

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE SOUL:  
MYSTICISM MADE SIMPLE

by

Richard Shining Thunder Francis

Copyright 2001 by Love Ministries, Inc., Liberty Township, Ohio

**DEDICATION:**

To my two closest heartfriends, who have made possible all good in this life, and for whom I am and always remain eternally grateful-- Maria Francis and Pat Fields-- this book is dedicated, with deep, heartfelt Love.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No work of Love is possible without loving friends. Their support is always invaluable, and deeply appreciated. Every man needs friends to love, even as he needs them to love him.

So, it is with the utterly luminous Love of the heart that I respectfully express my admiration and delicious gratitude for the following extraordinary souls (in alphabetical order):

Ann Blufeather, one of the most extraordinarily kind, compassionate, selfsacrificing, and beautiful people it has been my honor and joy to know.

Mary "Maribee" Butler, whose kind and compassionate heart is matched only by her lucid and brilliant mind, whose friendship I so greatly treasure.

Viqi Fairchild, who has taught me so much about the fine, delicate, sometimes unpredictable art of living as a physical being.

Pat Fields, who has given with such miraculous generosity to make life possible. When I asked for God in my life, she appeared, and my prayer was answered.

Maria Francis, the very best human being whom I have ever met, a woman true, guileless, and impeccably honorable, the sweetest friend of my heart.

Karen "Aurora" Ludwick, for whose sharp eye and mind I am always grateful, in proofreading, a real "emerald" of a lady.

Frank Merriman, a compassionate, generous man who has taught me much about the "Song of God" in nature and in myself, and a brilliant teacher in his own right.

Greg Sexton, whose gentle kindness and magnificent mind have made it possible for me to have a roof over my head.

Shirley Sexton, whose sense of refinement and elegance have brought much loveliness and beauty into my life-- and not just the visual kind, for she has a heart overflowing with compassion.

\*\*\*\*\*

May whatever merit is created by this book be shared with all hearts everywhere. May the hearts of all beings be filled with Light and Love, and may all live forever in happiness, joy, and peace.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

\*\*\*\*\*

Author's Preface: Why on Earth Another Book About Spirituality?

1/ The Search for Inner Excellence and Splendor: Universal Love and Spirituality

2/ Love as Passionate Obsession: Mysticism

3/ Who Do You Think You Are? The Nature of Self and Soul

4/ The Psyche, the Cosmos, and the Creator: A World of Dreams and Illusions

5/ World and Mind: The Phenomenon of the Psicosmos

- 6/ The All-good Inner World
- 7/ Welcome to Heaven or Hell, Your Choice
- 8/ Mysticism and Your Secret Identity
- 9/ Mysticism, Love, Identity, and Mindworld
- 10/ Mysticism and Mind: The Inner Journey
- 11/ The Mystic as Lover of Love
- 12/ The Mystic as Psychological Type
- 13/ The Discovery of the Virtual World of Illusion and the Dawning of Freedom
- 14/ The Mystical Experience and the Dreamworld or Mindworld
- 15/ More Notes on the Illusion: The Dreamworld (the Mindworld) and Science
- 16/ Many Worlds, One Mystical Worldview
- 17/ Idealism: A Philosophy Friendly to Mysticism
- 18/ Skepticism: A Philosophy Hostile to Mysticism
- 19/ The Girl Next Door, the Girl in My Head
- 20/ Impermanence, Spiritual Genius, and the Gift of the Dream
- 21/ Bionature, Selfdefinition, Beauty, and Pain
- 22/ The Mystic and Death
- 23/ The Suffering Mystic
- 24/ Brain, the Way of Simplicity, and the Mystical Embrace of Beauty
- 25/ Everything is Beautiful, in the Mystic Way

- 26/ The Inner World of Mind, and its Gnosis by the Mystic
- 27/ Come Fly the Friendly Inner Skies
- 28/ More Mysteries of the Mystic Mindworld
- 29/ It's Alive! Mysticism and Vitalism
- 30/ The Call of the Mystic
- 31/ The Everyday Life and Behavior of the "Ordinary" Mystic: God "In" the Self
- 32/ One With the One: Union with the Higher Self through Yoga
- 33/ One With the One 2: More Notes On Yoga
- 34/ Singing the Light Fantastic Versus Lethal Materialism
- 35/ Love Is Like a Melody: Inner Sounds of Silence
- 36/ Mystical Mysteries: Some More Identifying Marks
- 37/ Marks of True Mystics and Phonies
- 38/ Reading, Talking, Writing, and Walking Mysticism
- 39/ Mindpower, Abundance, the Way, and Magic
- 40/ The Well and Ocean of Perfect Love: More Signatures of the True Mystic
- 41/ The Real Mystic: Attitudes and Discoveries
- 42/ The Superhuman Mystic: Revelations and Keeping the Peace with Religion
- 43/ Spinning the World of Light or Living Within It
- 44/ Immersed in the Mystery of Love: Some Notes on the Interior God
- 45/ Psychocartography: Mapping the Inner Journey to the Center of the Soul

- 46/ Ghastly and Nightmarish "Truth"
- 47. From the Many, One: The Multiple Origins of Orthodox "truth": The Word, the Incarnation, and the Trinity
- 48/ God Inside Out: The Inner Mystic Divine, and the Primitive Projected God
- 49/ Theopsychology: God and the Inner Trinity
- 50/ The Clarification of the Mystical Trinity
- 51/ The Mysteries of Preincarnation and Incarnation
- 52/ Pantheism and Mysticism, and Jesus as the Archetypal Pattern of the mystic
- 53/ The Cross in the Rose: The Darknight and the Rebirth
- 54/ Beginning Babysteps: Identifying with the New Self or Soul
- 55/ Three Types of Mindmaps
- 56/ New Values, Integration of Opposites, and Mystical Elevation
- 57/ Types and Varieties of Mystical Experience
- 58/ High Ethics and the Mystical Entry into Inner Heaven
- 59/ Phases of the Mystical Journey: The Seven Valleys Described by Attar
- 60/ The Mutual Mystic: Lovers and Richard's Four Phases of Ardent Love
- 61/ Enlightenment, mystical Reality, and the Mysteries of Alchemy
- 62/ The Alchemical Tale of the Mystic Quest
- 63/ The Occult, Cults, Magic, and Mysticism
- 64/ The Teachings and Worldview of Magic
- 65/ Archetypes, Magic, Power, Healing, and Mysticism

- 66/ Miraculous Mystic Emptiness, Magic, and the Formal Church
- 67/ The Mystic: A Composite Portrait of Pneumopsychology and the Phases of the Mystical Experience
- 68/ The Darknight, Egodeath, and Joy
- 69/ Becoming God: Utter Joy, or Final Disappearance?
- 70/ The Absolute and the Nature of Mystical Metamorphosis
- 71/ The Positive Social Implications of Mysticism
- 72/ Total Selfmetamorphosis: The Core of the Mystical Experience
- 73/ Varieties of Mystical Experience: Brief Notes on Various Mystical Types
- 74/ Cosmic Consciousness, Richard Rolle, and the Two Types of Mystic
- 75/ Ridding the Life of Evil and Cultivating Humility: The First Steps of Mysticism
- 76/ Cultivating Invincibility: The Allembracing Mind and the Way of Purgation
- 77/ Purgation: Purgatory, Pain, Peace, Passion, and Poverty
- 78/ Mortification, Ultracontment, and the Ways of Renunciation and Simplicity
- 79/ The Classical Virtues of the Mystic: Using Them to Overcome the Lower Nature
- 80/ Owning and Being Owned: The Paradox of Mystical Freedom
- 81/ Living in a Very Good World: Poverty of the Psyche and Resignation
- 82/ The Discovery of Inner Sanity: A Quick Review of Mystical Principles
- 83/ Bourignan, Francis, and Theresa Versus Gurus of Ignorance: Opposite Fanaticisms to be Avoided
- 84/ Notes on Mystical Lifestyles: Ecology, Unbalanced Mystics, and Inner Death



- 85/ The Crucifixion of Ego and Resurrection of Spirit: Hyperintrospection and the Illusion
- 86/ Life, Death, and Love, Mystic Style
- 87/ Mysticism and Masochism: Separating the Mystical Wheat from the Aberrant Chaff
- 88/ The Perfect World: Abandonment of Preference, and Some Mystic Vignettes of Mortification
- 89/ Borderline Between the Purgative and Illuminative Ways: Alternations Between Rapture and its Absence
- 90/ The Illuminative Way: Ecstatic Midpoint of the Journey
- 91/ The Illuminative Way and the Unitive Way
- 92/ The Luminous Theophany: God in the Soul, God in the World
- 93/ Nature, the Perfect Creator, and the Imperfect World
- 94/ Strange Scents, Visions, and Revelations: Parasensory Experiences and Mysticism
- 95/ Madness, Visionary Interpretations, the Superconscious, and Audiorevelation
- 96/ Visions, Revelations, and Exteriorizations
- 97/ Imaginary Vision, Passive and Active
- 98/ Automatic Writing, Inspiration, and Mysticism
- 99/ Introspection, Attention, and Contemplation: The Dynamic Training of a Mystic
- 100/ The Vanishing of the Self into Love
- 101/ Mystical Prayer and Stages of the Inner Journey
- 102/ Review of Some Mystical Stages and Transformations

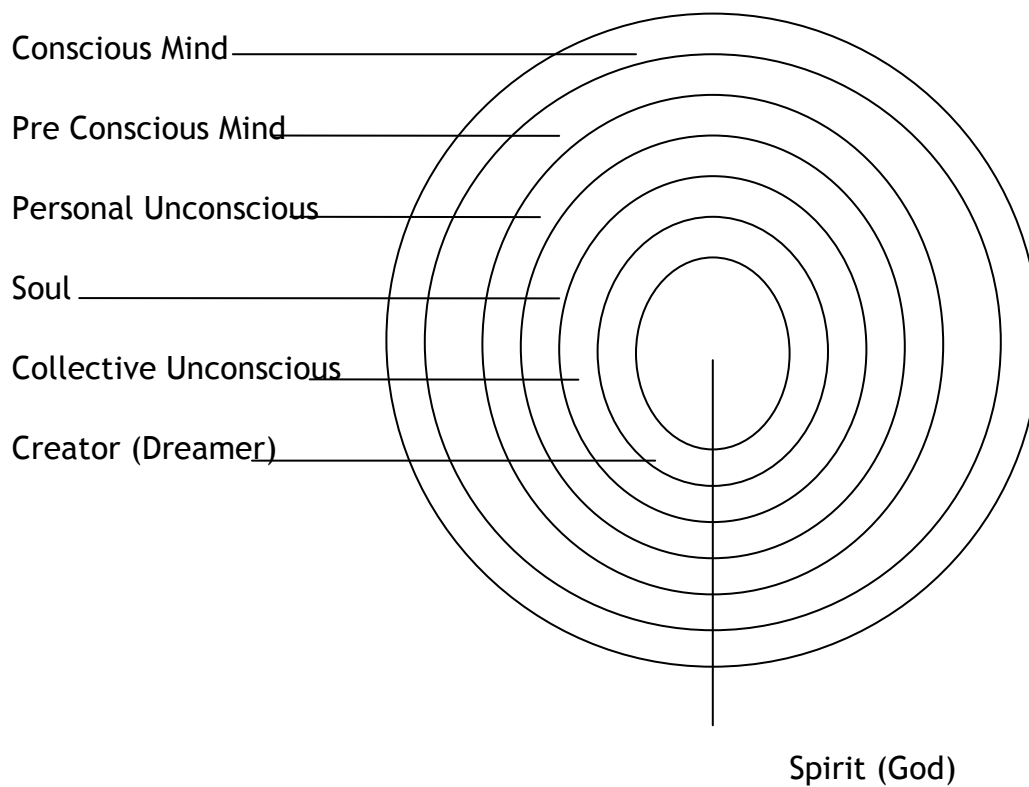
103/ Quietism: Phony Mysticism

104/ Inner Steps to the Miracle of Contemplation

105/ The Mystery and Ecstatic Beauty of Contemplation

106/ The Paradoxical Desert-Garden: the Inner Dwelling place of the Absolute

107/ Cosmic Closure: Final Ecstatic Union



Graphics by Dana Pilolli

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE: WHY ON EARTH ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT SPIRITUALITY?

\*\*\*

Far too many books about "spirituality" overflow from shelves bulging in every bookstore. It often seems as if they are falling out of the racks. They promise everything, often for nothing. The last thing this planet needs is yet another.

But the reality is not appearance. Books about true spirituality are few and far between.

Many thousands of books discuss religion-- a completely different subject. Religion does sometimes dip into the oceanic mindwaters of real Spirit. A tragic error blinds us, however, if we assume that religion is spiritual. The two can be totally unrelated. For religion involves finances, administritivia, hierarchy, Scriptural dogmas, and a host of other factors unrelated to Spirit.

Also, much "bull" passes for popspirituality. This is usually a combination of cheap metaphysics and shabbier psychology. It is designed to stir up greed. It promises the moon and stars. With only the mindless repetition of some simple but "secret," usually "ancient and esoteric" techniques, you can become rich and/or famous overnight. You can have anything that you want, without even working for it. All that you have to do is wish-- as in a b-movie about a genie in a bottle. It is an ancient human fantasy.

The universe, and God, are here to serve you. To tap the inner hidden Power of this genie, and to learn to do this well, just buy the book. Once you learn the appropriate prayer, affirmation, or correct way of thinking, you can have it all. This stuff is spiritual nonsense, mere wishful thinking. But it appeals to the average reader's fears in general, and to her overcompensating greed in particular. This "pneumobabble" (spiritual nonsense) is actually quite attractive, and seductive. For it appeals to that part within all of us called the "lower" nature. These programs are often quite complex, complicated, and involved.

The startling component of real spirituality is, by contrast, its stark simplicity. For real spirituality does not demand even that you accept a particular religious view. It has no organization, no standard rites, rituals, or ceremonies. It has no complex set of doctrines, dogmas, or scriptures to memorize. It posits no infallible leaders. It demands no church-attendance. It implies no loyalty to any hierarchy, to priests, bishops, pastors, ministers, or elders. Instead, it is universal in scope. It is intercultural, inclusive rather than exclusive. And in its utter nakedness, its mindboggling simplicity, spirituality can be defined by a single word: Love.

Truly spiritual people, such as Jesus, Kwan Yin, the Buddha, Lao Tzu, Patanjali, Rabiah, Al Hallaj, and dozens of others stand at the foundation of most religion. But religion has endured centuries of distortion and accretion, so that modern religion

often bears little resemblance to the spiritual life. Most religion has drifted far from the noble and spiritual ideals of its founders. "So, we have the paradox that religion might not even be related to spirituality. And real spirituality cannot be bounded by the perimeters of any standard religion.

For example, you could gather Jesus, the Buddha, Patanjali, Lao Tzu, Kwan Yin, Theresa, and Catherine of Genoa in a small room, and they would experience only peace, love, and harmony. But gather their so-called "followers" in that same room, and they would very quickly be at each others' throats!

This book, then, is **not** about religion. It is about living a more productive, more creative, and happier life. It is about finding and maintaining inner peace. It is about selfimage and relationships with others. It is about learning the art of consistent loving. It is about knowing ultimate Reality.

I have discovered, after over a quarter century of spiritual and psychological counseling and education, that precisely this kind of book is desperately needed. Many people don't know spirituality "from a hole in the wall." The very word "spirituality" leaves them baffled and bewildered. It is not a subject taught in school. People usually do not make movies about it, and no one discusses it at a Saturday night party.

I have no intention of entering a complex debate about religion in schools. **Religion should never be taught in schools run by the government.** But spirituality would be a welcome oasis in the midst of the modern spiritual desert. People, especially young ones, are suffering enormously from the complete spiritual void, the utter absence of spirituality, in their lives. This factor has given rise to a generation of amoral "digitheads," people who are great at computers, but who have largely forgotten the arts of conversation and interpersonal interaction. People are "interactive," too.

This book is also not about the matrix of religion, theology. Except as it bears directly on the question of mysticism, theology will be completely ignored. Since it is a mindnumbingly boring subject, I do promise to avoid it whenever possible. I make the same vow to my readers about organized religion-- possibly the dullest subject in the world.

I dare to hope sincerely that this book will make it into the hands, and eventually into the heartminds, of young and old alike. People need to know that the practice of a full, healing, vibrant, satisfying spirituality is entirely possible with or without standard religion. For spirituality is inner goodness, not conformity.

So, call it what you want: Community Ethics, Community Cooperation, Self-acceptance, Self-love, Crisis Management, Community Service, Positive Action, Positive Self-image, or by any of a hundred other names, "a rose, by any other name..." I challenge each of my readers to become a Love-activist. This is not complicated. It simply means, Do something every day to help someone. Do a good

turn. Show generosity, charity, or compassion. Spiritual principles, stripped of all traditional religion, need to be taught in every school, home, and public forum in the world. And in view of the utter decimation of social order that is right now occurring in some areas, we need to begin yesterday, or, at least, asap.

Complete separation of church and state is one of the very best ideas upon which our country was built, and must never be compromised. But a course on spirituality, emphasizing cooperation, service, and boosting of a good selfimage, need not alter this fine principle. What we need are programs designed to create people who accept, and dare we hope, actually like, themselves and others. This is not an "instant"solution, but it is definitely a step in the right direction.

What is needed are courses in "agapology," the psychology of unconditional acceptance, compassion, and love. At the Institute of Agapology and Metaphysics, in Cincinnati, Ohio, we have developed a sample curriculum which attempts to distill the great spiritual teachings from the world's major traditions.

When clients and students request a "must read" list of books about spirituality, there are a number that spring to mind. . I heartily recommend that great and ancient classic on Taoism, *Tao Now: A New Rendition of the "Way of Virtue,"* by the Master Lao Tzu (Love Ministries; Worthville, Ky., 1995) Besides this, there are some more standard classics universally recognized in the field of spirituality. These might or might not be recognized as "religious," but a wide intercultural approach prevents the recommendation of any one religion. Recommended for a good "intro" to spirituality are: The Gospel of John, *the Celestial Song of God*, the *Way of Virtue*, the *Cloud of Unknowing*, various Sutras of Buddhism, the Upanishads of Hinduism, the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, by Shankara, a wide spectrum of writings by Taoists, Sufi poets, and some Christian saints. This small list is quite enough to keep the average person busy in selfeducation for quite some time.

In the future, I hope to add to this illustrious, venerable collection of spiritual gems the present work.

For when a good teacher meets a good student, she truly cares for her. While sexual activity between student and teacher is unthinkable, another form of powerful Love does develop between them. The teacher becomes somewhat protective of her student. She does not want simply to cast the student out onto the roiling waves of the tumultuous and confusing ocean of religious and spiritual teaching. Instead, she longs to give as complete and sound a guidance as possible. Still, she honestly tries to avoid all dogmatism and claims to exclusive truth.

