.” Except for Eckhart, this example is in a different area from the ones previously quoted, in which the mystical experience is one of unity with a universal force, a oneness that expresses throughout all the manifestations of the universe.

Another quotation by Meister Eckhart is worthy of consideration. “In this barren Godhead activity has ceased and therefore the soul will be most perfect when it is thrown into the desert of the Godhead, where both activity and forms are no more, so that it is sunk and lost in this desert where its identity is destroyed.”

By the use of the words barren and desert, Eckhart is expressing a vast oneness or universal condition that is normally not accessible to the consciousness of the individual in his objective states. There seems to be a state of inactivity in these states reported by Ruysbroeck and Eckhart. They are conditions to which the individual is led through his experience in his attempt to contact a Universal Source.

St. John the Divine bears this out when he says, “the soul must be emptied of all these imagined forms, figures and images, and it must remain in darkness in respect to these.” Again, we have the example of the individual being freed of all physical phases of consciousness and perception in order that the soul might be able to approach an area that is in contact with the universal, an area which St. John the Divine referred to as a state of darkness. We must bear in mind that

St. John the Divine, while being a devout religionist, was neither a philosopher nor a scientist. He writes in a type of naive philosophy. Nevertheless, he expresses his experiences and his interpretations as he perceived them. Like Eckhart, St. John stresses the cessation of all physical activity, which would include, as far as I can interpret it, all objective thinking.

Turning from Eastern thought, the Upanishads, and from Christian mystics, we find one who was not associated, as far as we know, with either. Plotinus, who might be considered as a mystic philosopher, lived in the third century A.D. While he was familiar with Christianity, he neither supported nor adopted it in any way. We do not know to what extent he may have been familiar with the mystics of the far East, or the writings as expressed, for example, in the Upanishads. We do know that he was thoroughly familiar with and a believer in the metaphysics of Plato. He expounded a mystical theory based upon Plato's philosophy which has stood the test of time and has been respected because of his thorough grounding in philosophy. He was one of the great philosophers of the early Christian era who was not in any way associated with the Christian movement.

Like others, Plotinus also refers to a condition of the pure ego, that is, the oneness of self. He wrote, for example, "Our self seeing there is a communication with the self restored to its purity. No doubt we should not speak of seeing but, instead of seeing the seer, speak boldly of a simple unity. For in this seeing we neither distinguish nor are there two. The man is merged with the supreme, one with it. Only in separation is there duality. This is why the vision baffles telling; for how can a man bring back tidings of the supreme as detached when he has seen it as one with himself. Beholder was one with beheld. He is become the unity, having no diversity either in relation to himself or in anything else. Reason is in abeyance and intellection, and the very self, caught away, God possessed, in perfect stillness, all the being calmed. This is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed men -- liberation from the alien that besets us here, a life taking no pleasure in the things of the earth -- a flight of the alone to the Alone."

Stacey quotes this passage as another classic example of the introvertive mystical experience and shows that it contains the common experience that is found in all cultures and under all circumstances. Transcendence of the duality of the subject and the object, that is, going beyond the objective, everyday self, is emphasized in this statement by Plotinus. We find here not only the classic example of the meaning of a mystical experience but the interpretation by a competent philosopher who is able to convey the importance of the individual being able to contact the source of all things, as stated in his statement of the flight from the alone to the Alone. We might say, instead, to the awareness of the universal self.

A further example of this same principle is found in another area. The Moslem mystic, Al Ghazzali, states, "When the mystic enters the true and absolute unicity of the One and the Alone, mortals reach the end of their ascent. For there is no ascent beyond it since ascent involves multiplicity implying an ascent from somewhere to somewhere, and when the multiplicity has been eliminated, Unity is established and the relationship ceases." This is another outstanding example of the oneness of all things and that the mystical experience brings an association with the oneness.

While it is said that Judaism is the least mystical of the theistic religions, insofar as its associates have attempted to relate themselves to mysticism, there is a statement made by one of the Hasidic mystics as follows: "There are those who serve God with their human intellects and others whose gaze is fixed on Nothing. He who is granted the supreme experience loses the reality of his intellect, but when he returns from such contemplation to the intellect, he finds it full of divine and inflowing splendor."

Again we have the example of the mystic moving toward a full realization of the greatness and unification of the divine as expressed in the universe. Furthermore, in this quotation we find that as the individual returns from such a mystical experience or contemplation, it is in his interpretation that he finds it a manifestation of the divine.

While Buddhism is not a theistic religion, there are in some phases of it indications of mystical states and mystical experience, as shown

by the statement, “In its aspects of enlightenment, mind essence is free from all manner of individuation and discriminative thinking.” Even among the Buddhists there are those who have had experiences that have left them with the realization that the universe is one and that there is a force manifesting through all of it.

In all of those quotations and statements of experience, we find repeatedly this approach to a universal oneness, and in finding it, a loss of individuality, that is, the individuality of the objective, human self. The mystic is searching for a relationship with the force that religion has called God, but which is a universal manifestation that functions through all things.

Again, we refer to Plotinus, who stated, “You ask how can we know the infinite? I answer, not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define. The infinite therefore cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the infinite by entering into a state in which you are finite self no longer. This is the liberation of your mind from finite consciousness. When you thus cease to be finite you become one with the infinite. You realize this union, this identity.” So it is that the mystic believes that there is a possibility not only of grasping and understanding to a degree the universal oneness but that it can be entered into, that the finite can so relate itself to the infinite that the individual mystic can become one with it. The mystical experience, therefore, is an absorption into finite being. It is a degree of experience in which the individual becomes associated with the ultimate force of all things.

Stacey summarizes the common characteristics of the extrovertive and introvertive mystical experiences. He finds that there are certain common characteristics in both types of experience. These are, as he lists them, (1) a sense of objectivity or reality, (2) blessedness and peace, (3) a feeling of holy, sacred, or divine, (4) paradoxicality, (5) alleged by the mystics to be ineffable, even though afterward in their interpretation they record or tell their interpretation in words.

There are these common characteristics, but there are also differences. Stacey states that in the extrovertive experience there is a unifying vision. All things are one, as illustrated by Eckhart looking out

and seeing that all the things he perceived seemed to have a oneness flowing through them. Stacey also states that the extrovertive experience is the more concrete apprehension of the one as an intersubjectivity or life in all things. The mystic sees this oneness within himself.

The introvertive experience, on the other hand, expresses, according to Stacey's classification, a unitary consciousness, the one, the void, the pure consciousness which is entered into by the participating mystic. It is also nonspatial and nontemporal. That is, it is completely a condition which exists when all the physical aptitudes are eliminated. The outward and inward become the same. Again, there is the expression of oneness.

Regardless of their classification, all these experiences include awareness. The individual is aware of a condition which he later can interpret. It is a true experience, just as the worldly experiences which make up our daily life are true. Critics may say that the interpretation is affected by the imagination and the introspection of the individual who reports the experience. This is true. The interpretation may differ from the actual experience, but it is the best the individual can do to express that which seems to be ineffable.

Insofar as introspection is concerned, we know that modern psychology has not emphasized the importance of introspection as did the philosopher William James. Nevertheless, William James was able to advance a system of psychology that was based upon introspection and had validity which is still in use and can be applied today.

The basic psychological characteristic of all mystical experience includes the unification of the individual mind with the universal mind. Regardless of how we may try to classify types of different experiences and interpretations of different individuals, there is manifest a transcendence of the individual's thinking or mental content over day-to-day experience. The ultimate mystical experience is that of union with the divine, of the ability to perceive, in a degree, at least, a relationship between the individual self and the universal self or One.

Chapter VII

PERCEPTION OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES

I HAVE OFTEN heard the comment from many different individuals who have studied mysticism that they never have had a mystical experience. They wonder why some individuals have such experiences and others do not have the experiences. In my estimation this conclusion is erroneous. I am convinced that all human beings have had a mystical experience at some time in their life. Usually they have many.

Possibly the most orthodox materialist might so resist the concept of mysticism as to have practically no such experience in a lifetime, but I doubt that even this is possible. The problem concerns the interpretation of what constitutes a mystical experience. Even though we have already examined some of the factors involved in the mystical experience, we have not yet considered some of the simplest mystical experiences.

There is a general misconception that every mystical experience must be an overpowering phenomenon, a condition that overwhelms the individual, such as that described by Dr. Bucke, who was quoted earlier. Such experiences do exist, but they are probably in the minority. On the other hand, the individual who has not had an overwhelming experience is not apt to make a record of a simple occurrence.

A mystical experience does not have to be accompanied by flashes of lightning or the ringing of bells. It can be a very simple experience, an intuitive impression, a hunch, an idea that helps individuals in their

life, their work, or whatever they are planning to do. A hunch may direct them to avoid an action, or to do the right thing when another step would be the wrong, or to make a decision that will be of benefit to them and others.