Not that any spiritual teacher should ever seek to control her students, or make decisions for them. The best teacher is the one who wants the student to outgrow her. She plans and hopes for her own obsolescence. The crucial thing is that she never misdirect a student.

That is why this book was written. Sending a student into the average bookstore

is catapulting her into a spiritual tornado. The student can be swamped by a tsunami of confused, confusing, contradictory, and nonsensical messages, ranging from the silly to the sublime. It is hoped that this book can provide simple and easy guidelines. This book has deleted almost all technical terminology, and, if any odd or strange words have had to be used, they have been simply and clearly defined. This book is not written for the scholar, even though it is accurate. So, although it is derived ultimately from dozens of sources, cumbersome footnotes have also been eliminated. The goal was to present profound truths, but in the form of a "quick, easy read." It has been written for the average reader.

I owe the most enormous and genuine debt of gratitude to a mystic who wrote a great classical study of mysticism in 1911. Her name is Evelyn Underhill. The essential matrix of datastructuring used in much of this book owes very much to her classical study, named simply *Mysticism*.

The present book can, and I think, will change your life, for the better. To those who have never before cracked a book on spirituality, it promises vistas and horizons of an entirely new universe, as close to you, as intimate, as the neurons of your own brain. It was H.D. Thoreau who spoke of a "private sea" within the person, representing her unexplored spiritual depths. The Hindu mystics similarly referred to an inner "ocean of light." So, come with me, to this sea, and let us explore it together.

Richard Shiningthunder Francis,  
Shalimar 3

## Chapter 1/ THE SEARCH FOR INNER EXCELLENCE AND SPLENDOR: UNIVERSAL LOVE AND SPIRITUALITY

\*\*\*

Is "spirituality" really spooky? Is it as weird or bizarre as many think? It does carry a burden of eccentricity, if not nuttiness. Are all spiritual people flakes or airheads? The average person, especially among older, more conservative, types tends to think so. They mock, and often vitriolically damn, anything having to do with "new age" spirituality.

But spirituality is **not** synonymous with "new age." Much "new age" stuff is truly spiritual. But all new age ideas are **not** spiritual. And all spiritual ideas are not new age. Much that is absurd, in fact, passes under the term new age.

These cults and fantasies often include ludicrous gurus, extraterrestrials, extradimensionals, spirits and spooks, and related imagination-enriched phenomena. Formerly, these were limited to wild-eyed, fanatical fringe groups, those suffering from mental and emotional disorders. The new age is an unconventional, sometimes bizarre, grab bag. It is full of a wide spectrum of worldviews, ranging from the accurate to the absurd.

Spirituality is not the study of exotic cults or esoteric books, or those of "channelers." Some of this might be spiritual. Most of it is not.

Spirituality is also **not** religion, although, ideally, religion is supposed to be its loyal handmaiden. But historically, this has almost never been so. The world's great



faiths partially reflect the spiritual. Aspects of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Taoism, nature-faiths, and others are spiritual.

Spirituality is much simpler than religion. It is what you do **inside**, while religion is what you do on the outside. Religion might impress others, but spirituality changes thoughtpatterns. Religion is attending church, singing hymns, giving tithes or donations, Bible-study, public prayers, etc. Any fool or hypocrite can do all this. But there is one action that a fool/hypocrite can't take. For if she did this, she would no longer be a fool/hypocrite. That is Love.

Love is spirituality. Many people, burned by religion, suffer from "pneumophobia," or unrealistic terror of all things spiritual. Lunacy and psychosis have historically manifested under the banner of religion. So, this is understandable.

It's bad taste to discuss spiritual issues. This policy is "I don't talk about religion or politics." But we need to wake up. It's the twenty-first century. We now hear, every day, public discussions on sexual practices and abuse, and a wide spectrum of other sexual issues. We can now talk about illness, often in excruciating and repellant detail, and about death. Political debate-- too much of it simple rubbish-- fills the airwaves of talkradio. Spirituality is the final frontier of prohibited discussion. It is time to blow the lid off this nonsense. For it is the very absence of healthy spirituality that has driven our civilization to the brink of ultimate annihilation.

We can be open about everything else, and it's far past time that we broke the spiritual taboo, as well. Let us, then, fearlessly approach this forbidden final frontier in fairness and freedom.

So, let's talk. Let's discuss spiritual ideas wisely and widely. It is time that "closet spiritual people" (the word "Spiritualists" refers to members of a specific religion) reveal themselves. We can, and should, do so with joy and honesty.

I am not at all a religious man, and am not ashamed to say so. Some of the greatest spiritual people of history were not "religious." And some were not even "respectable." The example that springs to mind is the most influential spiritual person of the entire history of the Western world. I refer, of course, to Jesus.

It is a common, but ignorant, error to assume that Jesus was appointed by the Jewish synagog as a teacher or official rabbi. The Greek Scriptures, commonly called the "New Testament," do not support this facile and shallow assumption. Jesus was formally and rather starkly rejected by the official Jewish organization and hierarchy.

His earliest followers, despite being, like him, genetic, geographic, and cultural Jews, were also hated by the Jewish religious community.

Jesus' teachings were regarded by most orthodox Jews as dangerous. He was seen as a rebel and a renegade. He was universally regarded as a lunatic, or at least, a heretic. He was accused of having abandoned the path of the ancestors or forefathers. He scared the official organization so much that, in the end, they supported and engineered his murder.

This is not written because I am antisemitic. I am not. People are not responsible for the behaviors of their ancestors. I'm certain that my own ancestors, somewhere in history, probably were guilty of equally execrable behaviors. Probably they committed unspeakable atrocities. My only point is that Jesus was not warmly embraced by the official Jewish order of his day. Jesus was genetically, culturally, and geographically Jewish. That does not mean, and it does not follow, that he was religiously Jewish. The "religious and respectable" components of Jewish society saw him as evil, a threat to their "theocratic organization," and even accused him of being possessed by Beelzebub-- one of the ancient names for their devil.

Perhaps more startling, Jesus was not a Christian. He could not have been. For the word "Christian" was not even invented until after his death.

So, here we have the gigantic paradox of a man who was not a religious Jew, and was not a Christian. What, then, was he? He was a human being, a man who had found and touched something "divine." He was, in short, not a religious man at all, but he was clearly a very spiritual man.

In the retrospective twenty-twenty vision of historical hindsight, some of the value of religion evaporates. Religion divides people, and has hurt at least as many as it has helped. Religion has been misused to support the most hideous and horrific genocides, wars, rapes, atrocities, and barbarities. It has justified racism. It has been the matrix of superiorism, self-righteousness, and incredible arrogance.

Wherever and whenever it appeared, religion divided people, often into vicious warring camps. Few religions have practiced even a modicum of tolerance towards other religions. In overview, religion is the worst idea ever conceived.

But spirituality is the best. For by stunning contrast, wherever spirituality has blossomed, people have dropped religious, racial, and political hatreds, biases, and bigotries. They have joined hands in harmony.

So, in history, religion and spirituality have been direct opposites. Religion has almost never been spiritual. It supports a destructive "us versus them" psychology: Only a certain church has an "in" with God. This god is like a petulant little brat. He (and "He" is always male) deigns to speak with ONLY members of a particular religion. This is because it is the "right" religion. It has figured out God and cosmos, understands and knows everything, and only its official views are right.

I'm not aware that anyone has ever been so stupidly bigoted as to claim that God actually is a Roman Catholic, a Baptist, or a Jehovah's Witness. But the members of divisive, hurtful churches and cults imply that God is indeed such a member. He/She is the ultimate leader of their group only. So, they theorize a limited God-- the world's greatest oxymoron.

So, to sum up: Religion is merely what is done on the outside, to impress people. Without Love, it is one of humanity's worst ideas. Spirituality is Love, and it is the sum total of work done on the inside, on your inner being, resulting in changes in

words, thoughts, and behaviors. It is deep, authentic, and permanent. It is the best idea in history.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 2/ LOVE AS PASSIONATE OBSESSION: MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

A thousand-carat faceted emerald, polished and glowing, at the center of the heart. This is a metaphor for the "jewel" of a truly spiritual life. To the one who discovers this "gem of great price," the abandonment of the rest of the entire world seems like a trivial afterthought, like blowing away dust. So, abandoning all greed and all quests for fame or power, spiritual people have focused like a laser upon the attainment of the highest state of Superconsciousness.

These luminous men and women pursue a magnificent obsession. They have sought, as the ultimate act of humility, to disappear without a trace into the great cosmic Flow of Love. This great Flow they have defined as "ultrultimate Reality." It has many other names: Spirit, Absolute, Beloved, Coremind, Creator, Dreamer, Superconscious, God, Christ, Love, Love-nature higher Power, Buddha, Brahman, Tao, Great Spirit, etc.

The passion to know this Absolute is so fiery that these unique people sought to redefine the word "Self." They decided that this word did not apply simply to the "self" of family, society, and world. Instead, that small self was defined as "ego"-- only an insignificant part-- of a higher Self.

This higher Self or "soul" dwelled in the deep unconscious Mind. It possessed startling and great clarity, bright understanding, and brilliant experience and memory. They taught that, at some level, this soul merged with the deepest core-mind, the Spirit. (See "Chart of Mind.")

When this spirit was holy, it was called Holy Spirit, which became one of the names for God. So, these unique people, called "mystics," defined God as the deepest level of the collective unconscious.

These people, then, never saw God as external or outside themselves. Instead, they spoke of the "indwelling" holy Spirit, or the "God within." This core-mind or nuclear Mind they defined as the inner Love-nature, the higher nature, the Absolute.

These mystics are the most excellent and brightest luminaries among all earth's spiritual populations. NOTE: Mysticism was never a religion. It was/is a worldview that appeared interculturally, in all faiths, in all centuries. It was discovered, and rediscovered, by Buddhists, Hindus, Taoists, Greeks, Romans, shamans in nature-religions, Jews, Christians, and Sufis.

The word "mysticism" has been seriously abused and misused, even by scholars and journalists, who should know better. Just because a worldview is unusual,

paranormal, psychic, or just bizarre, the use of the adjective "mystical" is **not** justified. Nor is every psychic, guru, or cult-leader correctly labelled a "mystic" just because her teachings are unusual.

"Mysticism" has a crystalclear historic and academic definition. It is the philosophy that marks the deepest spiritual people who have ever lived. So, it deserves a place of solid respect, not the "throw-away" place of disrespect to which it has currently been relegated.

Specifically, a "mystic" is a person who has discovered that "God" is not outside, but inside, the human heartmind. "God" has been found to be Love, not an interventionistic "parent" in the sky. And the goal of the mystical life is to become a full embodiment or incarnation of the Love-principle, or of God.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Chapter 3/ WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? THE NATURE OF "SELF" AND "SOUL"

\*\*\*

It'll knock your socks off. It will explode like a supernova in your brain, filling you with light, and changing your life forever. It is the experience of enlightenment. The mystics say that it is not an achievement. It is a discovery. Mystics do not find It by continual selfimprovement. The greatest quantum leaps in spirituality do not arise from improving the ego or social self. (In psychology, this selfimage is called the "lookingglass self," because, instead of being authentically derived from inner sources, it just reflects the views of others.)

What is this fake identity, this ego? It is symbolized by your name. It is a name-label, with all that this implies. If your name is Mary Smith, it is everything encompassed by that name-- history, limitations, selfimage, etc.

But all the qualities collectively represented by your name do not constitute your true Self. This is the view of spiritual/mystical psychology. If your name is Mary Smith, then that is simply a "role" that You (the higher Self or soul) are playing. It is a costume, a disguise. It is a *persona*, from which we get "person." In Latin, that word means "mask." So, Mary Smith (insert your name here) is not your true Self, but a kind of game. You are just pretending, wearing a mask. The crucial question is, Who is behind that mask?

So, the ego is not your most genuine Self. Take a quick moment of your time, and write here your first and last names:

---

Now, study that name for a few moments. Then, we will discuss it.

That name represents the identity that you received from your parents, who gave

you the name. But when you are finished with playing the "earthgame," that will no longer be your name. The "person" who has that name will have died. For that name identifies a body. And that body will begin the process of returning to the elements.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Adam, in old Hebrew tradition, was told, "Dust you are, and to dust you shall return." But you, your Self, will survive death, as a soul. You will adopt a new identity. Or, more literally, you will remember your truest, deepest "secret identity." For you are not an ego, but a soul-- deathless and timeless.

Your higher Self, or soul, will not die. It will continue to live, in another form. This will all occur in a very deep inner space in your mind. This space is another universe, dimension, "world," or reality. When you arrive there, that reality will seem **every bit as real to you as does the present one**. It is as if you have completed one dream, and then, when it ends, you begin another, just as real. Your old life implodes into the psyche at death, and another reality, just as real and convincing, explodes from the depths of that same psyche. This afterlife world is just as real and solid as the previous, present one. After all, from the view of previous lives, this current one is the "afterlife."

This idea, called "survival" is hardly radical. For centuries, most of the population of our planet has believed that death is not the end of consciousness. Now, for the first time in history, we have good, solid, medical evidence that it is true. For thousands of people have actually died, and been resuscitated, through neobiomedical technology. Anyone who remembers anything about her afterlife experience tends to give a report that is substantially the same as those reported by thousands of others who have also died. Also, faithful Christians, Buddhists, and atheists tell the same account.

This experience has been incorrectly called the "near death experience," or nde, but these people involved in the nde will proclaim that they were not **nearly** dead. they were actually completely dead. (The term "nde" is actually a concession to, and compromise with, the rigid materialism and mechanism that rule modern medicine. It is an implicit way of ignoring the possibility of life after death.)

So the "nde," or "real death experience," actually supports an idea that, not long ago, seemed scientifically incredible. Happily, younger, and better educated, physicians are more open to the metaphysical/spiritual view that death is not the absolute end of consciousness. So, in the future, perhaps the rde will gain wider acceptance and recognition. This recognition would actually represent a step towards greater realism, since labelling the phenomenon "nde" is an implicit denial of experiential reality.

Yes, there are still plenty of oldthinking people who believe that the physical brain is the origin of all thought, and therefore, that no consciousness can exist outside the physical body. But as the new enermeds (branches of "energymedicine") develop, it is becoming more evident that we consist not only of the physical,

cellular, molecular, chemical body, but also of several energetic systems or "bodies." If consciousness is a purely energetic function, and if the lines of force in these structures can form a permanent matrix to organize electrical impulses, forming circuits, then we could have a theoretical mechanism to explain the continuity of thought after death.

The most rigid mechanist will concede that thought itself is an energetic phenomenon. It consists of tiny "sparks" of electricity, sent from one "microwire" (neuron) to another, in a series of circuits. If that same microelectric impulse can continue without the "hardwiring," without physical neurons, or "wetware," then thought could also continue.

If only this mild and very traditional teaching were true, then the idea of a higher Self would have to be embraced. It is just another name for the traditional "soul." But spiritual psychology usually is far more radical than merely to suggest that the soul exists **after death**. For it suggests that the soul also existed **before birth**. This means that the higher Self has gigapsychons of data and experience, stored in the unconscious Mind. It is far wiser than merely the conscious mind.

In certain altered states, it is possible to establish conscious communication with this higher Self. But, deep in the unconscious Mind, at a level much deeper than even this soul level, exists a much brighter, more powerful Mind. It is also unconscious, but it is not the subconscious usually described in psychology. This deepest Mind of all contains all knowledge and wisdom. It is a fountain of inner wisdom, joy, serenity, and Love. It has traditionally been called the indwelling Spirit, holy Spirit, or simply, God. Mystics tend to call It the "Absolute," the Ultraultimate, the Ultimate, divine Mind, infinite or cosmic Mind.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Chapter 4/ THE PSYCHE, THE COSMOS, AND THE CREATOR: A WORLD OF DREAMS AND ILLUSIONS

\*\*\*

The fire of Godlove shines radiantly into Mind, creating the dreamworld. The deepest level of the unconscious Mind is the Creator. It is a part of the indivisible Core of all Mind. It is a subsection of the level of unconscious Mind called Spirit. (See "Chart of Mind.")

God did not create or form the world, the way a carpenter builds a table, or a potter makes a clay jar. Instead, "creation" is an ongoing, neverending dreamprocess. It is happening now, and again now, and again now.

This Mindview of creation is fantastically more advanced and sophisticated than the homely and primitive view of a Creator who "makes" things with hands, out of some primal "stuff" or matter. The "stuff" of creation is Mind. The way the Mind

creates the cosmos is exactly the same way that **a dreamer dreams a nightdream.**

Before you continue, it is well worth reading that previous sentence a couple of times. For it represents an entirely new vision of the process of creation-- one that has dazzling and stunning ramifications.

Ancient enlightened people claimed that the entire world was the "dream of God." Because this world was a dream, they used the Sanscrit word *maya* or "illusion" to describe it. God "creates" the world through a dreamprocess, and He/She uses the human nervous system as the medium of creation. He/She dreams up the world through you, and through me.

But everyone knows that the world around us is "real." That is obvious. Commonsense confirms this fact. Science confirms and verifies it. It is "selfevident." Continuity verifies it.

But before we make any rigid statements about reality, let us look objectively at what exactly we can really prove. If you had to prove the existence of any object, say, this book, how would you prove, even to yourself, that this book exists independently? That is, how could you prove that this book would exist without a mind, such as yours, to perceive and sense it?

Think about that one for a moment, while we take a minor excursion into detour. Nobody denies that the world exists. I live in the world, and deal with it, every day, just as you do. I know that it exists. But the question up for grabs is not, "Does the world exist?" For we all know and agree that it does.

The real question is, "Does the world exist as a collection of independent objects, or does it exist as a series of dreamimages?"

The "obvious" answer is the one that we all learned in school. This typical, Western, mechanistic, materialistic view I call the "nbc universe." This is the usual or "normal" view. The "nbc" stands for "Newtonian-Baconian-Cartesian" universe. Newton, Bacon, and Decartres were three men who were famous for establishing the view of reality as consisting of solid, independent objects interacting at random.

There are some deep technical philosophic problems with this view, but it is beyond the scope of an introductory and simple work such as the present one to go there. So, let's just keep it light, and fun.

Now, according to the traditional nbc view, all minds could disappear tomorrow, and the universe would go brainlessly and mindlessly "ticking on," like a mechanical toy or clock. The material, external cosmos, says this view, exists independently of any mind.

The alternative view, held to be true by enlightened people since ancient times, says that this is wrong. A cosmos cannot exist without (a) mind to perceive or sense it. So, your mind, mine, and every other mind, make possible the real existence of the universe. If all perceiving, sensing minds were suddenly snuffed out, the cosmos would disappear.

At first, this strikes us as odd. But with a little thought, it can be seen to make sense. Like the old saw about the "tree in the forest," this philosophic conundrum implies that any reality has two aspects: an object, and a mind to sense/perceive that object.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 5/ WORLD AND MIND: THE PHENOMENON OF THE "PSYCOSMOS"

\*\*\*

Without Mind, only nothingness, empty void, silent vacuum. Even the old question about the tree and forest is not really, "If a tree fell in the forest, and no one heard it, would it make a sound?" The genuine puzzle is more complex, and goes something like this: "If a tree fell in the forest, and there existed no minds to perceive it, would it make a sound?"

I know how breathless with suspense you must be, so I'll give the answer: No. For "sound" is an energywave that must be interpreted by a mind before it actually becomes sound. In other words, the tree falling would send out waves of energy when it struck the ground, but those waves would not be "sound." What makes them "sound" is their interpretation/processing by a mind.

Sound does not exist independently of Mind. It needs a sensing, perceiving, interpreting mind in order to exist. A little common sense implies that forms and colors follow the same path. An object cannot have form without a mind to "impose," or at least, sense that form. As sound is the interpretation of naked energy, so color must be filtered, or flow, through a nervousystem or eyemindsystem before anything has color.

Under the influence of certain drugs, and possibly genetic components, a phenomenon called "synesthesia" is observed. In this odd condition, one can often "see sound," for example. This is not because the world has changed, but because the brainmind has shifted. Neural circuits have transposed, or otherwise become confused. This inner change completely alters the "outer" world.

The synesthetic world is very different from the normal one. To find out just how much mental input affects the worlds in which we all live, just ask anyone who has "dropped acid." The quality of the world depends wholly on the state or clarity of Mind.

Enlightened people took the question even deeper: What if the very existence of the world, not just its quality, depended on Mind? And they finally concluded that it did. Any object detected "in the world" was actually an object in that mind looking at the world. For the Mind, it was seen, was not just a passive receiver, but an active "cocreator," serving as a lens for unconscious dreaming.

Nothing could exist without the interpretation of (a) Mind. The world, then, was



literally in the Mind. We all and each lived in only a Mindworld, "caught" in a dreamscape.

So, if your mind ceased to exist, this book which you are now reading would not only change, but would instantly disappear. It would cease to be.

Each person interprets the cosmos in a slightly different way. This unique perception harmonizes with the "one-of-a-kind" neural structure of the brain/nervous system. It is stunningly different for various people.

The cosmos is altered by the ways that we perceive it. These depend on the nervous system. This ultracomplex system is different for each of us. This means that each of us must live in his/her own universe. For, if any two beings were to live in identical universes, their nervous systems would have to be exactly alike. No two nervous systems are.

Their structures are changed by every microevent, and affected by genetics. But even the systems of identical twins are not identical. Each inhabits his/her personal universe. So, if there are ten people in a room, there are ten slightly different rooms. If there are five people reading this book, then they are absorbing five sets of data. They are reading five slightly different books.

How, then, does anyone ever agree about anything? Our shared language and education create senses so parallel that we can agree about much. A simple statement such as, "A ball is round," will create agreement among a diversely wide population. But still, I cannot possibly know that "ball" and "round" mean the same perception exactly to you as they mean to me. It becomes even a little more complex when we say, "The ball is blue." Can I ever be absolutely certain that what you call "blue" is what I call "blue"? Obviously, due to interpretative brain structures as well as to responsivity of cone and rod cells in the retina, "blue" might mean different things. To a person who is colorblind, for example, red and green might mean the same stimulus.

So, each of us lives in a personal and unique "psycosmos," or psyche-created cosmos. When you leave this world, **your** cosmos will not "tick tock" along like a newtonian clock. For your dream will be over. When you stop dreaming at night, you do not believe that your nightworld continues on without you. The same is true when the dream of this world is over. When you die, your entire cosmos will "implode" back into the unconscious Mind. You will awaken to the startling fact that your previous life had been all a dream. This world will evaporate, disappear, vanish, cease to exist.

Instantly, however, the inner Dreamer will start another dream. That dream will be just as real in every way as this current, present reality. That new dream is what we call the "afterlife."

Like the ending of one film, and the beginning of another, at a cineplex, so when the "film" of the present reality has played out, a new film will start playing. The

next "feature" will begin. And there is no reason to suspect that this process cannot go on forever.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 6/ THE "ALL GOOD" INNER WORLD

\*\*\*

Love, say the mystics, lifts us above all things. But mystical Love has a unique object. For the mystic does not "love" the things of the material and sensory world. She sees them as dreamimages of great and stunning complexity and beauty. They are seductively realistic and convincing, but she does not love them.

The meaning of her life is not to be "sucked in" or fooled by those images. She is not drawn into the "playworld" of these images. The "shadowworld," as convincing as its props might be, does not deceive her. Love she reserves for sentient (aware) beings. She does not shower Love on mere things, wasting this sacred Mindforce.

So, fame and fortune mean nothing to her. But if her idea of success is not to play earthgames, why is she here? Her cosmic assignment is to come intimately to know the deep inner Mind that dreams up the world. She has come in humanform, because it is one of the Mindforms capable of knowing this Mind. It knows this Absolute through gnosis, or directly and immediately.

The enlightened of every culture and age have seen this Absolute as an interior and mental phenomenon. They have dismissed as projection, ignorance, or superstition those ideas that present the Absolute as "out there." The ancient Jehovah myth, which has guided and pervaded so much in Western religion, they dismiss as childish, for God is ultimate Mind. God is not some "big daddy" in the sky.

For these luminaries have seen the Absolute, and the world itself, as interior. Not only is the Dreamer seen as a very deep level of the unconscious Mind, but the world itself is also seen as an interior "dream." So, everyone lives, they say, in a mindworld. In this mindworld there is no literal "outside." For example, when you look up at night into the velvety sky and see a star that is, say, six trillion miles away, the very moment that you see that star, it is no longer "out there." Instead, it has become inculcated in, and integrated with, your inner world. It is within you-- that is, in your mind. By necessity, since you have seen and understood it, it has become a part of your inner mindworld or dreamworld. It is now "in here." Because the only universe is an inner universe. What is the ideal, most healthy, response to this inner universe?

To love one's Self completely, one must try to love every component of the Mind or Mindworld. In other words, one must try to love the universe.

So, the truly spiritual and wise have cultivated a state called "universal Love." As the name of this fairly rare condition implies, it involves an attempt to embrace all

things. In the enlightened state, there exists no "absolute evil" as an opposite to "absolute good." The absolute goodness is "absolute" because it exists relative to nothing else. It really, intrinsically, inherently exists. Its existence is not dependent on your, or my, existence. It is ultimately real. It is the primary and supreme nature of the core-mind, the deepest level of the unconscious Mind. This is the Spirit. It is the area of the unconscious Mind that is pure wisdom, pure joy, pure peace. This Spirit or Mind has no opposite, and, hence, is absolute. So, a name given this Spirit by mystics is Reality. They also call it the Absolute. For it exists relative to nothing else. This very Mind is also Reality itself.

Absolute Mind is all good, unadulterated and unmixed with the "nongood." Its major expression is the Mind-level called the Creator or Dreamer. This is the Mind that originates and dreams into being the every day world." So, everything dreamed up by the inner Dreamer or Creator must be good.

In other words, there is only one Creator, not two. And everything that It creates is in harmony with Its own intrinsic goodness or perfection. So, it is up to the being of light and wisdom to learn to love everything. This implies a complete cessation of all judgments and comparative evaluations.

This includes spiders and snakes, and a universe filled with phenomena that we have all been conditioned to label as "evil" or "ugly." It is quite easy, and ordinary, to embrace and love the noble, the just, and the beautiful, as those terms are usually understood. It's easy to love butterflies and rainbows, blue skies and flowers. But the being of wisdom seeks to go much further. She seeks totally to love the inner Creator. And the only way fully to do that is to learn to love all His/Her creation.

The beautiful love the ugly, making it beautiful. The loving love the good within the evil, making the evil good.

Take a fairly minute and insignificant example: We have all been taught that certain weather-patterns are "good" and certain others "bad." The weatherperson says, "It threatens rain," but never, "It threatens sunshine." Rainy or cloudy days are described as "dreary," and storms are always presented as threatening. One suspects that this device is used to "jazz up" an otherwise dull and monotonous forecast. But the enlightened can enjoy a storm as well as a sunny day. She can enjoy the ice and snowfall as much as the warm southerly breeze. She actually grows to like cold, or wet, weather, and has dropped her arbitrary prejudice in favor of blue skies and sunshine, which, by the way, she can also enjoy.

So, there comes at last a time in her life when the weather is always "good," or even "fine." She starts with "non-aversion therapy," (n.a.t.), in which she exposes her psyche to a stimulus that she finds unpleasant. She keeps doing this until she can feel completely neutral towards the stimulus. She continues the exercise until she can find something actually good about the object or situation. Then, as the final part of her training, she actually finds something to love, until she can honestly love

the formerly hated stimulus.

This is, in spiritual psychology, the "quick way to inner heaven." What does this mean?

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 7/ WELCOME TO HEAVEN-- OR HELL, YOUR CHOICE

\*\*\*

Hell boils and sizzles with all its mad fury, fulminating just below the surface of your own mind. But sweet serene heaven also lies only millipsychons in the other direction, also just below the level of your conscious mind. Which you choose as home is entirely up to you. A good definition of inner heaven is to be surrounded by things that you love." Inner hell, by the same criterion, is to be surrounded by things that you hate. So, the more things that you can learn to love, the closer you are to existing in a permanent state of bliss. The more you love, the more you move closer to inner "heaven." The more that you choose to dislike anything or anyone, the closer you move to inner hell.

Heaven or hell? The decision is yours every minute of every day. And whether you live in heaven or hell is not dependent upon the environment. Instead, it depends upon **your chosen response** to the environment. Positive, happy states of mind can exist only in a mind. They do not exist in the world.

A parable that illustrates this: Two kids are given candy-bars of rich dark chocolate. One hates chocolate, the other loves it. So, standing side by side, being touched by the same environmental stimulus, one kid is in heaven, while the other is in hell.

Heaven and hell lie more in the chosen response to the world than in the world-conditions themselves. We have all read stories of people born in terrible poverty, or with broken, dysfunctional bodies, who lived lives of great courage, happiness, and peace. Victor Frankl described how people found their greatest moments of peace, spirituality, and fulfillment amidst the horrors of the concentration camps.

Conversely, it is a modern stereotype that a person born into great wealth, with all the advantages, youth, education, and perfect health, finds her life to be a "living hell."

This is the paradox of an "inner world" opposite in quality to the outer. When the outer is horrific, but the inner serene, there is peace, happiness, and success. This is "heaven." (It was this paradox described by Frankl, in discovering meaning in the concentration camps.) On the other hand, when the outer is perfect, but the inner horrendous, we find pain, misery, and relentless horror. This is "hell."

This belies the story told by our militaristically materialistic culture that a good life arises from ownership of new stuff. New toys and material abundance do not

make for happy campers.

This commonsense observation strengthens the truth told by mystics: Real happiness is to find contentment within the interior Self. The relationship between your heartmind and your inner Self is much more crucial than your finances. Only owning the inner treasures of tranquillity and compassion can add riches to your interior world. And this is where you must always live. No matter what, you must always return there. So, if it is heaven, it is very sweet indeed; but if hell, a relentless nightmare.

Material things can never move you a micropsychon closer to inner joy, contentment, peace, or happiness. To invest in yourself, or through Love in people, is the real treasure. Jesus used a similar parable: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and thieves break in and steal. But rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven..."

These spiritual treasures are the intangible diamonds of inner hope, the emeralds of inner tranquillity, the rubies of inner goodness, the sapphires of inner compassion.

So, when the mystics say that it is Love that "lifts us above the world," they state the great truth that life is often a choice between Love and money (material things).

If we do opt for Love, we will be rich. We will also have found the very highest, best, and purest spiritual path, the intercultural Way of Love.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 8/ MYSTICISM AND YOUR "SECRET IDENTITY"

\*\*\*

"I love you." These words are often cheapened and weakened by overuse, or by insincerity. But the mystic utters them with her whole heart, even when speaking to the stranger. For it is her mission to come to love all the universe.

There are many intensities (power-levels) and types of Love. You don't "love" a new idea as you "love" a puppy, nor do you love the dog as you would a little girl. The girl, in turn, would be loved very differently from a mother, whose love would vary very much from a brother's, or best friend's love.

Still, "lovers of the universe (and humanity)" might be the best name for the spiritual giants of mysticism. They have known that they were, in their "secret identities," the Love-principle. This is your secret identity, too. To say, "I am the Love-principle," is a far cry from saying, "I am Mary Smith."

This reidentification of the Self as the Spirit of Love is essential to spiritual growth. It must follow a process called "deidentification with the ego." One must stop **being** Mary Smith before one can be or become anything or anyone else. So, you cannot simultaneously **be** Mary Smith and the embodiment or incarnation of Love.

Since identity is total (you can't be fully two persons), a choice must be made. Are you going to see yourself as merely a human being, the result of random molecular arrangements in a genome? Or are you going to change the course of your lifedesign by claiming that you are a temporary mask of a timeless soul? Then, will you complete that inner soul-journey by recognizing that the soul is a similar mask for Spirit?

Your answer will alter your thoughtpatterns. and those patterns will still further alter you. This is not to say, like those off the deep end, that you are Jesus Christ. But it is to claim that you are more than molecules, more than cells, more than an animal. You are not just "Mary Smith" (insert here your own egoname.)

It is to recognize that you partake of Mind, and choice. And because you are Mind, you can choose to identify with any component of that mind. But this becomes possible only after a long, arduous inner journey to the Center of the soul, the Spirit.

Love is the major Light and glory of Mind. It is the best of Mind. Of all heartmind, Love is the supreme aspect. In fact, "God is Love," say mystics, implying that Love is God.

The sage, after having identified her Self with the inner Love-nature, often says, "I am God." This is not God in totality, but God in nature. She caught a glimpse of her higher Self or soul. She saw it as a pure, dustfree mirror of divine Love in the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 9/ MYSTICISM: LOVE, IDENTITY, AND MINDWORLD

\*\*\*

Infinity invades your mind at this very moment. Eternity rests within your heart. The very highest good is concentrating your attention on the activities of infinite Love.

This Love acts through behaviors, thoughts, words, and attitudes. Love is also the central quality of the cosmic Mind, the Dreamer of the world.

Mystics have gone so far as to say that Love actually is the cosmic Creator or Dreamer, that Love is the Coremind.

We all have deep within us an unlimited Coremind. That is why we are infinite. This is why we have a gift called the "intuition of eternity." We all secretly, unconsciously, long for the infinite and the eternal. We will never be filled, never content, with anything else. Who has not felt this vague sense of poignant longing, and even a kind of moving emptiness, when looking into the night sky, with its millions of suns?

Eternity calls to us, resonates with us, because it alone can fill our internal hunger for satisfaction. Only Infinity can fill an infinite space, satisfy an infinite hunger. We arise from an eternal, timeless Mind deep within the unconscious. We will never find

serenity or fulfillment until we consciously join with It again.

So, we are all "psychonauts"-- explorers of inner space. We are driven relentlessly by a passionate hunger, verging on "starvation," to be filled by infinite Love. For if our thirst for Love is infinite, that is only another indication that the inner Fountain of Love is equally so. All our earthly quests to be filled with Love, to find Love, are petals from this one single gigantic Loveflower. This is the root of our need to unify with, to melt into, pure Lovemind.

When we get glimpses, or small tastes, of this inner Reality, we are actually catching a momentary snapshot of our own deepest identity. This is why Love is so immensely satisfying. When we catch a glimpse of that Love dwelling so deeply in our psyche, we are seeing our Self. "We behold that which we are, and we are that which we behold," said a medieval mystic named Ruysbroeck (1293-1381). To some extent, we are already "at one" with this deep inner Love-nature. For if we weren't, we could not behold it through the introspective journey into our own minds. The larger goal is to gain greater, to increase our, identification with It. To do that, we must be willing to drop our egoidentities. We must abandon our egonames. Then, these will be used only symbolically in the human community. For, in the most literal sense, after transformation, the egoname becomes a lie, a falsehood.

Human minds are ultracomplex. There, many orders, kinds, planes, or universes of reality converse and converge. This is so true that the words "world, dimension, and universe" are roughly synonymous with "state of consciousness." So, when we alter our consciousness, we actually enter a different experiential universe. We enter a different subjective reality another mindworld. It is, in fact, precisely because the mystic does not recognize any hard and fast barriers between "mind" and "world," that she can say that Reality is Mind.

The "ordinary, everyday" world in which we dwell is also a mindworld. If a "world" be defined as the sum total of experience, then the human mind is the TWM or "transworld mechanism," of the soul. It is dynamic, diverse, and versatile. With this "ultracomputer," we can feed in any software program, from "day at the ballpark" to "experience of infinity," and each will be equally "real."

This powerful recognition of the "virtual" nature of reality is at the heart of mysticism, and so, of truth.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 10/ MYSTICISM AND MIND: THE INNER JOURNEY

\*\*\*

None of this is real. The book you are now holding in your hand, the letters of these words, the hands that hold, the eyes that look, the ego that plays a part in the play, on this stage-- all are a hypersophisticated "virtual" arrangement. All has been

set up, not by a crude computer, but by the "ultracomputer within"-- the Mind, at unconscious levels. All the events of your life are being "played" or "run," like software programs, in the form of dreams. These are very realistically presented by Mind to mind, and so, you are not even aware that you are dreaming.

The discovery that we are in fact dreaming all during our "waking" lives is a hallmark of mysticism. These dreams are dreamed up by the unconscious Mind to provide you with exactly the learning experiences that you need.

Mysticism is being widely understood and correctly explained today as never before. To some extent, but slowly and rather microscopically, it is entering the mainstream. It comes, though, not through the portals of regular religion. Instead, especially since the sixties, it has arrived wrapped in the foil of psychology, philosophy, and the still alive-and-well Lovemovement, which did not die with the demise of the hippies. It simply mutated, matured, and became wiser. Now it is reemerging as a new guiding philosophy that includes much more than cheap, ready, available sex. It was, in fact, one of the greatest and most catastrophic losses that, in hippy culture, Love became reduced to sex only. The other great disaster was that altered states became reduced to drug-uses and recreation. For the hippies were, as a whole, on the very threshold of entering into the ultrabeautiful universe of real mysticism.

Above all things, mysticism is the platinum thread that interweaves itself into the fabric of all religions. It binds together experience, reason, and faith. The essence, the deepest meaning, of mysticism lies in its inner Target. This is the communication with, and of, perfect Love.