All of these experiences are in the strictest sense of the word mystical. I can give an example from personal experience. Recently, while tuning in a program on my stereo, I suddenly heard a musical strain that appealed to me. I stopped the tuning to listen to the musical composition that was being played. What it was does not matter. The fact that the composition appealed to me, caused me to stop and listen, is the significant factor. It triggered what I would interpret as a mystical experience. As I listened to this particular musical composition, I suddenly felt an all-over feeling of relaxation, of peace, of general content. As the music continued, these feelings seemed to deepen. Furthermore, while not losing consciousness, I seemed to have my attention and complete consciousness focused upon this music, which became the overpowering part of my state of consciousness at that moment. As a result, I felt greatly improved, felt inspired, and felt generally a sense of well-being from having gone through an experience in which I experienced a state of oneness. Just the music, or rather, just my consciousness of the music to a degree confirms Stacey's definition of an extrovertive mystical experience. This was simple. There were no unusual phenomena involved. It was nevertheless a satisfying and a revealing period of time, even though it lasted for only a few moments.

What we perceive externally and what we perceive from within ourselves are frequently keys to triggering an experience that is in the realm of the mystical experience. I believe most people have in one way or the other experienced such a condition, and therefore the mystical experience is not a foreign condition, a condition limited to only a few of the great in the past who have recorded it.

When we examine our consciousness at any time, we find that it is composed mainly of elements of the external world, the result of the sensations that continuously bombard our consciousness through our sense faculties. Sensation is therefore the consciousness of the quality of objects in our environment. Sensations also reach consciousness from an internal source that wells up within us.

On the other hand, perception in the physical sense is a consciousness of objects, the result of the presentation of a group of physical conditions that are impressed upon our senses. For example, we do not have a sensation of a rose. Rather, we perceive the rose. We sense its qualities one at a time. These qualities can be color, form, tactile sensations, or fragrance. They are all experienced. We may experience them simultaneously. As a result, we perceive the total object. The perception, however, is not an unrelated group of sensations which we have perceived by seeing the color, sensing the form, or smelling the rose itself. It is a unit of experience. It is a complete experience of a single object and not the experience of a group of separate qualities.

We perceive because of the ability of consciousness to absorb what is external to it. That does not mean that perception has to be limited to the physical world. We can perceive the conditions that exist within us, both mentally and physically. Such perception is primarily objective. We are so familiar with our day-to-day lives in a material world that we relate the process of perception to the physical world and to what our seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling bring to us in sensations, which are put together in our mental processes of consciousness to produce the perception of a complete object.

If the mystical experience is valid, the premise accepted here, it is worthwhile to analyze, as far as it is possible for us to do so, the procedure, the means of the perception of mystical experiences. I have previously referred to the fact that insofar as an objective perception is concerned, we judge the validity of an objective perception by its orderliness. If the things we perceive are in accord with the laws of nature, as we understand them, we believe the objective perception to be true. We believe we are perceiving what is actually taking place.

If the situation were disorderly, for example, if I held my finger in a flame and it did not burn, I would be aware of the fact that my perception was faulty, that I was having an hallucination. In the case of a dream, we might dream an improbable or impossible situation, but we know that we are not experiencing the regularity that constitutes objective perception.

We might therefore conclude that conformance to natural law, orderliness, in other words, is a basis for the validity of objectivity. Can we apply to the mystical states of consciousness the same rule to determine whether or not the mystical experience, or any conscious mystical state, is objective or subjective? We therefore ask the question, “Are mystical experiences orderly?” Orderliness seems to be a means of establishing the validity of a perception of any kind.

I like the definition of Stacey in regard to this matter. “The definition of order is the constant conjunction of repeatable items of experience.” This definition summarizes that to which we have already referred, that the objective experience which is valid, and the perception which is valid conform to nature’s laws and are in accord with the objective experience that is the common lot of all human beings.

The definition just given can also apply to perception of nonphysical things, that is, to a “constant conjunction of repeatable items of experience.” This orderliness also applies equally to experiences that do not originate through the physical senses, and I conclude that mystical experiences can be considered to be orderly in the sense in which we are considering these points.

We might ask if the conclusions we have come to apply to the introvertive type of mystical experience. Does it consist of a constant conjunction of items of non sensory experience? The answer is that it obviously does not because various experiences develop. Every individual who has an introvertive experience finds a difference in the experience itself, although the ultimate end may be the same. There are no repeatable conditions. Of all the mystical experiences that have ever been had by any individual, there will be running through them a series of differences that distinguish each one from the other. Therefore, we will have to conclude that the introvertive mystical experience is not objective.

The opposite of the objective experience is the subjective experience, one that takes place in consciousness itself. We have already come to the conclusion that many subjective experiences lack order. For example, I can dream that water runs uphill. I can imagine that I see an animal that

does not exist. The victim of delirium tremens, for example, would be familiar with such an hallucination. A dream, hallucination, or mystical experience can have extreme differences and can lack validity if they are not within the realm of reason or natural law.

Objective experience, when we consider it valid, does not conflict with the natural order that we find in the universe with which we are familiar. We can conclude also that the experience of a subjective nature which conflicts with reason and with the laws of living and the principles of life itself is also invalid. Therefore, it would be considered that the introvertive mystical experience is not subjective. We have come to the conclusion, if we are in agreement, that the mystical experience is neither objective nor subjective. It exists in an area of its own.

When we remember that in a mystical experience the various elements that compose it might be considered to be objective, the experience itself is not necessarily objective. Only the core, that is, the oneness of the experience, is the subjective factor. We must proceed further if we are to analyze more specifically how the mystical experience is perceived. Certainly there should be no sound arguments against the validity of there actually having been mystical experiences. We must acknowledge the many independent reports of those who have had mystical experiences; these reports come from different cultures, different periods of history, different parts of the world - some from the ancient Hindus, from the medieval Christians, from the Persians, Arabians, Buddhists, China, Japan, modern Europeans, and American intellectuals. All this agreement of oneness and Universal Attunement with a higher force should be a basis for believing in the validity of the experience.

What we can agree upon is that the mystical experience is a self-transcending one. When I had the feelings of peace and relaxation triggered by a piece of music, the self was transcended. I no longer was limited to the use of my objective sense faculties. I was not being affected by disorderly conditions of subjective consciousness causing hallucinations. I simply felt a sense of oneness that was created by this immediate familiarity with a condition that transcended my normal conscious states.

In the mystical experience we have not only reached our individual Inner Self, our individual ego, but we have in some way contacted and associated ourselves with a universal self, a universal oneness and force that supersedes all types of human perception. In many of our daily acts we lose consciousness of things going on about us. We may work at a desk or a bench and think only of what we are doing and nothing else. Outside activities fail to make any degree of impression upon our consciousness. So it is in the mystical experience that we become absorbed in the experience itself, in a relationship with a self or universal ego that transcends the individual and of which the individual self is only a branch or a part.

There is, no doubt, an ultimate or universal Cosmic self. Call it by whatever name you choose, it is with this entity that in the mystical experience contact is made. The participating individual becomes identified with this universal self. He goes beyond the subjective and the objective. He reaches a state of trans-subjectivity where he is associated and intimately related to the universal force that pervades all the universe.

Chapter VIII

MYSTICISM: A BASIS OF IDEALISM

THE WORD IDEALISM has many meanings. In philosophy, the particular meaning is indicated by the context or by the modifying terms such as platonic idealism, ethical idealism, objective idealism, subjective idealism, and other forms of terminology, depending upon the particular meaning that is intended. Idealism is also used in a popular sense. An individual who possesses and practices a high degree of moral standards and tries to carry out these principles is often spoken of as idealistic.

While there are many idealistic applications in philosophy, practically all the theories agree in two fundamental ways. These agreements are that all idealistic theories consider the mind or the function of the mind as the principal basis of reality. The theories also agree in that they are opposed to materialism. In fact, they are the very opposite of materialism.

The view that the universe consists solely of material objects, or matter in motion, under the direction of mechanical law, is fundamental to the metaphysical theory of materialism. Materialism is, therefore, exactly opposite to the fundamental concept of idealism, which, generally speaking, is the theory that puts emphasis upon the non-material world. Idealism stands for the principle that the real and fundamental part of the universe is mental rather than material.

In connection with the relationship between mysticism and idealism, it may be of help to give some consideration to the meaning

of objective and subjective idealism. Both forms concern themselves primarily with the mental world.

Objective idealism is based on the theory that both the subject and the object of knowledge are equally real and equally manifestations of the Absolute or the ideal. In this theory, the world we perceive is substantially of the nature that we find in our own perception of it. We ourselves are also, insofar as the body is concerned, of the same nature as that which we perceive.

Subjective idealism, on the other hand, is based upon the principle that the knowledge of the world exists only in the mind. For the subjective idealist, only our perception is real. What we perceive is what we believe to exist outside of us, but actually nothing exists except our own perception.

There are modifications of the various schools of thought in relation to both objective and subjective idealism. We need not, at this particular point, go into more detail in regard to the fine points of difference upon this basic subject.

Not all who accept idealism as a means of explaining the world or the universe accept mysticism. To put it another way, not all idealists are mystics. Idealism can be accepted, particularly in its form of objective idealism, in the same manner that the materialist accepts the universe. The objective idealist accepts the universe as an existing entity, as an actuality existing separately from the mind of the perceiver. We are able to perceive it through our physical senses. Therefore, there are many idealists, probably as many as there are materialists, although in the world today, materialism has a tendency to be emphasized because of the substantial advancement of material sciences in the last few centuries.

Most of the mystics of whom we have record have been idealists. It is logical the idealism would be the basic philosophical principle that the mystic could accept. The mystic looks within himself. He receives intuitive impressions. He has the various mystical experiences that bring to his consciousness information, knowledge, and the basis

of experience which is not in any way necessarily associated with the physical world perceived through physical senses.

Mysticism, therefore, is the expression of idealism for the individual who holds to the principle that insight and intuition are of equal importance as a source of knowledge as is the impression that comes from any physical sense or the conclusions reached through the analysis of memory, experience, and use of reason. The mystic usually upholds the concept of idealism as a metaphysical explanation of the real.

From time to time, idealism has been dominated by materialism. In such periods of history, those who accepted mysticism have influenced the general trend of thought of the particular age. Mysticism has been a force at these times that has subjected materialism to constant analysis, and therefore caused many individuals to think in terms of idealism.

I even go so far as to consider that if it were not for the mystics, religion and the idealistic forms of philosophy and metaphysics might not have survived various materialistic ages. Without the modifying influence of mysticism, the acceptance of materialism would have become more universal, and all forms of idealism would have been subjugated to the control of those who had no other philosophy than that of materialism.

There have been periods when idealism has been dominant and other periods when the voice of mysticism has been relatively quiet. Idealism can exist without mysticism, but mysticism does not exist without idealism. After all, mysticism makes idealism function or become an applicable and usable formula or theory.

We might therefore conclude that mysticism strengthens the concept of idealism by first giving it substance. The mystically inclined individual draws upon a source of knowledge and power to play upon the circumstances of his life and his environment. In doing so, he is constantly emphasizing the fundamental principles of idealism. He causes idealism to be more realistic in his own mind and therefore is able to teach it, either by instruction or example, to those who are overpowered or who are strongly affected by the arguments and examples of materialism. While materialism upholds the theory that

it alone gives substance to the universe and to the material world, the belief and practice of the mystics add a condition which is as near substance as the idealist can approach in these theories.

The second way in which mysticism strengthens the concept of idealism is by supporting the dignity of the individual. Materialism, while possibly not intending to do so in its fundamental theory, nevertheless contributes to the idea that the physical world is dominant in the universe and therefore should receive the first consideration and the first loyalty of all who turn to philosophical speculation. The individual, therefore, becomes secondary to the materialistic concept. In the material world today there exists the tendency for the machine to replace the individual entity and the mind of that entity. In this way, the individual under the pressure of materialism becomes subordinate to the machine, to the scientific application of materialism.

One of the forms of materialism receiving substantial support from a certain part of the world's population today is known as diacritical materialism. This particular form of materialism is an important factor in the formation of social and political standards that are affecting many individuals today. Basically, diacritical materialism, like all forms of materialism, accounts for realism of the world in the area of the material or physical. It goes even further than other forms of materialism in that it subordinates the value of the individual. In fact, it lowers the dignity of the individual and considers the group or the society to which the individual belongs as being of more importance than the individual.

Idealism, on the other hand, stresses a degree of individualism and claims that the development of the human race will come as the result of the development of each individual. This is based upon the principle that the individual can evolve and grow closer to the source of the Absolute, which is the beginning of all manifestation and of all life. Therefore, diacritical idealism is inconsistent with all the principles upheld by the idealist, and even by many materialists.

On the other hand, mysticism acknowledges and supports the principle that knowledge and experience are valid when they come from within as a product of the mind and not exclusively a product

of the physical universe. The individual is equal to or superior, even, to anything that is material. Therefore, individual value becomes important, and the dignity of the individual is upheld and made to be something that is worth having, especially in those who, supported by the principle of mysticism, live a balanced life, acknowledging the physical world but at the same time willing to draw upon the source of knowledge and power that come through the individual mind.

The third way in which mysticism strengthens the concept of idealism is by making idealism a living factor in the life of the individual as a result of the mystical experience. The mystic who has experienced the attainment of knowledge through an experience which takes place within the self is confident of the relationship established between the Inner Self, or soul, of the individual and the absolute oneness of the universe itself.

As is repeated many times in those who have been able to tell of the content of mystical experience, there has been the experience of universal oneness, peace, and composure. Those who experience these conditions find that life is purposeful, that it is a manifestation of the Creator, of the absolute power of the universe, which can be contacted by the individual.

In this relationship between the individual self and all the principles for which idealism stands, the principle of idealism becomes not just a theory, not just a metaphysical principle of idealism which can be discussed in philosophical systems, but a factor of life itself, a factor that contributes to the state of living and to the development of a philosophy of life.

Chapter IX

THEISM AND PANTHEISM IN MYSTICISM

IN THE WESTERN world particularly, there are two general views as to the relationship of God to the world. These are known as theism and pantheism. These two theories are more in accord today in respect to a number of doctrines because of the influence of science upon theology, but there is still a distinct difference in the emphasis between the two views. In pantheism the doctrine of inherence is stressed. God is the original substance and all things manifest this substance. On the other hand, theism stresses the doctrine of causality. God is the fundamental cause of all things but not inherent in them.

According to pantheism, all living things, events, and inanimate objects partake of the nature of God. According to theism, created things that exist in the universe may or may not partake of the full nature of the Creator.

Theism is expressed in two general forms. God is conceived as in some form transcendent to His world, according to one idea. In this view, the power of God is constantly present and functioning in all the affairs of the universe. This operational presence is usually considered to be a force of goodness, a power, as it were, that makes for righteousness. According to another consideration, God, while transcendent to the universe, is also immanent in it. In this concept the world is a manifestation of God's nature but only a partial manifestation. This form of theism is different from pantheism. In pantheism God and the universe are identical, and God is impersonal. On the other hand, theism teaches that God is a personality.

In the Western world, the three most prominent religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are based fundamentally upon theism. Each of these religions has grown out of the other and has carried the mono theistic principle of Judaism to the extreme consideration that God is a force or power that expresses itself individually. To many believers, particularly among the devout of these three religions, God is a person, a heavenly father, to whom they can direct their prayers and supplications.

In mysticism we are concerned with the principle that the individual can relate himself to this ultimate force regardless of how we describe it. The mystical experience is not merely subjective; neither is it an objective experience, but it is essentially what the mystics themselves claim it to be - a relationship intimately established between the self of the individual and the absolute force of the universe.

We can call this force anything we want to -- the Absolute, the One, the Unity -- or we can, as a matter of convenience because of the general acceptance and understanding, use the term God. It makes no difference which term we select. The mystic in his experience is concerned with a direct experience of this One, this Universal Self, this God. He is concerned with relating himself to that ultimate force, regardless of what its nature may be.

We are primarily concerned with the relation of that force in respect to its identity or difference. Are God and the world identical, as many have claimed, or is this force wholly distinct from the physical universe itself? Does the mystical experience throw any light upon this relationship?

Those who accept pantheism describe the relationship between God and the universe as a condition of simple identity. God and the universe are one. The universe is considered to be the creation of the Absolute rather than being the creation of an individual entity, such as found in theism. Pantheism tends toward the idea that the universe is an extension, as it were, of this absolute force of God. This concept is definitely expressed in most of the Eastern religions. In many passages of the Upanishads we find that while speaking in terms that are not purely philosophical abstractions, they nevertheless convey the idea

that what we conceive as God is an expression found in all things and is not limited to any one individual or personality. The Vedanta religious concept definitely supports the idea of pantheism.

In Western thought, we find one of the great proponents of pantheism was Spinoza, who held that God is a manifestation rather than being merely a First Cause. There is the famous statement by Spinoza, "I hold that God is the immanent, and not the extraneous, cause of all things." This statement definitely links the relationship of God to the entire manifestation of the universe.

In Christian mysticism we find the emphasis placed on theism. Christianity itself is a theistic religion. It is to be expected that the mystics who adhered to Christianity would conform to the theistic belief. For example, Meister Eckhart expressed in his writings and sermons many statements that caused him to be accused by church authorities as claiming identity with God and therefore touching closely upon pantheism, rather than adhering strictly to the theistic doctrine of the church. He wrote, "In union with God I discover that God and I are one. I am the unmoved mover that moves all things. Here too God is identical with the spirit." In probably one of his best known statements, he wrote, "The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same -- one in seeing, one in knowing, one in loving."

These are examples of the philosophical as well as the religious concepts of Eckhart which gave him some difficulty with the church. In fact, Eckhart was accused of heresy. This matter was never settled, as his heresy was not brought to a final trial by the church in his lifetime. Eckhart denied heresy. Although he repeatedly refers to the fact of his relationship with God as being an identity, he did not openly claim to be a pantheist. In fact, he claimed to conform to the principles of the church, and therefore to the basic principles of theism.