Mystics share among themselves realities due to common experience. But they have no dogma, no hierarchy, no organization, no administration, no exclusive church, or exclusive scriptures. Mysticism is not a religion, not a "way of the book," not a legalistic or mechanical path. Instead, it is a Way of experience. All who have the experience of having been plunged dramatically into the "ocean" of the deep unconscious mind, touched by its ineffable Light of Love, the Absolute, are mystics. They are joined and unified not by shared doctrinal or organizational affiliations, but by the fact of their having had this experience. They usually describe it in terms of perfect, flawless, universal, unconditional Love.

Mysticism rests on the sure and certain knowledge that God lives deep within the human psyche, and that He/She is accessible. The highest goal of the mystic is to become a pure crystalclear heartmind through which Love can shine unimpeded. To alter the parable just a touch, the mystic wants to become a "clear mirror" of perfect Love.

The mystic recognizes the existence of two selves: 1) the superficial, socially defined self, or ego, which has been called by the Latin animus. 2) a higher Self, which is largely unconscious (Superconscious), which is more authentic, whose nature



is pure Love, and which has been called anima. This Self is transcendental. It is the "soul" of Western religious tradition.

Mystical truth is revealed to the conscious mind, but it is produced by deep levels of the unconscious Mind. So, the conscious mind must train its senses to be able to feel the subtle higher Self. This sensitivity is not "natural." But it is this subtle, almost undetectable Self that initiates the mystical experience. So, it can never successfully occur unless the conscious mind integrates/communicates with this deeper Self.

The higher Self is always sending forth mystical experience, but only when it is in synch can the conscious mind discern that anything is even happening. The goal of mystical training is precisely this preparation and sensitization of the conscious mind.

For this alone makes it possible to respond to the subtle inner energies of soul, carrying the impulses of Spirit (Love).

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 11/ THE MYSTIC AS "LOVER OF LOVE"

\*\*\*

The Mind can be the "inner alien." Its expressions are so strange that it is challenging to get a grasp on its ways. The great historical masterpieces of mystical literature are filled with strange beauties, but are struggles to read. They are almost impossible to understand. Besides the classics already recommended, a study called simply Mysticism, by Evelyn Underhill (New York; Dutton, 12th edition, 1961), despite some unclear wording, is worth reading. It is a good overview of the Western mystical tradition. It forms the matrix for portions of the present book. It seeks to elucidate mysticism, and is careful to distinguish it from the paranormal research of psychism.

In terms of clarity of definition, mysticism has nothing to do with the paranormal. It is not the study of psychism or "occult" philosophy. In fact, most authors who are infatuated with the word "occult" are completely nonmystical writers.

Mystics are almost never occultists. All mystics speak the same "language," although it differs from that of psychism. Both show a pronounced interest in the Mind, but mysticism is captivated by the Core of Mind. This is why mystics can all understand each other. It is quite obvious when a mystic is heard by another mystic that they share identical or analogous experiences. And any mystic can determine with certainty whether or not she is talking with a fellow mystic. There is a kind of rapport that forms between two mystics. There is also a unique type of language used when the Spirit or deep unconscious is genuinely speaking or writing through one, and this cannot be faked.

Mysticism is, most simply, the artscience of inner exploration. It arises from the

wonderful discovery that the Ultimate is not outside, but inside, ourselves. The bugaboo word "God" is redefined as process and state of mind, or simply as active Love.

So, mystics universally reject the primitive, childish god of most Western religions-- a god of anger, brutality, violence, and damnation. Their God is infinitely higher. The God of the mystics is unstained, uncontaminated Love. The only function of this God is to love and to forgive; that is God's great delight, and God is actually eager to forgive.

There is inarguably built into the innate, intrinsic structure of the human soulmind a need to find harmony with a transcendental order, as mentioned earlier in this book. In the mystic, this need becomes an exclusive obsession. It dominates her life, as a passion, consuming virtually all her timenergy. What is it, exactly, for which she so hungers? It is a feeling of being at home, a deep comfort, with the universe. It is like being wrapped in the warm arms, and drawn to the breast, of the Goddess. The goal of this passion is "union with the inner Beloved." For the mystic literally "falls in love" with Love. That is, she falls in Love with the deepest level of her own creative unconscious Mind. When she has discovered this "inner Other," and found unity, she is permanently unified with her higher Self. This Self or soul is her bridge to the exquisite Christ-nature, Buddha-nature, or Love-nature. Her soul bridges her conscious mind to the inner Superconscious. If she can maintain a consistent pattern of living from the soulevel of the psyche, she will realize that she is a "Christ" or "Buddha," i.e., an enlightened, liberated soul.

Mysticism is not speculation. Doctrines/dogmas have no place. Intellectual teachings are irrelevant.

It is a process that tears you apart and puts you back together again. It explodes the person you thought you were, and shows You Who You really are. It influences powerfully your entire life, and sucks in, and turns inside-out, every nanopsychon. It is a living Way. (Both early Christianity and Taoism were called "the Way.")

The inner Target or goal is a deeper and more real level of Mind, in the unconscious. Mystics call this "interior Reality." They also call this the Absolute. It is the deepest level of the unconscious Mind. this is a reality more real than the personal mind, more real than material objects (cars, buildings, trees, bodies, houses, etc.). It is not completely explained by reason, because the laws of logic do not always apply to the metalogical, even as the laws of physics might not apply to the metaphysical. For this reason, the simplest definition of mysticism is the study of the "Real." It has also been called the "science of the Absolute (or, Ultimate." This defining things as "science" was an older ploy in the play. It was a desperate attempt to gain respectability. Mysticism is, of course, not a "science." Instead, it is a soulchurning, dramatic inner adventure.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 12/ THE MYSTIC AS PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPE

\*\*\*

Animals cannot be mystics. Neither can people who act like animals. Every advanced civilization, however, in the history of the planet has produced mystics. This is, in fact a criterion, of whether any company of human beings might be accurately called "civilized."

The mystic is a natural human type, marked by the following: She has an undefined and passionate "thirst" or longing for some Mystery beyond this world. Although she cannot define it, it has something to do with Love, goodness, beauty, truth, and perfection. She usually begins life with an interest in formal religion, but, as she matures, might lose this interest. She is strongly individualistic, and does not fear to be what Emerson called "a majority of one." She is often dreamy, romantic, and/or introspective by nature. Dissatisfied with the gifts of the material world, she is unconsciously driven to find a "way out," or "way back," even though it might not be clear to what exactly she is returning. She is driven by an inner sense of incompleteness, as if her soul has a "hole" in it, and it must be "filled." She is dominated by a vague craving for absolute truth, or, at least, something Absolute--all-satisfying, all fulfilling, all encompassing, and all consuming. She then needs to turn her mind and life over to the control of this mysterious and unknown, undefined Absolute.

In short, the mystic seeks to discover the "meaning of life." This Quest is no mere hobby or passing interest. It demands everything-- all her attention, all her timenergy, all her resources, all her endurance. In the end, it demands her whole heartmind, her very soul.

All mystics, from every land and century, discover astonishing worldviews. Even their methods symmetrize with each other. They have discovered glittering inner treasures. But how can we be certain that they are not simply the victims of selfdelusion?

These mystic masters number in the hundreds. They are educated, intelligent, literate, balanced people. This many sages and masters, teachers and wise people, cannot all be sharing a delusion. Mystics represent some of the most grounded, practical, no-nonsense, down-to-earth psychological types. Their shared teachings and experiences form a solid, convincing body of evidence that the mystic has really touched something real.

They claim to have touched, or have been touched by, an inner and veiled Reality, which they call the Absolute. They celebrate It happily and quietly as the Source of all other reality. This Reality/Absolute has been found to be so blissful, so utterly satisfying, so rapturous, that they have, one and all, fallen in love with it.

They claim that It is, in fact, nothing less than Love Itself, and so the mystics are the ultimate lovers of Love. This is "truth" or reality. But mystics are also completely open to any and all kinds of truth, whatever its source. Some think that it can be found best in nature, or in the lab. Others seek it in history, or books. Some find it in religion. Others find it in music or songs. Some look to their dreams. Still others find much of beauty and truth in the judicious use and interpretation of the senses. Others find it in art and poetry.

God, they say, might as easily be found in the kitchen, living room, or back yard as in any cathedral or temple. For God is in the soul, in the deepest heartmind, in the unconscious.

Skeptics always easily assume that "truth" does not exist at all. They have taken the easy way out, by evading the complex issues of inner discovery. The mystics, by strong contrast, have grappled with the toughest issues. They have had to explain how Love can be fully in charge of a cosmos filled to overflowing with ghastly and nightmarish activities, minds, and forces. They claim, in fact, to have established communication and rapport between the human mind and the Mind of Reality or truth, the inner Absolute. They have never evaded, avoided, or fled from the difficult and complex issues of the spiritual life, but have faced the terrible dragons head-on. They have taken a deep breath, and plunged headlong into the stormy seas of evil and horror, claiming Love as shield and guide.

They claim to have discovered, in the deepest, most hidden "caverns" of the mind, what they call "final Being," that is, what they also call the "Ground" of being, the Absolute. This, they say, is the only "voyage" that ever brought any contentment to their restless souls. It is, they generalize, the only truly satisfying goal in anyone's life.

Mystics see themselves as pioneers of a new and unexplored "territory," or an "inner sea." They are "pilgrims" or voyagers. their job is to explore the interior "psychscapes." This is not only to fulfill their own inner need, but so that they can "map" out this unexplored terrain for others. They also realize that this inner Home is their eternal Home, where they will live in the future.

Preparation for becoming "psychonauts" in the exploration of "inner space" involves several steps in the "school of earthly life." Among these steps, to be explored later, are purgation and mortification. "Purgation" or "purification" they see as the gateway to knowledge and wisdom. They do not take the physical world for absolute reality, and so often go very far in "purification" to overcome the dominance of the senses, material comfort, or egodesires. Their attempt to "kill" the sensuality of the physical body is called "mortification," and is an unavoidable aspect of their great inner journey.

Claiming that metaphysical (and often parapsychological) experiences are just as "real" as the realities of traditional science, mystics state that all possible human

states and experience are related to the mystical state, that is, to the attempt to fuse with the deepest Core of the unconscious Mind. For it influences every form of behavior, and we are never "far" from it psychologically.

?So, the "mystic type" does not claim anything special, but insists that she simply has a specialized focus of concentration or attention. She claims no special gifts. But the "mystic type" is clearly related to the general spiritual (not necessarily religious) types, poets, visionaries, sages, teachers, ecstasies, and saints.

But what makes a mystic out of an "ordinary" or average person?

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 13/ THE DISCOVERY OF THE "VIRTUAL WORLD" OF ILLUSION, AND THE DAWNING OF FREEDOM

\*\*\*

You are more real than the world. You are more real than anything else. And the most real part of You is the Mind. And the most real part of the Mind is Love.

Everything in the mystical philosophy begins with the realization that you exist. This is the profound meaning behind "I am" as a name of the infinite inner Absolute. (The Latin *sum* and the Greek *ego* both mean "I am.")

The reason that this simple statement of existence is so crucial is that it is impossible to go very far beyond it. How do I know that I am? It is because I can think. I can also perceive myself. When I hear myself thinking, in other words, I know that someone is "in there."

This became a famous principle of philosophy. It was formulated by the famous French philosopher Descartes (1596-1650), who stated it in three Latin words: *cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am."

It is rather simple to prove to yourself that you do exist. But can you really prove that any other object exists independently? Take for example this book. You might say that your vision of the book proves that it exists. But vision is a function of mind. The book would "look" just as "real" to you in a dream. So, you have not proved that the book independently exists, but you have proved that only the vision or sight-sense of the book exists. Since vision is a mindfunction, you have proved only that the mind exists, not the book.

The same principle applies to the other sensory cues that cause you to think that the book exists. You can feel it. It has weight and texture. But this sense of feeling is also a mindsense. The book would feel just as real in a dream. So, once again, you have not proved that the book exists, but only that the sense-creating mind exists.

You can smell the book, tap on it and "hear" the book, even taste the book. (Minimum rda's of nothing are guaranteed.) But since these are all mindcreated senses, you have proved once again only that the senses exist, and that they are

coordinated by a mind. You have not proved that the book has any independent existence. That is, you have not proved that the book exists on its own, without the cooperation of your mind.

the five sense-tests that you did with the book could equally be done in a dream, and would be just as convincing, just as "real." Yet the book in the dream would be a totally mindcreated book. There would be no objective book. And this booktest could and does apply to any object in the world.

Add to this the very real fact that you cannot do anything right now to disprove that **you are dreaming**. The fact that you cannot disprove that you are dreaming does not, of course, prove that you are dreaming. But it is an intensely captivating observation, a fascinating factoid.

**There is absolutely nothing that you could do which you could not do as convincingly in a dream.**

So, you can prove that only the mind exists, and you cannot prove that any external or material world actually exists. And you cannot prove that you are not dreaming right now. Mystics have noted these fascinating facts. And from them, they have for centuries developed a philosophy that is astounding.

They say that the "material" world has no independent existence at all. It is, in fact, not a literal "material" world, but a sensory world. It is a world built up by combining sense-impressions. In short, it is a Mindworld, an "imaginary" world, a dreamworld.

In other words, everything that goes on in your world is going on in your mind. Thousands of years before "virtual reality" appeared, mystics already hypothesized the existence of a supersophisticated system of mindcreated "illusion" which perfectly mimics an external world. But this is only illusion. **There is no "external" world. There is no "material" world.** There is only the mindworld.

This is the great discovery made by the spiritually enlightened sages and masters, those mystics who are the very luminaries of history. This realization greatly changed their relationships with the world.

For one thing, the world or environment could no longer control them. They refused in effect to become the slaves of mere dreamimages. The body was a part of the world, while the mystic was "in the world." But she was "not of the world," to quote Jesus, "...because I have chosen you out of the world." His disciples were, says John, "no part of the world."

The Greek word for "world" here is *kosmos*, which means "natural order," or "literal planetary arrangement," implying "natural world." So, to say that they were "no part of the world" does not mean that Jesus' followers snobbishly held themselves aloof from people, the community, or the social order. The Greek word did not imply anything of the kind. *Kosmos* had nothing to do with politics or the social life of people. It does mean that they were not produced by the world of nature, because

they were the producers of that world. As one is "in a dream," but not created by her dreamsymbols, so the Christian was "in the world, but not of it," not produced by it. The world was not her origin or source.

Very early Christians, called the "Docetist Gnostics," taught that Jesus was a "phantom," according to their detractors and enemies. This might have been, however, only a partial glimpse of their true teaching. They ascribed this teaching to Jesus. But what if Jesus actually taught that **everyone** was a "phantom," inhabiting a "phantom" world? This would be a teaching remarkably similar to the mystical view that the entire world is illusion, or dream-stuff. There is, then, evidence that Jesus, at least in his more esoteric or hidden teachings, hinted at this same "virtual" condition of the "Material" and "external" world.

If we are real minds "playing" in a virtual world, inhabiting a phantomworld, this explains why the mystics saw themselves as separate from the control of the world. Since the "physical" body is also part of the "material" world, the mystics were also freed from its dominance and bondage.

So, as long as they retained this high mystical level of consciousness, where they knew the world to be virtual, they enjoyed absolute freedom. Nothing and no one could control them. They must have felt like birds soaring into the cool sun-kissed breezes of a blue sky. They, with the famous mystic Paul (died 65), celebrated their freedom. Paul wrote, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.... We, with unveiled faces, reflect like mirrors the glory of the lord, from glory to glory, until we are transformed into the very image of the One whom we reflect."

This also gives wholly new meaning to the famous words of the Master Jesus (7 BC-26): "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." This text might also be rendered, "You will know what is real, and Reality will make you free."

the mystic claims exactly this kind of absolute freedom. Nothing in the "material/external" world can control her. She has touched the great shining hearttreasure of absolute and unlimited freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 14/ THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE DREAMWORLD OR MINDWORLD

\*\*\*

A bird is lifted by the winds into the breezes of a cool blue sky, kissed by the sweet bright sunlight. She relaxes totally, allowing the wind to carry her gently on its vaporous arms. She is fearfree, anxiety-free, and worry-free. In a similar way, the mystic is absolutely free from the control of environments, other persons, and even her own impulses. This is because she takes none of these factors as absolutely real.

Jesus (7 BC-26) told his followers to live like birds. He also recommended that they imitate the flowers, and nursing infants. Historically, mystics did live in such

insouciant patterns. For they did not take this life on earth with utter, deadly seriousness.

Zen masters, for example, were famous for laughing at everything. They refused to take anything seriously, giving some of them a reputation for being absurd, or at least, somewhat "silly." Still, in the very midst of madcap antics, they taught extremely forceful truths.

Some mystics suffered from horrible and/or chronic diseases. Others had terrible marriages. Some lived in poverty, self-imposed or otherwise. Nearly all lived in downright intolerable conditions.

What a relief it was for these intensely suffering people to realize that their earth-path was a dreamscape chosen by their souls. Realizing that their lives did not begin at birth, or end at death provided them with an overview in which they could see the most hideous suffering as but a momentary pain. It was, they reasoned, all only a dream anyway, and they would soon awaken. This view served to bring relief and refreshment to their souls.

They could catch glimpses, from time to time, of an "inner world," both more real and more beautiful. This heartened them, empowering them. They felt blessed to be able to visit this "world," later called "heaven," before they actually moved in. This world was in their Mind. Paul (died 65) said, "though the suffering is momentary and light, it works out for us a glory that is everlasting."

This overall perspective allowed mystics to realize that not only was their suffering temporary and "unreal," but it served, at the same time, to distance them from the "unclean" world. For pain pushed them away from that world. This gave them greater strength to resist the "temptations" all around them, and so, made them inwardly or spiritually stronger.

Mystics, like all people, appear to receive constant "messages" from the "environment." But when the truth was seen that the world was a projection of the Spirit, these messages were seen to come actually from that Source. So, the mystics saw the world as continuous communication with God. The world was God's telephone, and God was always talking.

Knowing that the senseworld is a mindconstruct, the mystic can respond "transcendentally." That is, instead of following old programs, usually including those from parents, that she is controlled by the world, she comes increasingly to see herself as mistress of the "material, external" world. She ceases wrestling with, resisting, it, and tries to "dance," or cooperate, with it. This world is inside, she realizes. She knows that it is not built up from sensory experience as much as from her **interpretations** of that experience. So, in a way, she takes control of even the kind of "world" she chooses to inhabit. Gradually, as described above, she moves from a world more hellish to one more heavenly. Much of this occurs through nonresistance, or embracing, even loving, the world as it is. In time, she learns that



the only Love of God is expressed by loving His/Her dream, His/Her projection, the universe.