The theologians and officials of the church, particularly during the Middle Ages and even to some extent in modern times, definitely indicated their distrust of pantheism and have always at the slightest sign of it declared a heresy. The causes of the distrust are due to the

principle that theism stresses the idea of a personal God. On the other hand, pantheism upholds an impersonal Absolute. In the three theistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the belief in a personal God is one of the fundamentals of worship. Christian worship is concerned with prayer directed to a personal God. In prayer, the Christian asks for forgiveness, health, and grace. Obviously, with this principle underlying a belief in God, pantheism cannot be accepted, because the theist could not pray to the universe.

Theism claims that pantheism cannot deal with the problem of evil. If all that exists is of a divine nature, an expression of god, how can we explain evil as being divine also? Furthermore, in theism, man is considered to be belittled by God. He is nothing but dust and ashes. He is a sinful being and has to be redeemed. Therefore, a personal relationship has to be supposed. Pantheism does not provide for such a personal relationship.

For many mystics, the concept of identity, that is, being one with God, as stated in the pantheistic concept, is appealing. Many Christian mystics, such as Eckhart, have tended toward the idea of identity with God, which has led to a deviation from pure theism. However, the mystical experience is usually devoid of any consciousness of either theism or pantheism. In statements made by mystics, they, as a general rule, were not concerned with the religious or philosophical considerations of any differences between theism and pantheism in the course of the mystical experience itself. The mystic did not care whether or not God was of one nature or another, whether God sat on a throne, or acted as a heavenly father, or was immanent within the universe and transcended it at the same time, or was a force that manifested through all things, or that identity was the key to the explanation of the relationship between God and all other things.

The mystic was concerned with his own experience. He claimed -- and we believe him -- to have an experience that related him to a force greater than himself. The nature of that force, or at least an explanation of its nature, was secondary to the experience. Mysticism is primarily

concerned with reaching the Absolute, or the Universal One that exists behind all other manifestations. Mysticism is more interested in the experience of relating the individual to that fundamental source than it is in any philosophical or religious speculation as to the nature of the source itself.

We might conclude that while speculation as to the nature of God and a study of the theistic and pantheistic concepts prove interesting and informative, they are secondary insofar as the mystic is concerned in his attempt to reach a union or an identity with this Ultimate Source and to translate his experiences into a practical application of living that will help him to better understand himself and his relationship to the universe, and to be a guide so that the mystic may direct others toward the attainment of peace and fulfillment.

Chapter X

REASON AND EXPERIENCE

IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY living, reasoning is primarily an objective process. We put into words the content of consciousness, that is, the things we are thinking about. Particularly, we use the thinking process in order to arrive at a decision based upon the knowledge and experience that we have available in our conscious mind.

Reasoning is associated with the phase of philosophy known as logic. Logic is a complicated subject, far beyond the scope of our consideration here except to consider some of its elementary aspects. One of the tools used in a logical process is inference, a process of putting two judgments together in such a way that a third judgment is formed. Out of this reasoning process a new truth arises, which constitutes a conclusion, the ultimate purpose of all reason. We follow a process of reasoning in order to arrive at a decision or conclusion.

The judgments which we make are associated with each other in such a way that the final judgment becomes identical with the conclusion. The process is known as a syllogism. A famous syllogism is All men are mortal. Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal. This syllogism represents the three steps or judgments made up of a major premise, a minor premise, and the conclusion. The first or major premise states a general principle. The minor premise takes into consideration the general principle by applying it to a particular case. The conclusion states what we might consider to be a new truth or a new discovery. This is the syllogism of deductive logic.

Inductive logic does not have any special form of inferences. What is most interesting in connection with a syllogism is that it actually does not represent the manner in which most conclusions are reached in our thinking processes. The aspect that seems most important to us is the conclusion. We do not go through the formal steps as outlined by a syllogism of logic. We might say that the syllogism of deductive logic is used only as a means of testing the truth or falsity of a conclusion that has been reached after it has been made.

Logic deals with proofs, not the mental processes that are involved in making inferences. Logic is therefore interested in arranging facts into ideal systems, in showing what may be the necessary relationship which exists between those systems, and in providing methods of combining them for the purpose of testing the validity of our conclusions.

When we examine the reasoning process to find out how these conclusions actually arise, we find that they frequently arise mainly by laws of association. If I see water and I am thirsty, I say to myself, "I can drink the water and satisfy my thirst." I have come to a conclusion immediately as the result of the perception of the existence of water. The content of my thought is linked with the idea of water, and that determines the inference that leads to the conclusion. Naturally, such a process is reached as the result of the experiences, the information, my temperament, the interests and purposes that I have had that make it possible for me to have this association of ideas. In this sense, association by similarity is most important in reasoning. We put together the things with which we are familiar in such a way that they lead to the conclusion we are seeking. If we are correct in arriving at a conclusion, we have used the reasoning process to discriminate and properly evaluate the elements of whatever has been presented to our senses.

In the analysis of mystical literature, we do not find a great deal of reference to logic, and very little to reasoning. It has been stated by many who have studied mysticism and by those who have been mystics that mysticism is above reason. In using the word above in this sense, it would appear that the world of the mystic, of his thinking, is of a higher nature than that which we receive through our normal sense experience.

The mystic does not reason himself into a mystical experience. In fact, he could not do so if he wanted to. The mystical experience lies above reason. Therefore, as it lies above it, it lies outside of it. Reason and mysticism are almost opposites in that they are associated only in the sense that we may use inferences that come to mind after the mystical experience itself.

This does not mean that when the mystic claims that his revelation or experience is outside reason it is outside the sphere of being reasonable. The mystic will urge, if he has an opportunity and is so disposed, that in the end the mystical life is the only reasonable life that a man should live, and that men were born to become mystics. In mysticism the proponent of this concept will uphold the idea as one of the purposes of life.

A basic reason why the relationship of reason and mysticism is not close is due to the paradoxicality of many of the mystical experiences. If we consider the reports that individuals have made about these experiences, we often find an inability of the mystic to express his mystical experience or revelation in words. The mystical experience is fundamentally ineffable. As a result, we rapidly move away from the concept of reasoning and logic as normally considered by the objective consideration given to these subjects by those concerned with the process of reasoning.

We can easily review some of the paradoxes. In the pantheistic paradox, God and the world are both identical and nonidentical. The universal mind is both qualified and unqualified, both personal and impersonal, both static and dynamic. There is also the paradox that the I or ego ceases to be individual and yet retains individuality. There is the paradox that the person who has reached nirvana neither exists or does not exist. There is the paradox of the extrovertive mystical experience, that objects perceived by the senses are both many and one, that they are both identical and distinct.

Another example of the paradox in mystical experience is illustrated by Suso in referring to an experience which he describes as containing “dazzling obscurity.” Still other examples of paradoxes used such terms as personal impersonality, or statements like the Absolute has

qualities but in the Absolute no qualities exist. It would seem that in these paradoxes there exists a disregard for what we in our objective reasoning accept as laws of logic. The paradoxical events are like experiences in dreams, and have been reported time and time again. Therefore, we know that these paradoxes are logical contradictions and are contrary to many of the rules of reasoning.

The mystic may be unable to put into objective consciousness the necessary concepts to translate it into words which correspond with the criteria of normal, day-to-day objective living. Stacey sums up this concept when he says, "And I think it is quite true that taking mystical paradox to be the same as unvarnished contradiction is not a plain matter of indisputable fact but rather an interpretation that must be justified."

Mystical experiences directly affect our concepts of logic and reason. They conflict with many of the laws of logic, and they are not in accord with our normally conceived ideas regarding the processes of reasoning. As far as the mystic is concerned, the mystical experience replaces the laws of logic and reasoning, not that the mystic denies that these exist. In his day-to-day experience, he applies logical conclusions, inferences, and the process of reasoning to the conditions in his environment which he must face as he lives like other human beings.

But to associate mysticism and logic as being related or complementary to each other is going beyond the area of fact. Reason is at a lower level than the mystical experience. As the mystic says, the mystical inference lies above reasoning. It is to be presumed, then, that what is gained by the mystical experience is far superior to what can be attained by human reason or by any logical procedure. For example, the great inventions and discoveries throughout human history have come about not always through a process of logical conclusion or human reasoning but by adding to the knowledge and experience of the individual the intuitive glimpses that have made possible the completing of situations and ideas that have brought the conclusions we now know exist.

Many inventors acknowledge their achievements have been the result of a hunch, an idea that entered their mind from whence they

knew not where. While they did not acknowledge the invention or discovery as the result of a mystical experience, it was definitely a process complemented by an intuitive impression that put together the pieces, as it were, and made possible the culmination of the inventive process.

Mysticism is not a magic formula. The mystical experience does not replace knowledge and hard work. It is necessary to have a degree of experience in order to apply what is received intuitively. The individual who knows nothing of mathematics, for example, is not going to receive by a mystical experience an idea which solves a complicated mathematical problem. There must be a background already ingrained in consciousness. The mystical experience may fill in the gaps.

Various mystics have stated that in a mystical experience they have attained knowledge that was previously not theirs, but that they were unable to utilize, put into words, or even to explain after the experience was over. Nevertheless, I am convinced that in the experience these individuals have established within the subjective consciousness ideas which intuitively crept into their thinking process and helped to conclude the ideas they were working on or were developing.