The ordinary senseworld, the dreamworld shared with others, can be useful, even convenient. People cooperating, can get things done. This world offers many opportunities for Love. But until the mystic sees that this "external, material" world has no self-existence, but is only the self's projected and superimposed interpretative picture, she is not liberated. She is not enlightened.

The world, she realizes, is a work of art, not a collection of scientific facts. The soul, as Eckhart (1260-1327) pointed out, approaches the world through interacting with images. But, he says, "the image is a thing which the soul creates...." The "external, material" world is a symbolic picture that only approximates reality, but does not actually or accurately embody it. That is why the "evidence of the senses" cannot be accepted as relevant to the definition of ultrultimate Reality.

The senses are like sex, or the telephone: They make useful servants, but unreliable and terrible masters. They are also poor, and somewhat blind, guides through the world of mind.

Because the universe is a projection of the Self, to know the egoself is a door to an actual way of knowing the universe. So, knowing the self leads to a knowledge of the higher Self, the soul. and knowing the soul leads to a knowing (gnosis) of the Spirit, the inner Creator or Dreamer. The Creator can be known indirectly, by studying His/Her creation. But He/She can be known directly, inwardly, only through mystical experience.

The Way of knowing the Creator indirectly, by seeing His/Her reflection in the mirror of the world, was recognized by ancient mystics. They wrote, of this inner "Knower": "Fire burns all other things, but does not burn fire. Water makes all things wet, but not water. The sword cuts other things, but not itself. So, the Knower knows all things, but not itself directly." It can know itself only by knowing other things. So, the mystic uses her natural senses to know, or study, the world. In this way, she comes to know her "Lord," the inner Creator/Dreamer. ?But when she is touched directly by the Ultrultimate Mind of the Absolute, in the mystical experience, all her normal senses seem to fuse. Or they might expand into supersensory sensitivities. then, she gains input from another, an inner, "world" or state of consciousness. (Remember that the mystic defines the common, ordinary world as a shared state of consciousness. So, she defines another state as another "world," as do shamans.) The senses, as separate interpretations of vibrations, seem to unite. So various mystics interpret the divine (mystical) experience as both "heavenly music" and "dazzling light." Through a paranormal fragrance known as the "odor of sanctity," certain mystics have translated the divine presence into an olfactory (scent-based) pattern. Many others describe it as "sweet," perhaps a gustatory as much as a symbolic description. Others feel great warmth, as they

translate the Absolute into tactile terms.

At any rate, the experience of Reality cannot be measured or evaluated by the standards of "commonsense," which apply only to common experiences or objects. For if the mystical experience is anything, it is surely uncommon. It is also supersensory, and so, cannot be reduced completely to expression in normal sensemodes. The world of commonsense deals with only concepts and words. the mystical experience is beyond words. Mystics regularly call it "ineffable" or "unutterable," saying that it is "quite beyond description."

Some mystics feel subjectively that the mystical experience represents interaction with an external cosmos or entity. This might be simply because they have been caught up in illusion for so long. But even these mystics admit that it is an experience of the Mind. Most believe that it is solely an experience of pure Mind, the Self presenting itself as it does in the normal everyday world-- through symbols. But in transcendence, it has chosen a set of supersymbols, revealed to the supersensory Mind of the mystic. The Self in this way encounters the deepest Superself or Absolute.

As long as one insist on holding onto the old (human) pattern of mind, because it is familiar, and clinging to it, the mystical experience is beyond the perceptive threshold. It cannot be apprehended, perceived, or sensed. An important exception might occur when an "average" person significantly alters the neural thresholds by the ingestion of a psychotropic drug. But drugs are distinctly not recommended, since their effects are unpredictable, and can be chaotic enough to lead to permanent psychospiritual damage, or other disasters.

Since we cannot, as seen , prove the independent existence of the simplest object, we all tend to be haunted by a psychic restlessness which drives us to something higher, something real, solid, dependable, and reliable. We want something or someone we can lean on, count on, depend on. We long to believe that even the playworld rests upon some real and solid mind. We need a substratum of reality that underlies the projections of illusion.

So, every mystic experiences her own unique, one-of-a-kind experience of transcendental Reality, even though the mystics agree on many features. As William James (1842-1910) has reminded us, this is a matter of vision, not of argument.

Mysticism is pure subjectivism. But so are all existence and reality, in the final analysis. Back in the bad ol' days, when "subjectivism" was a derogation, mysticism sought to gain credibility by associating itself with various religions and great spiritual traditions. In retrospect, it might even be said that mysticism suffered from a "physics envy" similar to that which derogated psychology as "unscientific." As psychology had to fight tooth-and-nail to gain recognition as a "respectable science," so mysticism has always had to strive mightily to gain respect as a viable and credible spiritual pursuit. But in ages of greater individualism, when conformity was not so

much admired, mysticism has been most fully and completely able to embrace its "subjective" quality and nature.

Mysticism is by no means a true science, as some have mislabelled it. This represents only a misguided attempt to give it a mask of respectability. It has been called, for example, the "science of the Ultimate." Still, neither is it purely or exclusively subjective. For mystics have always been able to "compare notes" with other mystics. Often, these have been of other cultural or spiritual traditions, and even of other centuries. By so doing, they have created a core of solid mystical worldviews. A consensus has coalesced, and the mystical experience has been seen not only as reality, but as the most real event possible in a human psyche. For, according to mysticism, Mind is far more real than matter, and is superordinate, or more important, because of that factor.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 15/ MORE NOTES ON THE ILLUSION: THE DREAMWORLD (THE MINDWORLD) AND SCIENCE

\*\*\*

Mysticism swallows everything. It demands of the mystic her whole being, heart, mind, body, and soul. It becomes an allconsuming passion. This is so vital that, without this alldemanding passion, one could at best be, not a mystic, but only a student of the art.

In mysticism, the very best of the human heartmind, intellect and feeling have fused. Mysticism, then, is not just a notion. It constitutes a genuine, comprehensive and cohesive, philosophic worldview. It is a system that is equivalent to the great worldview and mindview called "spirituality." Both terms can be seen as synonymous with living, active, practical Love.

It contrasts rather sharply with the philosophy that has been called "naturalism," which states simply that the world is exactly what it seems to be. Most people naively adopt this view. "What you see," they say, "is what you get."

By stark contrast, according to mysticism, this view is naive, superficial, and misses the truth (reality) altogether. Mysticism says that reality is subtle, often hard to understand. The world, it teaches, is not only Mindcreated, but Mind. Despite appearances, it is a Mindworld in which we all live and move. There is nothing "ordinary" about this fascinating dreamworld. It is infinite Mind, modified.

Naturalism says that material things are concrete and "real" in a way that mystics simply cannot accept. Sense-impressions, say the naturalists, are the only source of knowledge, which is made more accurate only through careful observation. This philosophy tends to mark unsophisticated or naive minds, say mystics.

For we know, at least unconsciously, that we all live in worlds of ideas. These can

be externalized or projected, but they are active in molding or creating our environments or worlds.

When these are projected onto the "screen of space," we have a very sophisticated, internally generated, "vr" system that is complete. Nor do mystics deny that the "material, outer" world is astoundingly, captivatingly convincing. The world, they say, would have to be very convincingly engineered, or else, it would never be able to function as a school for the soul. If that soul were not tricked or fooled into believing that the world was real, it would never have taken seriously its cosmic mission or assignment on earth. So, it would never have grown through earthly experience.

One of the main occupations of the spiritually enlightened person is to remind herself continuously that the real world is only peripherally related to the world of the senses.

She also reminds herself that, underlying all is the foundational Reality of Mind. This Mind expresses itself through the medium of very realistic "pictures." Exactly as holograms "fool" the sense of vision, these mindpictures or dreamimages "take in" all the senses. These we have called "psychoholograms," a word that I first invented in 1986. This world of "psychoholograms" is so wellconstructed that, within a fraction of a second, even the enlightened mystic finds herself drawn back into the tempestuous "external, material" world. It is, she knows, deep down, a cosmos of illusion, but she, like all people, responds to it as if it were reality. This "backsliding into illusion" happens over and over again.

This is because the world of lightpictures, the lightshow of the "material and external" world, is so fabulously and fantastically wellfabricated. It is an enormously, abundantly rich and intricate fantasy. The Mind continuously generates images of this dreamworld with beautiful and exquisite attention to detail. In fact, It does such a good job that it would never even occur to the average person to question the solidarity, reality, or independent existence of this world. Nothing could seem more natural than naturalism, the belief that there really does exist, free from Mindinfluence, a real external and material world.

Earthlife must be very realistic and believable. For, in the beginning, if we had "seen through" the illusion, we would not have taken life seriously enough to learn from it. So the "props" (environments and situations) had to be so realistic, so very convincing, that we "fell" for this "play," becoming emotionally entangled. We still do this, over and over.

But this snared condition is far from the mystical ideal. The mystic wishes to become mistress of the world, not to have it master her. So, the condition of the mystic, when she remains aware of the nature of the playworld, is called detachment. In its higher octave, this state becomes liberation or freedom.

In spiritual psychology, the term "detachment" lacks its colder connotations, for it

is always balanced by a firm and deep commitment to Love. It does **not** mean that one remains emotionally unresponsive or frigid. It lacks the indications of aloofness often associated with the word. It simply means that one is no longer the "marionette" of the world or environment. As discussed above, one becomes totally free of all this kind of control when one becomes spiritually enlightened. Then, the worldview undergoes an internal earthquake-shift, as the conceptual paradigm of an "external and material" world starts to unravel.

Superficial perusal sees this explanation of the Mindworld as absurd. But a closer examination will show that even doggedly materialistic science is actually on the side of the mystic-- not, as was the case with old science, that of the naturalist.

Science, in the form of ultramicroparticle physics, has demonstrated that the "material" world is a place regulated by some bizarre laws never before suspected. For they lie completely outside of, and often contradict, the antique newtonian physicists. In older centuries, science proudly presented a "commonsense" world. With the latest concepts of physics, that comfortable worldview can no longer be taken seriously as a valid description of reality. Probably the main disruptive discovery, which toppled permanently the naive naturalism of the senseworld, is that "matter" is mostly space.

As we learned in high school, everything is made up of atoms. Atoms are made up of microparticles, called the proton, neutron, and electron. These are not solid objects, like microscopic bee-bees. These are not even "particles" in the literal sense, or tiny bits of matter. They are instead tiny "quanta" of energy. ("Quantum," and the plural "quanta," arise from the same root as "quantity," and, for practical purposes, represent extremely tiny quantities of energy or force.)

These microparticles are made up of still much tinier "ultramicroparticles," which are also not literally particles.

But, such as they are, these microparticles hang in empty space bound by nuclear forces, which are also invisible. Even more astounding than the fact that all atoms contain **nothing solid**, they hang together as structures that are well over ninety-nine percent empty space. This means that your body, the walls of the room, the computer, the book that you are now reading, is over ninety-nine percent empty space. And that tiny part of the atom that is not empty space is by no means "solid," but ultratiny bundles or packets of invisible energy, analogous to sparks. At its most basic level, then, the solid, stable, reliable "material" cosmos is no more solid than the shower of sparks generated by a Fourth-of-July sparkler.

In the ultimate analysis, then, everything in the sensory universe is made of energy or force. The ancients used the word "light" to indicate what physicists now call "energy." For centuries, mystics were relentlessly mocked by the scientifically-minded for their statements, such as, "The universe is light." They were dismissed and ridiculed as "prescientific," "unscientific," or even, "antiscientific." They were, in

short, dismissed and ignored as "flakes" or "airheads." But guess what the very latest science is telling us in the twenty-first century. You guessed it. It says, "The universe is light."

Philosophy is also catching up with mysticism. Philosophically, it has been challenged to assume carelessly or quickly that an object of perception can really exist "outside the perceiving self." The old nbc construct or interpretation of the cosmos is rapidly losing credibility. A "sensing subject" and a "sensed object," we are now told, must always arise as an inseparable and inevitable pair. Without a subject to perceive a world, a world does not exist. Matter, in whatever form, cannot exist without mind. This is another kind of "theory of relativity." It makes all matter relative to the existence of a perceiving or sensing mind.

And the mere fact that the world "seems so real" cannot validly be used to support a naturalistic view, which says that it really is. For the very same "external quality" is as easily attributed to objects in dreams. At night, in dreams, we seem to be surrounded by solid, physical objects that seem really to exist apart from our minds, but, in reality, the entire dreamworld is a Mindworld. Mystics simply say that this same process continues when we are awake. You are dreaming right now.

Objects perceived in a dreamstate, or in a vivid hallucination, are sensorily indistinguishable from objects that are claimed to "really be there." In other words, both "feel real." Both appear to be sensed in an "external" world, and both seem to have independent existence. Also, there is no way to tell them apart. For the only tools by which we can analyze the world are the senses, and we have already seen just how stunningly easily they can be fooled. In fact, every time that you have a convincing dream, you are fooling all your senses simultaneously. And it is so easy and natural that it is almost as if the mind wants to be fooled.

In fact, there seems to be built into the nervous system itself a rather powerful, almost irresistible, predisposition to believe in a real and external material world. It is related to the readiness to believe that makes movies so captivating, as if they were real. And movies are not even good simulations of reality.

The mystic overcomes this habit only by a mighty exertion of will, and, later, of continuous reminding. Overcoming the illusion that the world is real, just as it appears, is a monumental lifetask.

What is the "standard" by which the reality of the world is measured? It too is unreliable. For the standard is simply that most people tend to see the world in the same way. In other words, this "argument" is mere consensus.

The reason that this standard of reality is unreliable is that it is just as easy for thousands of millions of people to be wrong as it is for any one of them. And it is just as probable. Historically, the entire population of the world has swallowed, hook, line, and sinker, worldviews or paradigms later rejected and disproved by reputable science.

Further, the claims of historic science, which we now take for granted, seemed at one time to go completely contrary to the senses, and to commonsense. Two examples, out of very many, will serve: The world, for millennia, seemed "obviously" to be flat and stable, or unmoving. Science demonstrated not only that the world is a sphere, but that, incredibly, it is "hanging on nothing" in space, and is, more incredibly, speeding around the sun like a spherical bullet. Nothing, in the beginnings of science, could have seemed more preposterous!

Science has also demonstrated that a plethora of illnesses are caused by organisms so tiny that they cannot be seen by the naked eye. Skeptical physicians, who refused utterly to believe this "illogical" and incredible "nonsense," used to sharpen their surgical instruments on the bottoms of their boots, to demonstrate how "silly" this concept seemed to them.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 16/ MANY WORLDS, ONE MYSTICAL WORLDVIEW

\*\*\*

It's amazingly easy to be crazy when surrounded by "nuts." "For practical purposes," says Underhill, "we have agreed that 'sanity' consists in sharing the hallucinations of our neighbors." This golden quotation, from *Mysticism*, captures precisely the view of the mystic. If everyone in the world agreed, for example, that the color we now call "yellow" was now always and forever more to be called "blue," then everyone would share the "hallucination" that yellow was blue. And, actually, "yellow" would be "blue."

Similarly, if enough people believe that it is "seriously important" for a group of grown men to knock around a little ball with sticks, then in the minds of many, baseball becomes as "important" as any other "religion." It becomes an "ultimate concern" for millions. And what could be more preposterously and outrageously insane than mistaking a little sphere for God, and jocks for prophets? But more "serious and significant profits" are at stake here. For otherwise unskilled and ordinary men are paid millions of dollars, not to make earthshaking contributions to human welfare, but to knock around a little ball with sticks. So, trivialities can become lucrative, and create fanatics, shortened to "fans."

The famous philosopher Heraclitus (c. 544-484 BC) therefore said, "Eyes and ears are bad witnesses..." Dare we trust the most important decision in our lives to these "bad witnesses"? What is that most crucial decision? It is nothing less than this: What in the world is really "real"? So, to what should we devote our lives, our time, our resources? This involves and incorporates other supreme questions: Does the cosmos have meaning? Why was I created, or born? Why does 'evil' exist? Different people will receive slightly different answers to these questions, for each lives in a

completely unique perceptual sphere or "world." Nevertheless, all mystics do agree that the universe is a place of meaning, and all agree about the content of that meaning.

Each soul, say mystics, contains the dream the precise and specific worldreality that it needs, for its best spiritual growth. And no two souls have exactly the same requirements, learn the same lessons, or have the same worldream.

The fact that each mystic lives in a unique sphere of feelings makes agreement among mystics more remarkable. For mystics from many cultures and centuries share an astonishing, breathtaking spectrum of experience and interpretations. Together, they form a consensus that implies objective reality. Despite the fact that they embrace no dogma, no human leaders, and no infallible scriptures, they draw from the inner universe a common pool of ideas that guide their lives. Supreme among mystical beliefs is that Love is central to the spiritual life. Mystics have identified Love with even God.

The "liquid cosmos" inhabited by the mystic is continually shifting, changing, so that the mystic can grasp, at any single moment, only an "instant photograph" of an evolving, everchanging cosmos. The mystics, like everyone else, are inevitably engaged in unconscious projection. This is the production of subconscious overlays superimposed upon the matrix of the cosmos. This manifests as the dreamworld. So, when the mystic sees the cosmos, she beholds herself, in multiplex megamirrors.

So, the mind which seeks Reality in this cosmos must return finally to itself. For it perceives only its own reflections. It sees only projections or overlays. What the seer sees is more the seer than the seen.

In this reflective universe, a "fact" must be handled with great care. If not, it can be reduced to only a relative and conventional symbol, with its own degree of plasticity. "Facts" are therefore insufficient in describing Reality to the mystic. They are simply not reliable enough. For her, the personal experience is much more reliable. Facts can only hint at, but do not encompass or describe, the Absolute. It is a Reality beneath, behind, beyond, and within the matrix of the simply factual. It cannot be reduced to facts, for it is the Mind that creates the facts.

Anything too "big" to fit within our sensory field can often not be "seen" or perceived by us. This is even more true of any Reality larger than our verbal constructs. This means the "Indescribable." So, anything as massive, as overwhelming, as the mystical experience is not, sometimes cannot be, a part of our ordinary world. It is outside of usual, conventional thought or experience.

Yet mystics repeatedly describe an experience of the "inner Infinite." This Absolute they have described a multitude of times, in a plethora of patterns. So, all the worldviews and perceptions of all mystics throughout the ages describe Something immense within. This Mystery, they insist, is not subjective, but absolutely real. This they call the Ultimate or Absolute. In Kantian terms, these



"visions" hint at a "transcendental object." This Absolute is Love. It is the central and supreme quality of Mind, the only changeless Source.

The existence of Mind is reliable, a solid rock. It is the foundation of everything in mysticism, the basis of all continuity and stability.