In the end, mysticism transcends logic and reason. It is in a sense a super state, a mental achievement which rises above the limitation of the human mind functioning purely on an objective level. It is the means by which we go beyond what we would be able to do if we had nothing but physical or material training. It adds to the total of human experience by being able to bring into consciousness those bits of knowledge which can be coupled with what we have learned in other areas. By putting them together, they make a completeness that is possible only when the human being has the training and experience to be able to arrive at a combined conclusion resulting from both the physical and the nonphysical sources.

Man is not purely a physical being. He is also a psychic being. Through the psychic faculties that are inherent within consciousness he is able to draw upon the Absolute and bring into experience, through what we call the mystical experience, that which will round out his knowledge and his life.

Chapter XI

MYSTICISM AND ETHICS

AS LONG AS man has lived in a society composed of himself and his fellow human beings, he has established rules and regulations with the primary purpose of governing his morals and behavior. These principles have varied at different times in man's history. From the time he was a primitive creature to the advanced civilization that we acknowledge today, morals and types of behavior have been as different as many other human expressions and experiences. However, there has never been on the part of humanity as a whole an agreed basis by which such morals and behavior are enforced. They are regulatory in the sense that it is presumed by the highest aspirations of mankind that human beings will abide by some system of regulations which will be beneficial to themselves and not harmful to their fellow men.

Codes of practice and principles have been adopted by many societies. A classic example is the ten commandments of Judaism, which also to a lesser degree, as far as actual practice is concerned, have been adopted by Christianity, Islam, and the Western world in general. Even though they are not literally practiced today, they still stand as one of the basic moral codes upon which correct behavior is based.

During a period of time in man's society, both ancient, medieval, and to some extent in modern times, when religion had the uppermost force and power over people's lives, religion was the enforcer of moral regulations and rules. During the last century in the period known as Victorian, morals were enforced not only by religion but also by the strength of a government which gave at least outward support

to moral principles that it believed its citizens should follow. In more recent times, many believe that the value of morals has substantially declined. The practices that are current and accepted today are not in accord with the moral standards that were considered the best example of one's ability to live in cooperation with other individuals.

What is needed, and what has been debated in many societies is a basis upon which the ethical rights and duties of the individual should be founded. What is the source of such practices? Many writers in the field of mysticism confirm an idealistic philosophy, that is, that the final source of ethical values lies within mysticism. It is a basis for moral precepts. Its most important contribution to the welfare of the individual and to society is that it stands as a source of all ethics. Morals and behavior can and will be governed by the concept of mysticism.

According to this point of view, mystical experience is that phase of human experience from which moral feelings and concepts originate. Moral values are therefore considered to be a function of that which is experienced as the highest human good. Mysticism is the highest basis upon which we can conceive any system of thought or any practiced discipline contributing to the welfare of man. Mysticism is related to human behavior.

Many of us are accustomed to the idea that religion alone has been the preserver and upholder of the moral and ethical concept, yet Plotinus, for example, subscribed to no religion. His concepts are based upon his philosophical background and upon pure mysticism. He stated that ethics and morals will take care of themselves once man has wisely chosen the proper mode of living. That proper mode, in accordance with his concept, is communion with the ultimate, absolute, or divine nature of the universe and the awareness of its expression in the universe, such as beauty in nature. Any action that violates natural decency can nullify happiness, but the very nature of man's search for the divine should preclude lapses into evil conduct.

“It is not by casting about here and there, outside itself, that the soul will understand morality and ethical conduct,” Plotinus stated. “It knows them of its own nature, as welling out of itself.” Plotinus seemed to believe intuitively in the moral principle and that it came about as

the result of a simple way of living. To that extent we might say that he practiced a moderate and healthful asceticism. Plotinus maintained in his mind a constant image of good. He felt that he attracted good in the world, stating that good is normal and that man should obtain it. It is ever-present, even to those who temporarily disregard divine law and therefore are not practicing the moral concepts and ideals to which they subscribe.

In this regard, Plotinus said, "In each of us there is something of this entity. Wherever you may be, you have only to open to this omnipresent good the faculty in you which is capable of drawing from it; your share flows to you." He mentions the problem of evil by saying as a result of concept, evil is shut out. "All who have possessed themselves of the good find it sufficient. Essentially, one's aspiration is less away from evil than toward the highest and noblest comprehensible to the soul; this attained all has been one and there is peace, the intended condition of life."

All the beliefs and doctrines of Plotinus grew like branches out of the tree of his mystical experience. So said Sheldon Cheney in writing of his experiences. We are now able to apply his concept that association and attunement with the Absolute is the basis of the mystical theory of ethics. It is in the separateness of each individual self which produces the egoism that is a source of conflict, grasping, aggressiveness, selfishness, cruelty, malice, and other forms of evil.

The mystical consciousness abolishes separateness. All distinctions are annulled. It must be conceded that probably the vast majority of mankind do not concern themselves with the nature of mysticism and have no awareness of the nature of the mystical experience. Some might question how mysticism can be the source or basis of ethics if the majority of individuals are not concerned with it. I believe that some faint mystical sense is latent in all men. It is a part of ourselves, instinctive, as it were, influencing the feelings and lives of many individuals without their understanding or knowing the source of such conditions.

Even the primitive individual, or the uncultivated or the debased person today may have at some time in his life feelings of affection,

sympathy, kindness, or good will. These must have sprung from some source. We can theorize that they sprang from a mystical source, that is, the inherent mystical sense latent within the soul itself, within the life essence that causes man to be, that does come to the surface at certain times, and through which ethical experiences and attitudes are exhibited.

Ethical values arise out of the mystical sense that is within everyone. It becomes a profound mystical experience in certain individuals who have advanced to the point of being conscious of the existence of this force within them. It has its source in the universal self, in the Absolute, which is the foundation of the world, or, we might say the Cosmic.

Ethical value, then, is not something that has been humanly devised. Rather, from the innermost depths of the individual being, it is founded upon and reflects the nature of the universe itself. In accordance with the pantheistic concept, it is of the nature of the Absolute. This thinking will cause us to reject the idea that the world and the lives that populate it are indifferent to higher values. In the mystical theory that we have put forth, we accept the fact that love and compassion are feelings which are a necessary part of the mystical foundation. These high ideals enter into human behavior and become a part of man's behavior during his lifetime.

The mystical experience, then, is the basis by which ethical values become overt, that is, expressed in human behavior, whether the experience be explicit or latent. In most people, it is often submerged in the subconscious or Inner Self, and regardless of the individual, from time to time, it brings to the surface of thinking and behavior the feelings of sympathy and love. Love might therefore be considered as a groping toward the individuality of the universal self, which is the essence of mysticism.

Plotinus, the most philosophical of all recorded mystics, has shown conformance with this theory. We can look even further. We find in Buddhism that the same principle exists. There is conceived a pure source of ideas that rest within the universal mind. In Hindu thought, the doctrine that the mystical consciousness is potential in all of

us appears frequently throughout the Upanishads. In them we find reiterated that the individual self is identical with the universal self.

In Christian mysticism we find repeated examples, particularly in the writings of Eckhart, that the soul is not the possession of mystics only, but of all men, and it is identical with the mind essence of the Buddhist, or with the mystical consciousness of the Hindus. The mystic achieves, according to Eckhart, the ability to reach to the Inner Self and bring out into empirical expression the high ideals of love and compassion, which are the expression of the mystical concept.

Thus, the mystical consciousness is potential to a degree in all individuals. It is what the mystics of the East have always held without question and what is implied in many of the philosophical writings of the Christian mystics. These considerations are expressed by Stacey. "We are left with the assurance that the mystical consciousness should be, for those who possess it, a powerful motive and impulsion toward ethical, and therefore toward social action."

For the mystic, there is in the universe a power not of ourselves but of the universal self, which makes for righteousness. That there is such a power seems probable when one considers the ethical and spiritual progress of the human race. We might state this in another way by saying that it seems difficult or impossible to account for all the achievements which, taken together, constitute civilization, without assuming the existence of such a power.

How can we account for man's advancement from the most primitive form to the present concept of ethical insight and behavior unless we assume the presence and activity of some divine or universal agency in the universe? Just to list man's achievements in industry, business, science, government, art, morals, and religion seems to confirm the presence in the world of a force of a higher nature than man himself, which is a directing force in universal events. If this fundamental principle of mysticism is not true, then all that we call worthwhile in our environment, all values, all achievements, are the result of blind chance. All would be illusion. Such a concept would lead to despair and pessimism. The point of view opened by mysticism is the concept that leads to hope and optimism.

CHAPTER XII

PERSONAL ILLUMINATION

IN THE STATEMENT by Dr. R. M. Bucke, referred to earlier, he gave an account of a mystical experience that developed into a state of illumination. According to his report, the experience was sudden and overwhelming. It took possession of his entire consciousness, and in fact not only affected him momentarily but continued to be a major influence during his entire lifetime. Similar experiences have been reported by others. Records of such experiences have not been common, but nevertheless such experiences have been reported by a sufficient number of individuals with such conviction that we cannot doubt their validity. One example well known among Christians was that of St. Paul.