Take our friend Mary Smith. In idealism, an "ideal" Mary Smith would exist in the unconscious mind. This would be unaffected by how the various "real" Mary Smiths were interpreted. This "ideal Mary" in the unconscious is what is known as a "Platonic ideal," named after Plato (428-347 B.C.). (He was a Greek philosopher, who first came up with the idea that things, and people, have an "ideal" or more perfect existence in the unconscious mind. In that mind, they exist as perfect forms, creating the most noble goal-forms towards which real things aspire.) So, like mystics, Plato held that there was an inner world superior to the "outer."

The Mind is the Origin of the worldream. It is transcendental, above the dream, its Master. In totality, It includes all dreams of all sentient beings. This allinclusive Mindlevel lies very deeply in the unconscious Mind, below the level called the collective unconscious. It is an aspect of the Superconscious called the "Creator." (See the "Chart of Mind.")

But how can we know this One? Why do we have a natural thirst for an all-inclusive unifying Reality? Why are men and women forced to seek an Absolute? Clues to this mystery are found in a philosophy. It contrasts starkly with naturalism ("what you see is what you get.") It is called idealism.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 17/ IDEALISM: A PHILOSOPHY FRIENDLY TO MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

The cosmos is thoughtfeeling. Nothing but thoughtfeeling exists. The cosmic concept called "idealism" is at the other extreme from that of naturalism. It is much more rarefied air. It does not arise from the senses. Instead, it is much more abstract, arising from the observation of thought.

Idealism says that there are only two factors about which we can be certain: A thinker exists, and so does what she thinks about. Although it is convenient to ascribe sensations to an "external environment," we can't be sure about this one. What we call the "universe" is really a collection of thoughts, not things. And these thoughts, as we have seen, are inevitably altered by the thinker.

The philosophy known as "objective idealism" states that a Reality does exist beyond or underneath all subjective interpretations. There is a mysterious, hidden Thinker behind all these thoughts. Surely, the mystic agrees. There really does exist some undistorted underlying Reality, as the Source of all these impressions. There is one great Thought-pool from which all thought arises. It is collective (shared), and

lies at the deepest /Core of Mind.

The universe is this same Thought, manifested. It is often distorted by perception. So, objective idealism converges with mysticism in the idea that the cosmos is the dream of a great Dreamer.

The idea that Mind is immanent in all material things belongs to idealism. Common among mystics, this is technically called "immanental idealism." This includes the idea that we are also a part of the dream. Everything, in fact, represents an expression of infinitely variable modifications of thought. This all arises from the One Dreamer. We live in a "sea" of thought, in which we are immersed. So, matter, space, and time are not realities, but the "backdrop" of the stage where Reality, or Mind, dreams its dreams. Spacetime is the setting in which It produces Its plays.

So, reality is simply thought. Multiplicity (the many forms in the world) is swallowed in unity (one Mind), as the "many" are expressions of the "One." This means that only one Mind dreams up the many objects and situations of the world. This is analogous to a nightdreamer, who might dream of a thousand people, but who still remains only one person. This multiplication of interesting forms is most clearly seen in nature.

"Nature" is not real. Only Mind is real, and nature only a creation of Reality, a complex illusion.

Love is the Core of Mind, Absolute Reality. So, Love's expressions are more "real" than any observed fact. In agapic idealism, Love dreams up the world.

Historically, religions have been powerfully affected by, even saturated in, idealism. The early Christian writer Jerome (342-420) identified idealism as "perhaps the most sublime theory of being." This is a fairly rare convergence of religious with mystical thought.

But idealism is limited in real spiritual influence. For it is all "air," or intellect, without "fire" or excitement. It does not stir to passion. In other words, it does not keep emotional pace with the white-hot mystical events that it describes.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 18/ SKEPTICISM: A PHILOSOPHY HOSTILE TO MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

Nothing is real, nothing meaningful, nothing worth doing. This is an extreme form of the worldview called "skepticism." Since they consider nothing worth pursuing, why skeptics have even written about their worldview is a mystery. Perhaps this inconsistency arises out of a simple but powerfully undeniable inner urge to find or create meaning. Clearly, this unbalanced extreme lies at the far end of the spectrum of philosophy. It is an arid and unsatisfying view. It denies many genuine and

dynamic psychospiritual needs. In the desert of skepticism, one could easily perish from spiritual thirst.

Those who reject both naturalism and idealism often end up in the desert of skepticism. It is attractive to some, for it appears to create a kind of courageous hero, one who faces the empty cosmos, the meaningless universe, without blinking.

But, despite this illusion of being brave and impressive, the concept is at bottom hollow, dead, empty, and numbing.

Skeptics like to say that there is no riddle to be solved. Like the naturalists, they say that things are pretty much as they appear, but there is no underlying Mystery at the heart of the cosmos. All the questions about mind, they say, are created by mind, and have no objective value. Behind Mary Smith, say the idealists, there is an ideal archetypal pattern in the unconscious mind, the "ideal" Mary Smith. No comparable ideal exist for the skeptic. She wants to give the impression of being a no-nonsense rationalist. She will have nothing to do with the dreamy or sentimental, which she often mistakes for the spiritual. She prides herself on being the hardnosed, crystalclear thinker, the most courageous of realists.

The skeptics' illusion of "strength" or courage comes in a negative form. For it is not what she believes, but what she disbelieves, that gives her a certain sense of superiority.

The skeptic is forced to recognize, anyway, that the one thing that does undoubtedly exist is the conscious awareness of the self. She stops there. As far as she is concerned, as far as she can know, nothing else really exists. Or, at best, other things and ideas are simply farfetched speculations. Outside of this highly circumscribed and limited circle of reality, she feels, she has no right or power to speculate. There is no "indulgence" in "guesswork." The self becomes the one Absolute.

This view can lead, in extremes, to solipsism, or the belief that one's egoself is the only existence in all the cosmos-- a dreary, boring, and lonely proposition at best. This view is narrow in the extreme, for it refuses to admit the other levels of the unconscious mind. The Absolute can be no greater or wiser than the human self, and so the Ultimate is reduced to a mind that loops back in on itself without meaning. The desert of the conscious mind, with its relative poverty, is the best "area of mind" that we can know, and life's journey, if it has a goal at all, is simply to perfect this. This is like a person surrounded with great jewels and gems of every size and color, who finds total exclusive fascination with a rather ordinary and gray little pebble.

The skeptical conception of being is more purely subjective than others, for it is locked and chained to the conscious mind and its contents to the exclusion of greater worlds, even those within the psyche. These are dismissed as "only" imagination, or as "speculative."

It is due to the influence of skepticism that some writers have come to the

outrageous conclusion that the "God" of the mystics was nothing more than the contents of their own "subconscious minds." The mystical God is in the "unconscious," although not the "subconscious" Mind. This God exists at the level opposite the subconscious, called the "Superconscious." (Both are equally unconscious.)

By its denial of an Absolute, skepticism drives us towards, and leaves us with, nothing but a dry and sour pragmatism. It is almost a philosophy of the merely utilitarian. Its "truth" is not immutable Reality, but only that which seems useful at the moment. In skepticism, there is no underlying Reality behind appearance. There is no need for altruistic or giving Love.

This philosophy, especially in its application as solipsism, allows people to regard others as unimportant, nonexistent. No one really knows what she is. Even "mind" is only a concept created by mind. Human "psychonautic" exploration is limited by a finite, and rather shallow, interpretation of the mind. This worldview is relentlessly logical, but severely crippling. Skepticism tends, at its border periphery, to appeal to more egoinvolved types. This is often because it deletes any meaningful references to morality or ethics. So, it is often embraced not because it makes more sense, but because it allows one to cheat, lie, and engage in forms of ignorance and violence.

More credulous people, it is said, persuade themselves to believe in the senseworld, and hence, become naturalists. Those whose instincts and intuition are oriented towards propensities of spirituality might become idealists. But the truest and most literal intellectual often embraces skepticism.

At one extreme of the spectrum, this can fall into the horrors of nihilism. This is the philosophy that denies all meaning to anything, insisting that the universe is essentially empty, and going nowhere, or headed for mere annihilation. For to extricate oneself entirely from the limits of pure materialism implies some ability to pursue the possible, not to be shackled entirely by the limits of literalism. No matter what the skeptic might say, we live in a world whose perimeters are not completely known. It allows, permits, and even encourages active speculation. It promises dreams, and implies glory just beyond the rim of perception. In the final analysis, skepticism is a worldview that is hopeless and helpless. It is dead and mindeadening.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 19/ THE GIRL NEXT DOOR, THE GIRL IN MY HEAD

\*\*\*

It's all in your head. But that head can be an enormously complex and a-mazing maze of convoluted labyrinthine twists and turns. The cosmos is not as simple, as cut-and-dry, as it might at first appear.

Every realityconstruct must be interpreted through an ultracomplex, multileveled,

polymorphic, enormously intricate nervous system. Any given stimulus from the environment is distorted and modified by billions of interpretations made by the nervous system. This produces translations of reality. We often mistake these for reality. We could never know a "pure" vision of any "external" world-- even if that world did exist!

And even after that world would have been perceived, it would undergo further inner mutation in response to mood or temperament. So, the world in which we live is directly dependent on the kind of people we are, or become. The world is mirror of the self.

So, before the "external and material" world becomes a real, or mindworld which you can detect and with which you can interact, it has gone through a couple of billion dramatic alterations.

Take, for example, dealing with a human being. Nothing could be more practical than this problem of interpersonal communication.

Let's call our hypothetical person Mary Smith. If we grant that Mary is enormously, immensely, gigantically complex in her own nervous system, the relevant question is, "How is your nervous system going to interpret Mary's nervous system?"

Let's begin with the rather self-evident observation that you do not, cannot, deal with "Mary, as she is, out there." You are forced, instead, to react and respond only to the Mary whom you "recreate" in your own mind. Let's call this "mindmary." She is created internally in response to hundreds of thousands of elaborate "Mary stimuli." These are created by your own nervous system, and are not even necessarily triggered by a real, outer stimulus. How do we know this? Because you would tend to respond in the same way to a mindmary encountered in a dream.

In other words, you can never interact with a person as she is, but only as you interpret her. So, arguably, you are not interacting with persons at all, but rather, with your mindpictures or interpretations of persons. Persons, as complex as they are, are citizens of your mindworld. This easily explains why the same person might appear to two observers as two completely incompatible, or even contradictory, personalities. Historically, we can choose any great or famous person and see this dichotomy of interpretation. For example, some saw Jesus as so dangerous a rebel and renegade that they murdered him. They clearly thought him insane and even "possessed." But others saw, and still see, him as the most perfect, most loving, human being who ever lived.

This explains also why it is so difficult for human beings, even those with excellent communications-skills, to communicate or even to get along. For whenever you have two people interacting, you have one practically infinite nervous system making interpretations, and creating inner mindimages, of another practically infinite nervous system.

What factors color or distort our perceptions/interpretations of others? Many are

educational. Some result from lack of education, lack of exposure, bias, prejudice, bigotry, and/or stereotypes. The picture is complexified by "projection" in this sense: We unconsciously "project onto" others those qualities which we really have inside ourselves, but do not want to admit or recognize. So, when we meet another person, we often cover her with "overlays," or see in her qualities that she might not even possess. We are seeing only the superimpositions that we have "layered" over the nucleus of her true, authentic self.

So, it should come as no surprise that, in dealing with people as contrasted with objects, the world grows exponentially more complex. For people are the most complex and least understood components of the universe. And since it is impossible for us to "climb outside" our own nervous systems, and obtain a "clean" or undistorted, crystalclear, objective sight of any person, we must awaken to the stunning fact that we spend our time dealing not so much with external people as with mindcreated or mindaltered simulations or approximations of people. This implies, on a practical level of spiritual psychology, that **they** are not responsible for how **we** choose to "see" or interpret them. **We** are fully responsible for how we transform people-stimuli into mindpeople. Then, we are responsible for our responses to these mindpeople. The test is always the same: Do we respond with compassion? Do we correctly balance Love for ourselves with Love for others?

As with the world in general, **we** decide whether we are going to live in a "social" hell or heaven-- depending, again, not on how people actually **are**, but upon how we choose to judge, label, or evaluate them.

The Mastermind said, through Jesus, "Judge not." Most people think that this command means not to evaluate the permanent or eternal value of any person. And it does mean that. But its fullest meaning is found in its utter simplicity. For Jesus did not say, "Judge no person" He said simply, "Don't judge." This means, if taken at face-value, that we should not judge anything in the world. We should abstain from "judging" situations, environments, events, persons, or objects.

This kind of "judgment" is what is symbolized in the Eden allegory by the "primal" or "original sin" of "partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." For once we begin to believe that "evil" is just as real as good, undesirable as desirable, ugly as beautiful, then we are "expelled from Eden." ("Eden" means "pleasure.")

How then can we return to the garden of pleasure in the heart? We must somehow "undo" what human nature did. We must reverse the partaking of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." When we stop judging all things, the universe is no longer populated with "evil." We, in this way, remove one polarity from the spectrum from good to evil. This leaves only a universe populated by various degrees of good. This is the monopolar cosmos of the mystic, in which the Mind of Love and Light has no real opposite. Some situations are still better than others, but all are good. Why? Because the ultimately good Mind, the perfect Mind, is dreaming up everything.

So, the mystic, in fullest enlightenment, enters a universe that is not bipolar at all. The Good, or God, at the center of Mind has no real opposite. Now, a practical definition of "paradise," "heaven," or "the inner garden of pleasure" is to be surrounded by only good things-- only things and people that you like or desire, who are lovable and beautiful.

The mystic does not change the environment to surround herself with things and people whom she loves. Instead, she changes her own evaluative process. This allows her to evaluate any object, situation, or person either negatively or positively.

When she realizes that each environmental factor responds to her value-judgment, she is free to label any event or thing as "positive," or "good." This is how she draws closer to an inner state of "heaven."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 20/ IMPERMANENCE, SPIRITUAL GENIUS, AND THE GIFT OF THE DREAM

\*\*\*

You are a cloud of microsparks, no more solid than a mist. In fact, the feeling that one is solid, lasting, or permanent in the ordinary everyday world is one of the most absurd of illusions. Only the slightest introspection will reveal the desperate fallacy behind this illusion. Wanting permanence, we claim to have it. But we still exist in the midst of a swirling storm of impermanence, in which the world is continuously coming and blowing apart like a community made of houses of cards, during a hurricane.

This is the principle called in Buddhism "impermanence." This sounds a bit dismal at first sight, but it actually need not be. For a strong awareness of the fleeting nature of time, and of things, can grant us a sharp and keen appreciation of them. It can enhance and enrich our lifexperiences on earth, stimulating us into vital and bright focus, alertness, and awareness.

In Zen, they say that the awareness of impermanence, when it finally sinks in, gives rise to a special joyful reaction, a blissful response similar to our love for freedom. It is called in Japanese "aware," (pronounced "ah-wah'-ray").

Perhaps the mystic is the only one who ever faces impermanence squarely and without blinking. For it holds no terror for her. It does not scare the hell out of her, as it seems to do with the average person. Why? Because it is a fact of selfevident observation that nothing is permanent in the "outer and material" world. But she has discovered the secret of what is everlasting, and it is her own mind.

Or, more precisely, she has discovered that Mind is eternal and everlasting. So, anyone who partakes of Mind is also partaking of this same everlasting quality. And it is fairly easy to accept the transitory nature of things when you have discovered the imperishable within yourself.

Of course, if you believe that **only** the "external and material" world exists, impermanence is going to hurl you into a state of hopeless panic when you realize that nothing in it is lasting, that it has no more reliability or stable structure than swirling particles of dust. But if you have found the remarkable detachment that arises from coming in touch with your eternal Self, and knowing that it cannot be affected by the "material and external" world, then you have peace.

This, then, is the "open secret" of the fantastically famous "tranquillity" of the mystic. She has touched, and been touched by, an inner Self that is invincible, invulnerable to the outer world. This Self is invisible and intangible. It is not a "thing," but a nonmaterial, nonphysical center of consciousness or awareness. It is, in a word, the soul.

This "soul," for the mystic, is not just a theoretical or academic design. It is no mere speculative belief. Instead, it has been the subject of a real, genuine experience. The mystic has experienced a kind of "awakening" to the fact that she has a soul. This soul is the inner transition or medium that links her conscious mind with the Superconscious, the Absolute within. Radical re-identification occurs as she realizes that she is this soul, not the ego ("Mary Smith") identified by society and others.

As a soul, she is birthless, and deathless. Some people are surprised when, on asking for my birthday, they hear me say, with a deprecating grin, "I was never born." A soul, a truer, deeper SELF, is never born. And it does not die when the body dies.

Seeing life from this higher vantage, this elevation, allows the mystic to perfect her "detachment." In detachment, as noted earlier, she is not controlled by people, events, or things in her environment. She does not allow her moods, for example, to be twisted and hellfried by environmental pains or losses. Instead, she struggles to "transcend," to rise above environmental control. She alone decides how she wants to feel, or react, and her only Master is the inner Love-principle.

Human beings have been described as "visionmaking creatures." They are often dominated by unrealistic dreamimages and hopeless fantasies. How do we know that the mystic's reidentification of her self as "not ego" but "soul" is accurate?

As noted before, this realization is subjective. Every decision that we make is always subjective, in philosophy as elsewhere. Even "objective" science arises from numerous subjective impressions, upon which people have obtained consensus or agreement. So, we cannot simply, out of hand, carelessly dismiss the claims of mystics because they are "only" subjective.

Something happens deep inside the mystic. Something makes a "one-eighty," or complete turnaround, in the crucial area of identity. The mystic does not emerge believing that she is the historical Jesus, as do many with severe mental problems, but she does believe that she represents the same incarnated Reality that he manifested. She does not mistake herself for the historical Jesus, but her



identification with soul is a step to future identification with the inner holy Spirit of the Christ. She is not exactly like Jesus, because although manifesting the same Reality of Spirit, she must do so only according to her personal capacities. This implies also personal limitations.

Jesus is deservedly famous because of his unique propensity to have become so perfectly "clear" or "transparent" a mystic that he was able completely to become invisible in the presence of the Divine. He did not obscure or eclipse it with the murky, smoky cloud of his ego.

People cannot all be exactly like Jesus. He was a master of mysticism. He became that Master by practicing and learning over centuries. But the fact that every child will never become a great mathematical genius does not prevent our teaching every one of them simple math. A mathematical genius might arise out of the educational system only one time in every group of ten or fifty thousand students. Still, learning basic math has great value for everyone.

The same is true of "spiritual genius." The fact that only a tiny percentage of people will be spiritual geniuses in a lifetime should not discourage **all** of us from obtaining a sound, basic spiritual education. And even among those who are talented, few might become spiritual geniuses in any lifetime. But this should not keep us from studying the Way of the great saints, masters, sages, and teachers. We can all benefit from them.