Illumination as a result of the mystical experience is actually the involvement of the mental processes of the individual to the extent that the mind is enlightened. Such enlightenment is not, however, merely an intellectual acquisition. In this type of enlightenment, the individual has contacted a higher source, becoming aware of intuitive knowledge directly from the Cosmic.

The Rosicrucian Manual states, "Rosicrucians distinguish illumination from knowledge. The former is apperceptive or clear understanding, as well as a mere accumulation of ideas gained from experience." The reported experiences of mystics bear out this concept. Not only is there an emotional experience that has a profound effect on the individual and upon that individual's thinking, but actual knowledge is

attained, knowledge that can be tapped, as it were, and used to direct experiences that occur in the future.

As previously mentioned, experiences of a less dramatic nature may be the basis by which great discoveries and inventions have come about. The attainment of intuitive knowledge which has gradually been absorbed into objective consciousness is coordinated with knowledge and experience in such a way that the individual is able to carry out plans, achievements, and accomplishments not possible other wise. For example, the philosophy of Plotinus was compared with the branches of a tree. His beliefs and doctrines grew out of the central knowledge of his objective realization, training, and experience associated with the knowledge he received through mystic channels, that is, the experience that related him to a higher source.

In some of his commentaries, Plotinus explains how such an experience goes beyond a mere intellectual approach. It is a condition supplemented by the feelings associated with the aesthetic. With reference to those who have had intuitive experiences that have led them to the threshold of mysticism, he says, "their souls are suffused with beauty, they thereafter cannot look merely at life's surface. There is a profound inner vision, of the divine being. Thus possessed of God, the man has only to look to the image of divinity within and he sees himself uplifted, gifted with the nobler beauty. However beautiful that image may be, let him leave it aside, for it is of the world of separation; rather let him sink into the identity with the divine. Then he is one with God, experiencing in silence the presence."

According to Plotinus, we have here an illustration of the emotional and intellectual component of the mystical experience, a combination which is a key to the philosophy to which he subscribed and which begins in happiness. The philosophic life that he prescribed is therefore the life that finds the good, and in finding the good, it finds God. This, we must remember, is the statement of Plotinus, who is frequently referred to as the last pagan mystic. This reference, of course, is made to contrast him to the mystics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam who became more prominent during the Middle Ages.

The experience of Dr. Bucke and probably the experience of many others who have had a sudden illumination are typical examples of extrovertive mystical experiences to which I have referred. The experience comes about in a manner that might have appeared to be objective. In fact, Dr. Bucke confused the experience with the possibility that there was a fire in the city where the experience took place.

Such an experience seemingly comes about without any particular preparation or anticipation. The extrovertive mystical experience is frequently spontaneous in its occurrence or in the participation of the individual with the intuitive knowledge flowing into his consciousness. This, however, does not mean that no background was ever provided for such an experience. In some manner, life has touched upon an area which has made the individual responsive to this type of condition. In the experience of Dr. Bucke and a similar experience referred to by Eckhart, we are aware that they had an immediate experience, but we also know that their lives prepared them for the reception of such an experience.

The introvertive mystical experience, being an awareness of identification between the self and the universal core or oneness, is slightly different. Seldom have we found records of it except where an individual has developed to the point of being able to participate in such an experience. Reference was made to an experience of Santa Teresa, in which she refers to the fact that she had an experience after many hours of prayer and meditation. This is typical of the types of mystical experience given to us by the mystics of the East. They followed disciplined procedures in their philosophical and religious practices that prepared them for the ability to experience and recognize a mystical experience when it occurred.

Illumination that carries with it knowledge from a higher source than that obtained through the physical senses is one that we must prepare for, just as we prepare for anything else. A consistent and established set of graded studies and exercises are needed in order for us to be able to grasp such an experience should it occur. One of the fundamental purposes of the Rosicrucian philosophy is to teach a procedure by

which individuals gradually develop their Inner Self and make acute their own consciousness to the intuitive urges that can penetrate their mind and become a part of their philosophy and of their ability to use the intuitive knowledge that is the mystical experience.

As in all techniques, practice is essential. One does not learn to swim or play a musical instrument by reading a book. Neither does one learn to recognize and interpret an introvertive mystical experience merely by reading the experience of others, or reading a manual that might explain procedures that would be helpful. Techniques in any process are developed by directing oneself conscientiously and consistently to the practice of those procedures which will bring about the perfection of the technique. Playing scales on a piano, for example, may not sound like great music, but great music is not produced until after a degree of perfection is attained through the practice of these techniques.

The potential for the mystical experience and eventual illumination lies within all human beings. It is not a condition that has to be acquired through education alone, but also through practice. As stated before, a technique is obtained not alone by knowledge but by consistency of application of knowledge. There are moments in the life of all of us who are not controlled entirely by a materialistic philosophy when we feel uplifted beyond ourselves, when the walls of sense and objective thought fall away, and when we know we are in touch with an ultimate force. They are the supreme moments of our earthly existence. One such vision is worth all the verbal descriptions that others may have made of mystical experience and phenomena that have ever been written or that have been painted with the artist's brush or sounded by the genius of a musician.

Such moments of illumination are not simply the exclusive possession of the advanced intellectual but are probably more often obtained by devotion than by any purely mental procedure or process, by reaching out of the Inner Self, as it were, than by a process of reasoning within the brain. We do not analyze the splendor of a sunset; we feel it. Nature is one thing through the mind and another and quite different thing, a deeper and loftier thing, through the emotions. When we feel a oneness in a state of mystical unity with the vast whole of

nature, our self a star in the firmament of stars, it is then we have a testimony of the reality of universal oneness transcending all other conditions with which we deal. No matter how we reason, the objective mind cannot argue this reality away.

This, then, is the entrance into the mystical experience. Thus, illumination can be attained.

CHAPTER XIII

MYSTICISM AS A METAPHYSICAL SOLUTION

METAPHYSICS HAS ALWAYS been faced with the task of determining the nature of ultimate reality and with finding the answer to the question, "What is real?" Man in his early thinking, as nearly as we have a record of it, gave a great deal of time and thought to finding a fundamental reality that is the basis of all things. The early Greek philosophers, for example, specified air, water, fire, and other physical phenomena as being the underlying or fundamental reality. While they were able to formulate philosophies that were of interest and were at least the beginning of metaphysical speculation, they found that their theories were inadequate in the end.

It is true that materialism in philosophy has had value. It has led to the foundation of modern sciences. It has made it possible for man to delve into the mysteries of the universe, to find explanation for the laws of nature, and to be able to deal with material phenomena, including the body of man himself. As has been frequently repeated, we would not be in as good a condition, nor would we probably be as content as we are today, if it were not for the outstanding achievements of scientific inquiry and development. Thus we see the importance of man's thought. Men and women devoted themselves to thinking of their place in the universe and of the nature of that universe. In their attempt to arrive at the central core of it, the fundamental reality underlying all else, they developed systems of thought that contributed

to man's welfare down through the ages.

Materialism, as I have outlined, has contributed to the development and evolvement of science. Those who did not accept materialism, and instead, developed idealism, whose outstanding spokesman among the early Greek Philosophers was Plato, laid the foundation for the further development of speculative philosophy, metaphysics, religion, and, most important in our consideration, mysticism.

The historic development of philosophy in all of its phases has been to determine the nature of reality. Man has always sought the answer to this question. No one has objectively reached any final analysis or final answer, but metaphysics has moved in the proper direction. With all the faults that we can find with the social, political, economic and religious concepts that exist today, as well as finding faults with the application of science, we must acknowledge that man has evolved, that he is better off materially than he has been at other times in history. If man will lead a balanced life, if he will balance his thinking between materialism and idealism and accept the fact that both have merit, that both have validity, man can continue to evolve.

Needed most of all is the application of idealism. Man has neglected idealism because he has spent so much time in the development of the material world. In order to develop idealism in the world today, man must first of all acknowledge that materialism is not the final reality, not the final answer to the question that metaphysics has asked down through the corridors of time.

Idealism has not proven itself to some to be the final answer, either, but it has not had the opportunity that materialism has had, because materialism has been emphasized while idealism has frequently been subordinated. Generally speaking, the concepts of idealism have been left primarily to the realm of religion. Frequently, man has paid only a certain amount of attention to religion. He has acknowledged it; he says that it is good, and he may nominally subscribe to some of its principles, but it has not had the dynamic force that materialism has developed. Therefore, idealism has been in second place, as it were, throughout much of the history of man's thought.

How, we might ask, can the principles of idealism be brought into focus and made to be an important factor in the life of mankind? I believe that mysticism is the key. Through mysticism we can place our emphasis not alone upon the working of the brain and the perception of the physical senses, but we can look into ourselves, look into the world that is sustained by the universal force that causes the entire universe to be, whether material or non-material.

In fact, the mystical experience is the only channel by which we can contact any force of a non-material nature. The mystical experience leads us directly into an area where the ideals, the concepts that are non material, become stable and as realistic to the individual as does any material object perceived through the senses. In that way, we can bring to the surface of consciousness an awareness of the phase of the universe that is not physical and balance it with that which we know of the material. Only by an eventual balance and harmonious relationship existing between materialism and idealism will we ever be able to reach a complete understanding of the nature of the universe and the nature of the individuals who populate it.