The often mysterious teachings left behind by these great mystics speak of a world much different than our own. This they describe as an "interior" or "inner" world. They also speak of a higher vision of the future-- a literal, projected Mindworld of love, peace, and joy. This kind of vision is not at all pathological or reality-denying. Instead, it insists on believing that the very best is possible for all people. At the most, it can be criticized as "over-optimistic." And our planet could use a little more optimism. And mystics are among the great optimists of planetary history.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 21/ BIONATURE, SELFDEFINITION, BEAUTY, AND PAIN

\*\*\*

Lovers locked together naked in the crimson candle-light, lost in lust, and burning with frenzied passion, do not represent the "Love" that is the Center of the mystic's mind and life. But still, Love is that center. The mystic must, for example, learn to love her body and its passions, but not to be dominated, ruled, or mastered by it, or them.

The mystic is free of domination or control by appetites, drives, urges, and relentless desires. She has abandoned the goal of physical perfection of her body, as well as that of intellectual supremacy of her mind. Now, she is called to a much

higher goal. Passion in her has not been extinguished; it has simply changed directions.

She is called by her inner soul to become a stainless mirror of a higher Reality. That inner Absolute, which is the new object of her passion, is universal Love. When she does become a stainless mirror of Love, the soul promises, she will experience total and permanent contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment. But to do this, she must "die" to her "older" or "lower" self. this is the ego.

The problem is, this very ego is exactly how everyone has always identified her. It is the entire "role" that her soul is playing on the "stage of life," in the "earthplay." It is her soul's disguise, called "Mary Smith." To say that she is just a mother, just an executive, just a designer, or purchaser, or physician, or lawyer, is to reinforce only the role. For she, in her totality, can be reduced to none of these convenient labels. She is so much more than all of this.

For she is the conduit through which the inner Dreamer dreams up the world-- her world. To use a Western phrase, she is the instrument of God's creation. Her world would, could, not exist without her.

More importantly, she was created for spirituality. Whatever else she does, the pursuit of spirituality or Love alone can give meaning to her life. It blossoms into supreme meaning when she consciously chooses to participate, to cooperate, in reforming or reidentifying her Self. This reidentification occurs in terms of human, genetic, physical identity, as those criteria are dropped. But it also identifies her true Self as a birthless, deathless soul. The mission of this soul is to bring God's Love and light into a world threatening to become loveless and dark.

For she has found a higher, deeper reality than that of the scientific community or the religious worldviews. Not that she rejects "truth" from other sources, but she simply does not depend on them to validate her realizations. These have arisen from her own soul and are selfvalidating.

She agrees with both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas that human nature is contemplative nature. Now, she spends much quality time simply being still. For what is she waiting? For the inner higher Power to use her. For she is its eyes and ears, arms and legs. It will speak through her, act through her. It will change the world through her.

Maybe she will never address the UN. Maybe she will never talk to enthralled and mesmerized thousands. Maybe she will never write the Great Book, and might not even "dance in the spotlight" at all. But with her every act and thought turned over to the control of Love, voluntarily, she becomes a superspiritual being. She becomes an acting or living mystic, even if she has not had some dramatic experience in the alteration of consciousness.

Even if she has never been "blasted away" without a trace in a dazzling blaze of Love, she can still live as a practicing, or practical, mystic. She becomes this very

real variety of mystic the moment that she sincerely turns her life over to the guidance of inner universal Love.

The mystical experience, when and if it does arrive, will be the highpoint of her life-- its apex or zenith. But beyond transformation, the mystical experience has no practical value from the viewpoint of blind, aimless, meaningless, and random evolution. It is not a biological imperative. It has nothing to do with survival. Because of these factors, its value must occur on another level. And it does. For it is spiritually irreplaceable and priceless. It does not make one biologically "fitter," and does not serve the purposes of more likely reproduction. Mysticism appears useless as a purely molecular or genetic concern.

But spiritually, it is the most precious transformation, the most precious moment, possible in any human life. The mystic easily explains this: The mystical experience, she believes, is not a simple result of neurotransmission alterations or variables in synaptic connectivity. Instead, it is a true revelation by a real indwelling Spirit to a deep soul, which then reveals it to a conscious mind.

There appear to be two triggers to the deeper mystical experiences. The first trigger is no surprise: It is beauty. We might even expect a moment of startling natural beauty to create or enhance the clarity for mystical experience.

The other trigger, however, is less expected. For it is pain. Many great mystical experiences have historically been stimulated, or even created, by pain. How does this work? Often, especially if a pain has a source in a biomedical condition, one can be forced to recognize one's helplessness. While this hardly sounds like a great accomplishment, in reality, it makes possible **all subsequent mystical progress**.

So, the avoidance of pain that generally marks the average person does not identify the mystic. Usually, she encourages pain, tries even to "dance," or to make friends, with it. She does not, and refuses to, see pain as the "enemy." Instead, she tries to view it as a teacher. It is teaching her patience, tolerance, and inner strength. It teaches her compassion for others who are suffering. In short, pain is a great spiritual teacher, and it brings into her mind some of the greatest and most lovely, valuable and loftiest of spiritual treasures.

The mystic usually realizes that her relationship with the Infinite cannot be explained or elucidated in common words. She can vaguely indicate that something spectacular has occurred deep in her psyche, but when she tries to describe it, finds it "ineffable," or indescribable. In using common words, such as "bliss" and "tranquillity," she can only vaguely and dimly indicate its character. But this is a bit like trying to describe a galaxy as "bright." **The description never does justice to the experience.**

The inner existence of the Absolute can be indicated, but never "proved." It can be indirectly implied because, as we've already noted, one cannot prove that an outer world exists. But one can prove that an inner world exists, and one can prove

that it has more than one level. So, it can be demonstrated that the unconscious Mind does really exist. Nightdreams prove this. It just makes more sense to locate God as Mind deep in the unconscious Mind than it does to try to prove that a god exists somewhere in the sky.

It is, in fact, the conviction that "God" is an interior phenomenon that often serves as a useful criterion for defining the mystic from other spiritually inclined persons.

Spirituality, the mystic realizes, does not always "make sense," especially in a cosmos where the survival of the individual is regarded as the greatest good. True spirituality often calls people away from this kind of radical and rampant selfishness, towards a higher good, that of altruism or Love. So, the mystic Way has a secure place in a higher evolution-- not that of the individual alone, but that of the planetary community. Ultimately, it benefits even the galactic community.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 22/ THE MYSTIC AND DEATH

\*\*\*

Murder-attempts will drive any creature into a frenzy of selfdefensive strategies, or into wildest paroxysms of terror. The will for personal survival is probably the strongest in the complex repertoire of human drives. But the mystical reidentity is so powerful that it affects, alters, and even contravenes this gigantic urge.

It was not always so, historically. Here, in retrospect, we clearly recognize that the earliest human religioforms contained zero spirituality. Those fearfaiths were designed only to appease the anger of volatile, often psychotic, deities. We of the twenty-first century are still, shamefully, affected by the Jehovah-myth of over three millennia in the past. In spiritually primitive cultures, views of religion tended to be more utilitarian. Religion is more designed for this world, not the next, or another. This is the point where mysticism departs in history from religion. (

The mystic lives in two "worlds" simultaneously-- the "outer, material" world and the inner, transcendent world of Love.) It is only as religion matures, and begins to embrace spiritual components, that it becomes more inward-directed, more transformative of thought, speech and behavior. As religions grow wiser and more profound and personal, they tend to become more inward-facing, introspective, and, in time, grow into sources for inner guidance.

To die for a mere religious ideal is quite rare. Still, mystics voluntarily die for their spiritual principles.

The entire mystical view of death is topsy-turvy when compared to the commonsense view. For the mystic, death is a natural event, not a "tragedy," or "disaster." It is not an event to be avoided, but is supremely natural. It is never, as in backwards and empty religions, a punishment from an annoyed god. Death is as

natural as a rose opening to the sunlight.

Of course, the mystic recognizes death as a horrible, crushing, and shattering blow to the people left behind. But her view is strongly tempered by the relief that she feels for the friend who has "died." For the mystic does not believe in literal "death," as the irreversible extinction or end of consciousness.

Instead, she believes, as most great religious traditions insist, that the soul survives the experience of death. During the early twentieth century, when everyone wanted to be "scientific" in a way which now strikes us as amusing, due to its primitivity, it was thought to be "smart" and "modern" to turn away from soul-survival and afterlife.

Now, however, in the twenty-first century, we have come full circle. With the breakthrough work of Dr. Raymond Moody, who in the seventies produced the classic *Life After Life*, and with this kind of work being confirmed from literally dozens of other sources, we know now that death is a survivable experience. Thousands of people have literally died, and come back, with stories of continued, and even expanded, consciousness.

They tell of entering, shortly after death, a profoundly altered state of bottomless peace and glowing Love, together with an invincible sense of fearlessness. The author of these words had a couple of death-experiences, and so can verify that death is by no means the end of awareness.

This all confirms the mystical view that death is a transition period between one life, or kind of life, and another. This is perhaps summed up most succinctly in the Spiritualist phrase, "There is no death," or, "Death is an illusion."

The very beginning of the mystical path begins with asking basic questions about life and death. Very quickly, the first thing that one learns is that one is, as an ego, powerless to alter the major events of her life. If she tries to increase her power, wresting control from the universe, she enters the realms of magic. This expresses in many subtle forms, often including "magical" forms of prayer and affirmation.

But if, in the face of ego-powerlessness, she decides to accept the fact that she has no power, and to turn her life over to the Power that lives within her and the universe, she becomes a fledgling mystic, avoiding the egopath of magic. It is even possible, however, to progress, as many do, through periods of hopeful magic, through stages of surrender that mark actual mystic attitudes. So, a path begun in magic might end up as pure Love.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 23/ THE SUFFERING MYSTIC

\*\*\*

The mystic Master of Love, nailed naked and bleeding to a rugged wooden

cross, was lost in the inner ecstasies of untroubled Love. Some early Christians taught even that he did not suffer at all, since, in Mind, he was so detached from his body. Since he was truly "man," there can be little doubt that he did suffer. Yet he ennobled his suffering with a state of powerful detachment and transcendence, only amplified by agony. Unlike many adherents of many traditions, the mystic elevates suffering to a noble place in spirituality. While recognizing that some suffering might have karmic roots, the mystic is never permitted by Love to take a dismissive or complacent attitude towards the suffering of others.

Nor does the mystic take a destinarian or predestinarian stance of inactivity. A mystic will fight to prevent her friends from harm, and, yes, astonishingly, might even kill to keep her friends from being killed.

Still, a mystic knows that much karmic and psychological suffering has its roots in offensive violence. So, a mystic will never practice offensive violence.

As far as the other variety, defensive violence, the mystic follows the pattern of nature. The most friendly creatures often have teeth and claws which could be used to defend themselves if the need arose. The generally peaceful little bumblebee teaches us that there is an appropriate time and place for defensive violence.

Still, well over ninety-five percent of the time, the mystic is pacific and placid. She might or might not opt for the course which has been described as "pure pacifism." Most mystics, with full faith in the karmic process to right all wrongs, and to balance the scales of justice, would be quite comfortable as pure pacifists. Still, as indicated, that path probably does not include all mystics. Also, each situation must be handled on a "per case" basis. Generalizations, in the formulation of rigid rules, are precarious and perilous.

The mystic lives in this world just as does everybody else. She must also hear the cries and weeping of the suffering, brutalized, tormented people of our worldcommunity. If anything, she is more sensitive, not less so, than the average person. She cannot just accept suffering, and then, let it be. No, she is driven to find meaning in this, as in other factors of the cosmos.

First, and **most importantly**, she is never apathetic about suffering. Whenever and however, and with whomever, she can aid in lessening or alleviating suffering, she is obligated by Love to do so. Even if she knows that suffering has karmic roots, Love demands that she relieve suffering in every case she encounters. So, she will never allow herself to become lazy or complacent in the face of suffering.

Diligently, vigilantly, actively she will seek to comfort, aid, and heal. Love will move her to do this unconditionally, without regard to race, religion, or social background, and consistently. For Love is for her a Way of life. Wherever she finds pain-- physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual-- she is bound by honor to lessen, and if possible, to eradicate it. Her mission is not to judge, but only to forgive, to love.

Not all pain or suffering results from past errors. Some exists as a stimulant to cause the soul to grow in compassion, endurance, strength, and wisdom. Even if a soul has chosen pain as a route to accelerated enlightenment, the assignment of the mystic remains the same: She is obligated by Love to ease the distress and cushion the pain. In fact, the devotion of one's life to the fight against pain, say, as a nurse or other medical person, can be a very real form of a cosmic mission as a mystic.

The third reason that pain might exist in a life is as a warning from the unconscious Mind. Even here, the mystic is required to give maximum solace, to produce maximum healing. Not all mystics have equal healing gifts. But each is obligated to Love maximally. **Every act of Love is an act of healing. Love is the genuine healing Power behind every form of healing.**

So, suffering is always a call, a reminder, to Love.

Suffering, of course, comes in many forms and varieties. But no matter which form presents itself, it is always a call to elicit the mystic's Love-response. The highest mystics of history have opened their hearts to embrace even pain and suffering. They do not enjoy it morbidly, as in masochism, but have learned to include it in the all-encompassing goodness that marks their interior heartsouls. They have learned to declare it "good," because of the good lessons that it brings into their lives and those of others. It always teaches Love. For them, it has become a serious, often grim, but still kindly, teacher of the greatest truths of life. Pain can bring a certain type of liberty or freedom unknown in a painfree life. It can also sweep one into ineffable states of joy and bliss.

But pain can be agonizing. In fact, many have gone into complete denial of the existence of the Absolute as absolute Good. They or their friends have suffered so greatly under the crushing burden of unceasing and gratuitous pain. For all practical purposes, extreme pain is not needed, in most cases. Also, feeling the pain of others is a very real additional pain with which the compassionate mystic is quite familiar.

The equation of pain is complex, and involves many variables. One contributing factor is sensitivity. So, two men can experience the same stimulus, and it will seem more painful to one than to the other. Using the characteristic called "detachment," but still not weakening her compassion, the mystic can do much to create interior mental "shields" so that the existence of pain does not totally cripple her, in which case, she would be good for helping no one. In this case, reducing exposure or sensitivity to pain would not be a selfish, but a selfpreserving, act.

Some pain is created or exacerbated by disharmony with the ordinary senseworld. A solution that eradicates this kind of pain is the mystical inward-turning into an inner world that is more comfortable and supportive.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 24/ PAIN, THE WAY OF SIMPLICITY, AND THE MYSTICAL EMBRACE OF BEAUTY

Pain and Love-- are these really the two "wings" by which human beings soar into the deep presence of the Absolute? Why do Christian mystics call pain a "pleasure"? Why do ascetics of yoga and other schools actually court certain forms of discomfort and pain? Are these people simply mad?

Mystics are so stable, sane, and balanced in other respects, it does not seem likely that in this one area, they would be psychotic or schizophrenic. What they say about pain, then, must make sense, somehow. But its fullest meaning must be hidden and obscure. For their attitudes make little or no commonsense on the surface.

When St. Catherine of Siena says, "Trouble is a pleasure," what on earth does she mean? Perhaps a clue is found in the fact that other saints/mystics called suffering the "gymnastics of eternity."

The enlightened mystics saw pain as having a purifying effect. That is why they described *purgatorio* or "purgatory," whose name means "purgation" or "purification," as a place of pain.

Of what, though, can pain "purify" us? It can immediately introduce us to vulnerability and a sense of helplessness or impotence. So, it strips the human ego of arrogance and too much selfreliance. It does much to combat pride, and to develop, through empathy and sympathy, the treasures of spiritual love and compassion. These, then, are two great treasures bestowed by pain.

Pain, as Victor Frankl so amply illustrated, could ennoble the personality and character, creating heroes, comforters, and saints. It separates the great from the merely competent.

Mystics have always recognized three paths to the Absolute: religion, beauty, and pain. These three are supposed to trigger small experiences (often colorfully called "glimpses" or "tastes") of the Absolute.

In the case of Jesus, his moment of greatest pain was also his moment of greatest glory-- during his crucifixion. It is in the death of certain parts of the lower self that we can experience the inner "resurrection" of aspects or components of the "higher Self or nature." But was the pain of Jesus itself valuable? Or did it simply lead to states or conditions of spiritual value?

Some saints have been extremists and literalists when confronted with this question. Some were ascetics, which means that they deliberately deprived themselves of every possible comfort. Some went even further, becoming self-flagellates, which means that they actually carried little painful whips with which to strike their bodies, to keep, as they said, "the flesh in subjection to the Spirit."

The mystical path is more moderate. The Buddha implied this path of moderation or centrism when he recommended the famous "middle path," or the avoidance of all extremes. So, the mystic may enjoy both comfort and beauty, so



long as these do not become her "masters," guiding her behaviors. The value of Jesus' suffering, then, lay not in unhealthy masochism or desire for pain, but in the inner strength that it provided. He was empowered by his pain.

The Way of simplicity is an important subset of the Way of Love (mysticism), because it prevents one of the most insidious and painful of all psychospiritual pathologies. This disease is greed. So, in the Way of simplicity, one can enjoy a certain moderate amount of beauty and comfort, but these must not become determinants of thoughts, words, or behaviors. The Way of simplicity should not be confused with the extreme of Franciscan poverty, or with voluntary poverty that emphasizes the principle of minimalism.

It is neither. The Way of simplicity is a lifedesign, a lifepattern, that guides people to live in the fullest abandonment of greed. So, it is liberating, allowing the soul to soar into the blue skies of unlimited freedom and endless tomorrows. Why does this Way present and promise so much? Because when you stop spending all your time working to pay for an extraordinarily wasteful and stupid palace, mansion, gas-guzzling car, or other selfish luxury, your time is released from bondage. You are no longer living in abject thrall to your possessions.

When all is considered, time is the only commodity that we actually have. It is cosmic currency. You can either "sell" time for money, or "sell" your money to "buy back" time. The Way of simplicity restores the priority, and unlocks time for you. So, although pain might have its valid spiritual uses, the moderate and wisely balanced mystic does not deliberately court or encourage pain. Life itself will probably bring plenty of pain, without her having to seek it out. This pain will result in either bitterness or spiritual growth, depending on the choices that we make in response to it.

Besides pain, self-created or otherwise, beauty is another path to the Absolute. "Beauty is merely the spiritual making itself known sensuously," said the philosopher Hegel. (1770-1831) Hegel was no mystic, but, as a religious writer, was gifted with some really fascinating insights.

How does beauty lead one to the inner and higher Self?

First, beauty elicits a natural response of Love. We naturally and easily love the "beautiful," no matter how we define that term. Young children, and even animals, seem attracted by bright colors and beauty.