Mysticism, therefore, offers the solution to the problem of metaphysics. It is the means of arriving at not only an understanding of what constitutes reality but of being placed in touch with this reality in such a way that it can be brought into manifestation and can function as a dynamic principle. We can work with it just as we have with that which lies within the realm of materialistic metaphysics. To solve the metaphysical question is to lead man one step nearer to his ultimate goal, that is, a realization of his purpose and his true place in a total universe. We acknowledge our existence but fail to acknowledge the complete relationship that existence has to all other things, both material and non-material.

In order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between our lives as they are now and a practical application of idealism, we might summarize some of the principles of mysticism that can contribute to making it possible for man to realize the ideals as set forth by Plato.

Plato conceived that the ideal was the ultimate reality, that for everything in existence there was a perfect form whose idea preceded it. For example, man cannot conceive anything perfect. He can conceive a triangle, but the triangle that man conceives is only a rudimentary copy of the ultimate, perfect triangle that is the ideal triangle. It lies outside the scope or area of the material manifestation. Everything we conceive, therefore, is a poor duplicate of what perfectly exists in an area beyond our objective realization.

The principles of mysticism that will contribute to putting into practical application the principles of idealism might be summarized in this form: First, mysticism considers that the ultimate reality is one, that the basis of the world is monistic. There is one fundamental reality that lies at the source and constitutes the beginning and maintenance of the universe as a whole. The monistic concept is one that can be accepted by the mystic because his experience causes him to reach the conclusion that the one reality of the universe is the final reality and can be attained by the individual.

The second criterion is that mysticism considers the balance and harmony in the universe and that there is a materialistic universe in which man is made to experience the process known as life. The physical things that constitute the material universe exist prior to our knowledge of them. That is, the mystic is not a dreamer. He does not believe that all is within the mind. He usually accepts objective idealism and considers the fact that there is a world with which he must deal and with which he must contend. He also acknowledges that his physical body is a part of that world and that he must learn to use it and take care of it.

Third, mysticism teaches that the universe is purposeful. Its creator, the force that caused it to be, expressed a meaningful idea. That meaning lies within the area of unanswered metaphysical questions. Mystics have reported that they have seen the answers to these questions, that they have understood that the universe has purpose, and that the force behind it was purposeful and is directing the universe toward an end conceived within the process of its creation.

We can only take their word that they have had such experiences. In every case they have found what they experienced was ineffable. They were unable to put into words the concepts which constituted the mystical experience. This is a point which the agnostic points out as an argument against the validity of the mystical experience, saying that nothing concrete or worthwhile comes out of it, yet the assurance on the part of the individual who had such an experience has influenced the course of history.

Fourth, mystics maintain that the intelligibility of the universe indicates that its nature is continuous with the nature of the mind. The mind of man is a part of the function of the universe and will be in a harmonious relationship with the other universal forces if we permit it to be. The continuous manifestation of the universe contributes to the progress that man can make by his cooperation with the forces that lie back of these manifestations and through the mystical experience he can harmonize himself with that force.

Fifth, the mystic maintains that what we think the world to actually be is determined by the nature of the world and not by the nature of the knowing mind. Again, this is a reiteration that the universe exists as a whole and has a beginning and a purposeful continuance. It is not something conceived in the mind of man, nor can it be manipulated to its fullest extent by the mind of man. The force that causes it to exist and to be created in the first place is a force that transcends any human capability.

Chapter XIV

THE WORLD OF THE INNER SELF

WHEN WE OPEN the door to the world of the Inner Self, we approach an area that lies beyond philosophy, psychology, or religion. We enter what is truly within the scope of mysticism because we are approaching the point or area in which it is possible for the mystical experience to occur.

The term self is used frequently to be a state similar to that of mind. Many individuals do not differentiate between the two words but make them synonymous. As far as naive philosophy is concerned, there is practically no differentiation. They are both the part of the subject which knows and feels and wills. Whatever powers and attributes are assumed for one are usually attributed to the other.

Insofar as the content of consciousness is concerned, there is a limitation. Mind is an organization and unity of conscious content in an individual, while self is a central group within the larger organization of the mind. Our conscious organization, so to speak, is made up of many elements. We never find these elements completely isolated. For example, a sensation, a percept, a memory, a reasoning process, a feeling, an emotion, or an act of will never exists by itself. Sometimes one of these aspects of consciousness is dominant, sometimes another. Whether it is perception, memory, emotion, or reasoning, it is not the only mental state or process present at a particular moment. In each case there is more. There is a background of consciousness representing an organized and unified content which hangs together in a unique and personalized manner.

Whatever is thrown upon the screen of consciousness is projected there momentarily as a lesser content from a larger and more permanent content. No single experience stands alone in consciousness but is outlined against other experiences which lie outside the focus of attention. Sensations of our organs and of our bodies, aches and pains, marginal visual and auditory presentations, fading images of experience just past, memories of remote or recent scenes, hopes, desires, and plans for the future make up this background, which is always present in consciousness.

Each experience in consciousness overlaps the experiences which precede and follow it. There is a continuous unity in each individual stream of consciousness. As new and different experiences come about and reach consciousness, they do not come as sharp breaks but as modifications in the growing unity of experiences. The growth of the accumulative experience is so gradual that there remains a sufficient conscious background of old experience to give the whole a self-identity. There is no moment in the normal waking life where this unity, continuity and identity of conscious experiences can be disregarded. There is an organization of experience into a personal unity in which all aspects and processes of consciousness are represented. This complex organization is known as the self.

From the standpoint of the empirical psychologist, this subject would end here. The self would be a condition that is made up of empirical experiences. Actually, there is more, there is deeper, there is a transcendental ego or subject self. To attempt to understand it, we must resort to the psychology of introspection. I cannot be familiar with the content of your consciousness, with the totality of your self, unless you in some manner, by speech and by behavior, indicate to me to a degree at least what that content is.

Self is our private being. The Inner Self and the self might be difficult to isolate, but actually the Inner Self is the condition that is frequently referred to as the subjective consciousness. That layer of consciousness lies below the level of our objective self and the perceptions, experiences, and thinking processes that are currently taking place within consciousness. From the subjective consciousness can come impulses which affect our behavior either through the

functioning of the objective consciousness itself or by bringing up through the process of memory items, knowledge, and experiences which are hidden in the subjective but are able to reach into the objective consciousness and therefore become a part of our current realization of self as we experience it at any moment.

The Inner Self is related to the soul. We may even go so far as to consider the Inner Self and soul to be identical. Probably it would be better for us to presume --although this may not be a psychologically sound argument -- that the Inner Self is the self of the soul, while the outer self is the total content of objective consciousness.

The soul is the source of life, the source from which the material body is animated and made to be a living entity. The soul is derived from the source of all life and expresses itself as an individual unit incarnated in a material substance. Therefore, through it we should have a source of knowledge, a source that we should be able to contact and that would be a part of the universal one or Absolute. We can further conclude that the Inner Self is the locale of the mystical experience.

The difference is that when this knowledge of the Inner Self is impressed upon the objective consciousness, the experiencer becomes conscious of the existence of this Inner Self, which is associated with all life and all being. The resulting awareness is the key to the mystical experience, through which the individual gains information, knowledge, and direction from a source that lies higher than the objective self and objective consciousness can ever reach. The Inner Self is therefore the window through which mystical experience can shine and illuminate the objective mind, bringing to consciousness the awareness of areas of being, of the Absolute, of reality, that are not otherwise accessible to the objective consciousness.

It might be asked, "How is it possible to activate the functioning of the Inner Self? How can the human being reach into that area of the subconscious and thereby be able to have mystical experiences, or at least tap a source of information and knowledge that will be of value and that will have validity?" The answer to these questions lies in the ability of the individual to develop and utilize the process of intuition.

Man was created to use all his faculties, but so much of the time he has concentrated upon the objective faculties that the subjective ones are not noticed. There has been evidence that very young children frequently have a more intuitive ability than the average adult. Often when a child claims to have experienced something, it is downgraded by an adult. A father or mother may tell the child, "That is imagination. You are only making up a story. You did not actually experience what you told us."

Such is the effect of modern education, not modern in the sense of today only, but in the sense that since man has turned toward dependence upon the material world and the objective mind, he has tended to belittle the intuitive urges that come to consciousness. The child, being unsophisticated, does not differentiate these impressions from those of objective perception. As we grow older, we lose the ability to draw upon our intuitive knowledge through the lack of use.

Attention should be given to re-evaluating the process of education and to training young children to use this innate ability with which every human being is endowed. The Inner Self serves as a medium for the voice of the divine in mankind. It is a spark from the everlasting flame that exists throughout the universe and derives directly from the Source of all things. It is from God. It is God. As we learn in analyzing the pantheistic concept of God, the whole universe is the body God, its expression in time and space. So is the Inner Self God, a miniature universe which exists within the individual. It is the sun of the human system, that which holds its various parts together, shedding its warmth and light throughout. It is consciousness in all its aspects and phases, and consciousness should be one. What we term the Absolute is represented in a segment as the Inner Self, operating in and limited by the matter of the body.

The Inner Self does not lie immediately behind the veil of the world of material phenomena but rather far, far beyond, in what we might call an ultra metaphysical region, where reason is transcended by wisdom and vision by intuition. The physical or material can be defined in terms of mind, but the mind and its Inner Self cannot be defined in terms of itself. To do that, a higher perception is needed, and a language whose vocabulary and grammar are beyond the reach of textbooks.

MYSTICISM—THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE

We need to be re-educated. We need to experience those procedures which will develop the ability to call upon intuitive knowledge and therefore utilize the Inner Self as we utilize our objective consciousness and our bodies. Such a process is a fundamental principle of the Rosicrucian philosophy.

Chapter XV

BEYOND MYSTICISM

BEYOND MYSTICISM LIES a new world that we have not even dreamed of insofar as to what its potentialities might be. There also lies a concept of aesthetics, ethics, and immortality that is not in an area commonly associated with our routine daily thinking. As we well know, we have lived through a long period of materialistic dominance and materialistic development. If we review in our mind the history of the past few centuries, for example, we can readily appreciate the radical changes that have taken place in the material world and in our immediate physical environment.

An individual who lived ten centuries ago could not grasp the environment of today because of material conditions to which we hardly give a second thought. Good examples are found in the fields of communication and transportation. Conditions that could not have been conceived even a few hundred years ago now are commonplace. We accept these things because we are in the habit of using them. Seldom do we pause to consider the amazing benefits that we enjoy and that have resulted from man's material achievements.

What we also fail to realize is that there must be at some time an end to man's material achievements. Material is limited. A physical unit of any kind cannot be infinite, cannot exist forever. A time must come when man's physical achievements are substantially completed, when his evolutionary process, as far as physical change is concerned, is brought to an end. Then, we ask, which way will we go? That will be the time when man will be forced to change his direction, when the human race will have to realize that the next period of great achievement in life and environment must lie in the field of the mind or in the area of

the Inner Self. This development is what will be the area beyond our present concept of mysticism.

The future potential of mysticism is to develop through the experience of mysticism and to understand the now considered mysteries of the universe. The answers to the questions that every human being has asked for all time -- purpose, immortality, growth, and life itself -- will become explainable, not only in terms of man's material development but in terms of his ability to harness the mystical experience in such a way that he will draw upon the source of all knowledge and of all of the faculties of the universe and apply them to daily living.

Beyond mysticism, therefore, lies the key to the future - a future unencumbered by any physical limitation, unencumbered by any lack of knowledge, a future that will contain for all men all knowledge of the universe, and the answers to all questions that have ever been asked. This would seem an impossible situation now, because it cannot be completed, cannot be developed in terms of a physical universe. The future must lie outside that area.

Stacey illustrates this point by referring to an experience by the British poet John Masefield. He does not classify this under the terminology that he applies to other reported mystical experiences. In fact, he refers to it as a borderline case. I sometimes question the division of mystical experience into various degrees, but no doubt there is reasonable evidence that such facts exist, because the experience differs with the individual, with the individual's preparation, and with the individual's point of view.

Regardless of how we classify it, John Masefield tells that he had arrived at a title of a poem he intended to write but was unable to write it. One day, while taking a walk, he suddenly saw the poem appear before him in a completed form. He states that the poem was complete in every detail. He had only to return to his desk and write it as if he were copying it. The experience made a tremendous impression upon him. In reporting the experience, Masefield says, "This illumination is an intense experience so wonderful that it cannot be described. While it lasts a momentary problem is merged into a dazzlingly clear perception of the entire work in all its detail. In a moment of mental

ecstasy the writer perceives what seems to be an unchangeable way of statement.”

Masefield then comments that he knew of cases where other artists have had similar experiences, and that a completed art form has taken place, or taken shape, in an instantaneous perception. He goes on to say, “It is a perception by a mortal of an undying reality from which all beauty, good, wisdom, and rightness come to man. Certainly to myself this last is the explanation that this universe of glory and energy exists and that man may in some strange way enter into it and partake of its nature.”

As Stacey makes clear, Masefield was not considered to be a mystic in the sense we normally think of one. He made no claim to unusual mystical abilities, but yet he acknowledged the experience to which I have referred, and furthermore, states that he is not the only one who has had such an experience. This indicates the future possibilities which I have already mentioned, that the area beyond mysticism will be a human area in which the human being will be capable of drawing upon the Ultimate Source of all knowledge and thereby will be able to live fully and completely and to form a new world based upon the inspiration of his own experience in contact with the Absolute instead of living only restricted by the limitations of the material world.

So it is that man has the opportunity to move forward, to move into a new area of existence, an area based upon what would now be considered immaterial, and an area of which we know very little. Only those who have had the mystical experience, who have been in contact with the source of the universe, with the core of eternal being, and who have had glimpses of such a condition realize the magnitude of these possibilities.

To a degree, this conforms to the Buddhist concept of immortality. The Buddhist claims that upon attaining nirvana, he has also attained immortality. Immortality is not restricted to a state beyond the period of physical life. It is a condition rather than a state of being. It is to be attained through the mind and through the Inner Self, rather than only through a physical change.

Immortality begins when man grasps the significance of his own life and the source of that life. It may be that in this new world where man will live, his life governed by laws that are not restricted or limited to the physical, material universe in which we now dwell, he may grasp the full meaning of immortality and better prepare himself for its realization here and now, instead of looking forward to a state that he cannot now prove exists or does not exist.

We can believe in immortality, but the potential also lies within us to experience that immortality by being conscious of the perceptions that come through the Inner Self from the source of the Absolute. Immortality as we now understand it is a condition to which we refer at the close of physical life. Since consciousness is so closely related to physical life, we are unable to describe and understand the significance of immortality because of our close ties with the life we now lead - but time can change this. Time will be cut short by man becoming aware now of his mystical potential. That is the key.

The great values to which man can aspire that will contribute to this development are goodness, truth, and beauty. Goodness, we have been told, is a reflection of the Absolute. Some mystics, many philosophers, and some religionists make good and God identical. Truth is the awareness of the fact that man lives in an environment that is limited physically but unlimited if he will but extend his consciousness to take into consideration the fact that other areas exist.

Beauty is a prelude to the mystical experience. It registers upon consciousness in a way that affects our emotional stability. It makes us feel that we are sensing something that lies beyond our immediate grasp. All have had at some time in their lives experiences that lie in this field. They are difficult to describe because they are so closely related to the mystical experience that they are to a degree ineffable. All who have enjoyed the experience of beauty, however faint, realize these experiences for what they are. They may be a view of a sunset, the hearing of a piece of music as we walk down the street, or a great view from a high point looking over a large area. They might also include the act of heroism, or self-sacrifice made by a fellow human being.

Our normal material existence has a tendency to limit these

experiences. We are so involved with making a living and adjusting to our environment that the moments of aesthetic enjoyment are rare, and to a certain extent, surprising. They occur so suddenly that sometimes beauty takes us by surprise. In the sudden view or the hearing of the beautiful we find that the aesthetic appreciation seems to supersede the existence of space and time. While such an experience lasts, it lifts us out of the general area of mortal struggle and conflicts in which most of our daily lives are passed.

Such an experience will be rather short and will have a certain tantalizing character about it. We are at once gladdened by the experience and disappointed that the veil which hid it from us is lifted so suddenly that what was clear seems to have passed and there remains only a sense of nostalgia, the wish that the aesthetic experience that was ours could remain and that the vision which we saw could be maintained over a period of time.

Only the great mystics have been able to hold and control such experiences. The highest aesthetic and mystical experiences lie so close at hand and yet so shut out from our daily experience that we fail to appreciate them until after they have momentarily impressed themselves upon our consciousness.

In reference to these experiences, the British philosopher C.E.M. Joad said, "These characteristics of our highest experiences, characteristics of aesthetic experience though they are by no means confined to aesthetics are I believe, most plausibly to be explained on the assumption that in them we obtain a fleeting glimpse, a foretaste, as it were, of the nature of that reality which is God. Insofar as I can conceive the notion of immortality it is under the guise of a mode of existence in which what in these experiences is precarious is made secure, what is secure is made clear, and what is fleeting is made eternal."

The mystical experience is the experience in which a human being has the potentiality to be able to grasp knowledge beyond his physical capacity. We can all participate and find in this experience a reflection of the nature of the Absolute and a glimpse of eternity, so that we need question no more. We will then have attained immortality.

THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER, AMORC

Purpose and Work of the Order

The Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, is a philosophical and initiatic tradition. As students progress in their studies, they are initiated into the next level or degree.

Rosicrucians are men and women around the world who study the laws of nature in order to live in harmony with them. Individuals study the Rosicrucian lessons in the privacy of their own homes on subjects such as the nature of the soul, developing intuition, classical Greek philosophy, energy centers in the body, and self-healing techniques.

The Rosicrucian tradition encourages each student to discover the wisdom, compassion, strength, and peace that already reside within each of us.

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