Anything that triggers or elicits Love is on the right mystical track. Beauty also creates a sense that reminds us that the universe is ordered, hence, friendly. People, for example, who work in environments of harmony and beauty tend to increase their productivity and creativity. It is because beauty reminds us of order, and implies a friendly cosmos, that it makes us feel more at home in our own minds and mindworlds. That is why the Way of simplicity allows for beauty, to soulsatisfy, and is never spartan.

A sense of beauty also leads to inner peace. This is especially so with natural beauty, which makes us feel comfortable with nature, one with it.

The good seems, as Eucken pointed out, to form a cohesive continuum with the beautiful. These qualities reveal the "personal character," he said, of "Reality." Beauty, in fact, is a part of the inner spiritual world of "ideals" or perfect forms suggested by Plato. Beauty, whether audionic, visual, poetic, or in any other form, creates a "bridge" between the inner world of the higher Self and the everyday ordinary world. It hints at transcendence, and elicits the best responses from the human soul, including Love.

Beauty is a purer reflection of the nature of the inner Creator than is its absence. That having been said, though, it is necessary for the fullest, most enlightened mystic to rearrange her interpretative skills so that she can come into a state where everything, as the old song reminds us, is beautiful.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 25/ EVERYTHING IS BEAUTIFUL, IN THE MYSTIC WAY

\*\*\*

Spiders-- beautiful. Snakes-- beautiful. Death--beautiful. Pain and loss-- also beautiful. "Beauty is truth, and truth, beauty." It is a very old formula that interlaces the qualities of the beautiful with Reality or truth. Certainly the very last thing that one would expect when exploring "divine Reality" is to discover that it is ugly.

That is why the mind of the fully enlightened mystic contains no ugliness. She, filled to the brim with God or Love, labels nothing as "ugly." And since she has honestly decided that, despite her programs and education to the contrary, everything is beautiful, her mind is filled with the beautiful.

the most beautiful object of her Love is her deepest unconscious Mind. At this deep level, called "Spirit," or "God," there is no opposite to the beauty that exists there.

But how does the practical mystic even get started on this surprising path, a subpath of the mystical Way? She begins where she is. She starts to examine assumptions about "beauty" and "ugliness." These considerations lead to a rather astonishing discovery: The label often affects the quality discerned.

A very young child, for example, not "knowing better," might describe a rat, or even a lobster, as "cute." Adults have been programmed, by the "software" of their parents or others, or by social or cultural education, to see things quite differently.

Artists have always, as the beauty-specialists, tried to help society stretch its definitions and push through the envelope of its former and formal definitional boundaries. I must admit that I have as much trouble as the next man in seeing the

"beauty," much less the "deep meaning" and "artistic value" of a tiny green dot on a blue background. Even though this passes for "art" in the artworld, I can't seem to escape the durable notion that someone is being hoodwinked. When compared to a Degas or a Monet, it just doesn't stand up as "art."

Certainly, it is not, and not meant to be, representational art. But beauty is in the mind of the beholder-- **not** her "eye," for much beauty is not visual. If, though, I can shift my perspective, so that the two colors of this composition-- blue and green-- can be celebrated in their intrinsic beauty, my understanding of the "artistic" might shift. If the green dot represents, for a moment, all the green plants, all the busy, active, complex lifeprocesses, all the photosynthetic steps, that create the wonder and "miracle" of green plants from soil and sun, then I see more. If the blue represents the blue sky, with its golden sun, and myriads of planets at night, then I see more.

But, the objection is, none of this is on the canvas. This is all occurring in the mind. And, I think, that is exactly the point: True art is always in the mind. It's like sex: The most important sexorgan is not between your legs, but between your ears. Art comes from the mind of the artist, and is appreciated in the mind of the audience. In this way, art can be elevated from a "material thing" to an "appreciative response," a purely mental phenomenon. Art, like beauty, is an inner process. At its height, it is real spirituality. For it expresses Love.

From this wider, more inward, more spiritual, definition, every moment of life is "art," and so, capable of beauty.

So, in taking a practical look at our lives, we begin with the commonsense notation that in normal human psychology it is a good and desirable thing to be surrounded by beauty. The alternative, to be surrounded by ugliness, is by contrast distasteful, and even painful to certain temperaments.

How, then, does one "surround oneself" with the beautiful? Of course, one can do this mechanically, by literally removing "ugly" things and replacing them with more attractive objects. But there is another, an inner, Way to do this. and it has many advantages. It is precisely identical with the Way, described above, that the mystic surrounds herself with the "good."

The secret to this Way is interpretation. It begins with the realization that **nothing is beautiful or ugly in itself**. "Beautiful" and "ugly" are decisions that we make.

What is for one a neutral piece of sculpture, for example, may strike another as "ugly," and still another as fabulously beautiful and attractive. If given as a gift to the admirer, it would elicit great joy. If given to the one who hated it, the **same object** would create feelings of distress, possibly even pain.

So, the moment that you decide to label anything as "beautiful," it actually can become so for you. What the mystic wants to do is arrive at the state of

consciousness in which she literally welcomes and embraces everything as beautiful. Since it is impractical to eliminate everything "ugly" on the planet, or in the universe, she makes the only logical choice: She changes her perceptions and definitions. Since she will never manage to stomp out every spider in existence, for instance, she decides that Sister Spider is beautiful. Then, when she sees one, she has a pleasant experience because she has chosen a pleasant response to that stimulus.

You probably recognize this as a subset of the "good and evil" dichotomy discussed earlier. The mystic wants to see everything as good, and also, everything as beautiful. What effect will this have? It will tend to return her to the "inner paradise or garden of pleasure in her heart."

Obviously, being always surrounded by good and beautiful things would increase one's pleasure in life. In time, this positive interpretation of all things would create an interior heaven within one's being. The inner Mind would be always filled with pleasure, and life itself would become the supreme pleasure.

Start with small things. Try to see the beauty in everything. Instead of cursing that "damned dandelion" as a noxious weed that is ugly, open your mind to the beauty of its bright sunshine-yellow color. Look at all the work that nature has put into it. Accept it as a gift from nature. After all, the difference between the forms of a rose and a dandelion are colored, and often skewed, by programming. If dandelions were hard to grow and rare, they would probably be prized like fine tulips or roses.

Try to do this with other facets of your life. Accept the traffic jam as a gift of time from the cosmic Mind. Be grateful for it. See the wild, careless, crazy driver as a part of your driving-education, and be grateful for his/her antics. When you are put on hold on the phone, or have to wait for an appointment, see this also as a gift. It is extra time for you to go within yourself, study your inner mind, and make improvements. Or, it can be accepted simply as the gift of stillness.

Illness is also stillness. When your body gives in to a cold, it is reminding you that it is time for rest. So, receive and try to enjoy the gift. See it as "time out" from your busy day. People are usually much too busy. So, see it as a "break" from your routine. Take a minivacation.

One sunny spring day, I opened a porchdoor right onto the nest of some wasps. I received three stings before I knew what had hit me. I joked with my wife Maria that I must have needed some acupuncture work. Later, I discovered that the stings all indeed occurred on important points on the heart "meridian" or force-line that carries energy to the heart. Did that have any therapeutic effect? Probably not. But it might have. At any rate, I have no way of knowing. But it did help me in another way. Instead of hating Brother Wasp, I was able sincerely to thank him. This is called "taking life's lemons and making lemonade."

So, surround yourself with beauty by deciding that whatever surrounds you is already beautiful. You will be astonished, and delighted at the results!

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 26/ THE "INNER WORLD" OF MIND, AND ITS GNOSIS BY THE MYSTIC

\*\*\*

Beauty is in the garbage, dirt, murky water, and bioforms, when beauty is in the mind. The core-sense of beauty begins with a pleasant feeling, followed by attraction. Then, if it continues to grow, it can flower into a passion. It can, in time, lead to a jubilant, enthusiastic embracing of everything. The practicing mystic must simply understand that everything can be beautiful if she so chooses.

Beauty as a pervasive sense, in the very naked nature of things, is a profound aspect of the mystical experience. Things not normally perceived as even pretty or attractive can suddenly be surrounded with an irresistible aura of compelling beauty.

In an altered state, one man found the sight of an ordinary lighted bulb so captivating that he saw within it all the mysteries of the cosmos, and it hypnotically mesmerized him for hours.

In the midst of a mystical experience, the greatest truths of time and space, and infinite beauty, can be found in a "grain of sand," or blade of grass. A crystal, or a flower, can glow with exquisite and delicate finality and brilliance, containing the beauties of all the secrets of life and being. When some of this ultradeveloped sense of beauty is carried back from the mystical state, the most ordinary items can seem charged with inner or hidden beauty. The ecstatic splendor does not belong to the object, but is poured through it by the mind of the observer. When that mind is changed, her world is forever altered.

This is beauty beyond mere appearance, the beauty of inner Mind, to which outer form is quite irrelevant. This Mind projects its beauty everywhere, and it might just as soon find it in a clod of mud as in a spray of flowers, a cluster of crystals, or a gathering of stars in constellation. Underhill writes beautifully, "Each blade of grass seems fierce with meaning..."

The mystic comes into precisely the same psychological mindset as the initiates in the ancient mystery-schools of Egypt and Greece. One of their lessons was the "learning of universal beauty," or the lifting, through hypnosis and ritual, into the state wherein everything was actually beautiful. The rites of Orpheus, Dionysus, and the Goddess Demeter might have given a "taste" of true mystical consciousness. Afterward, the student was expected to attempt to solidify it as a permanent state of mind. Why, the people of the mysteries inquired, should we take as a standard of "Reality" a consensual world? After all, its confirmation was nothing more than the agreement of senses. And these were just the impressions of normal men. The question of Reality was far too important to allow it to be settled by the easily fooled senses. So, mystics have never hesitated to declare their honest mistrust of the

senses. This has prevented their being deceived by mere phenomena.

The senses, they say, are fine for dealing with the ordinary, everyday, "nine-to-five." But they are inadequate for dealing with spiritual matters and mysteries. They are also untrustworthy guides when it comes to disentangling the complex mysteries of the inner Mind. Senses were like words: They were fine for their limited areas of function, but were the "wrong tools" for inner or spiritual exploration or explanation.

Mystics even speak, with Underhill, of the "unreal world of appearances which is the standard of sensible men."

By stark and stunning contrast with the views of others, the lifedesign of the mystic does not have the material world as its core or central value. The mystic world is, by contrast, coalesced around the centrality of the deep unconscious Mind, the Spirit, or divine, cosmic Mind. The mystics long, hunger, and thirst for a Reality that is "more real" than the passing fancies of impermanence, in which all material things are on their way to becoming piles of dust.

Relentless sensation drives them to seek rest, a deep, quiet stillness at the center of being. This is the Source or Origin of all activity, but is itself deep tranquillity. Mystics seek final or ultimate satisfaction by incorporating their personal minds within this great causative Mind, the Creatormind at the core of all mind.

To "know Reality," whatever that grandiose phrase might finally mean, the mystic knows that she, her Self, must be real. So, she ceases to identify with the physical body, for it cannot partake of absolute reality. This is because it is material. And, being material, it is also passing and changing, like all matter. It is, in other words, on its way to becoming dust.

"But if I am not this body," she is then forced to ask herself, "what am I?" She then feels into her Self, for months, or even years, before arriving at the conclusion, "I am a mind." With still further and deeper inner exploration, she comes to feel as if, through "her" unconscious mind, she is actually part of a larger Mind, a collective unconscious. In time, she grows into the feeling that it is this Mind that is ultimate Reality. Then, her identity undergoes a subtle metamorphosis, from, "I am a mind," to, "I am Mind."

Mystics rely on a kind of natural "homing" mechanism to take their minds deep down into the depths of a far greater mind, where they, at last, feel at home. The very desire to seek this profound Mind shows that they are already on the "path" of right alignment and cooperation with this inner Power.

Mystics are trailblazers or pathfinders of the spiritual life. It is their job to explore the inner "city of God," structured into the very matrix of mind itself. They tell us that their mission is the fullest exploration and mapping of an independent inner spiritual "world" or Reality. This "world" is the same for all, though it might be interpreted differently. All mystics testify that it is filled with light, peace, and Love. Entering it brings bliss, euphoria, or ecstasy. Ancient mystics, in fact,

described this "world" as an "ocean of light and bliss." It is a haven, unaffected by the storms of the outer world, yet mystics do not simply "escape" into it to avoid problems. Instead, they draw strength from their regular visits to this inner world, and that strength is used to make their ordinary lives more productive, lucid, and peaceful. The "messages" that they bring back from this world improve the ordinary world. These teach peace, cooperation, tolerance, compassion, love, and related living skills.

This everyday world, they say, is unified always with the Absolute mind, which pervades, permeates, and saturates it. This Mind is never sealed off from the everyday world, but is in continuous interaction with it at a billion billion points, and in many ways, at many levels. So, the enlightened soon forever turns her back on the ancient godimages of the irreversibly separate god, apart from, instead of a part of, all creation.

Mystics describe this inner "world" as one of absolutes. It is life without the possibility of death, and so, a world of "absolute life." It is beauty unstained even by the possibility of ugliness, and hence, is a world of "absolute beauty."

Since events in mind are unaffected by either time or space, this "inner world" is said to be "beyond spacetime." In these altered states of lucidity, the Absolute is no postulate. Instead, we are fused with It, melded into It, expressions of It. It is actually our deeper Mind which does most of our significant thinking and feeling. The exciting possibility of knowing It directly, in its uneclipsed and unclouded brightness, drives the mystic ever inward, more deeply into "her" mind. This special kind of "knowing" is not limited to sense-impressions. It depends on heartmind functions only. It was this special kind of immediate, intense knowing of this inner Mind that the Greeks meant by *gnosis*.

This gnosis does not depend on intellect. Nor does it rely on the unfolding of the contents of the normal mind or memory. Instead, it is a new revelation (uncovering) of something completely new in the psyche. And while "in" the psyche, it is also "beyond" the psyche. It is the "Beyond within," or the "inner Other." It is in this latter manifestation that the psyche is the world or cosmos.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 27/ COME FLY THE FRIENDLY INNER SKIES

\*\*\*

Blasting into the inner Mind like a starship, then floating there, effortlessly, is the essence of the mystical experience. The basic method of mysticism is not abstract logic, but lifexperiment. The great discoveries made by the mystic are all experiential, not academic. The subject, the mystic herself, is both the laboratory and the scientist in this great experiment called discovery of the Real or ultimate

Mind.

The Ultrultimate is finally "known" by the mystic only in that dramatic zenith of experience called "full union with the inner Beloved." The deepest Mind is bound to the personal mind by attraction and Love, and so this core-Mind is called the "inner Beloved."

The inner Beloved is not literally "another person" but it also is not the self that is generally known and recognized. So, when directing her Love inward to this Object of Love, the mystic is not "falling in Love with herself." Instead, when she explores very deeply the inner Mind or Reality, she discovers "another"-- living through or within her.

Now, this is no alien, no strange presence. Nor is it any strange "spirit" come to "possess" her. Instead, it is her own natural mind. But, at some level or depth, some complexity or order, it ceases to be entirely "hers." It ceases in fact to be entirely "within her." It is sensed that it "spills out" of the container of self, overflowing into other minds. It also overflows the bowl of self, spilling out to become the "external and material" world. It flows over into dream.

At this point, the mystic is forced to react with one of two responses: Either she can say that, very deep within her mind, her mind has ceased to be "hers," and has ceased to be herself. Or she can say that the entire world is an extension of her "self."

This Self is synonymous with the Dreamer, not just with the soul. But here, things get tricky, in terms of divisions. For every level of Mind is fluid, and one level continuously flows into and fuses with the next. For simplicity's sake, we will say here: "The Spirit, including the Dreamer, lives within the soul. The soul lives deeply within the unconscious Mind. This unconscious Mind lives within the mind of the mystic.

Since soul or Self lives within the Mind, and Spirit or Dreamer lives within the soul, at times the word "Self" applies to the Spirit, and at other times-- more usually-- only to the soul. (While the soul level of Mind is personal, the Spirit level is collective.)

Since the area of Mind called "soul" already has the area called "Spirit" deeply ensconced within it, then the "union" between God or Spirit and soul is not so much an accomplishment as a discovery. In Buddhism, they have a saying, "You are already the Buddha." In early Christianity, they had an exact equivalent: "You are already the Christ." this identification with Christ or God was not regarded as blasphemy, but as the rose which blossomed from the highest human realization.

So, there is nothing more natural, or inevitable, than "union" between the mind and the inner Beloved, Spirit, or God. Since "your" mind already grows from cosmic Mind, the Ultrultimate, this is just a recognition of the Way things already are. It is not a change in situation, but only in realization.

It is the unavoidable destiny of, not just the mystic, but every being, to find this



inner union, and then, to express this "higher nature" as Love.

This idea has great antiquity. It goes back, in fact, to the very invention of writing. People have always written, or at least, expressed in symbols, what they thought important. And, although we cannot know with precision the inner or mystical life of preliterate or prehistoric peoples, when mysticism does appear, in the very earliest human records, it does so with suddenness, fully formed. This implies necessarily that it had been evolving during the centuries, or even millennia, preceding the rise of actual civilizations and records, about six to ten thousand years ago.

In the very earliest cosmogony ("origin of the cosmos" stories), appearance of the world from a primal Mind is already implied. The knowledge that the world arises out of Mind, or, later, out of a Mind, is credited by the ancients to the "gods," or "people of the stars," or "people of the sky," from whom all religion and spirituality were derived.

The first European appearance of the idea of mindunion with the inner Mind is found with the Orphic mysteries, in Greece and southern Italy, in the sixth century BC. These traditions were heavily influenced by pure mysticism, from a much earlier and unknown source.

The word "philosophy" means literally, "love of wisdom." All true philosophy begins with "love of truth." If the very highest "truth" or Reality is the existence of this profound Supermind that dreams the world, then Love for this inner Beloved is the highest meaning of philosophy too. By this definition, mystics are the truest philosophers. But while the traditional philosopher guesses and argues, the mystic experiences and describes her inner Reality.

The mystic also differs from the traditional metaphysician. For the "Absolute" of the latter is abstract and academic, like a diagram. The Absolute of the mystic is lovable and personal, warm and supportive, nourishing and sustaining. The mystic's Ultrultimate is real and even discoverable, for It lives within every human heartmind. It is immediately accessible. It is Love.

So, the fact that mysticism is an experimental art makes it more immediately available to the average, even uneducated, person. The system, as in this book, can be to some extent communicated. But its results cannot.

Mystics are not just thinkers, but experiencers. They grow quickly bored with discussions "about" God. They tire of theology. Like eager children, they just can't wait for the "good stuff." They do not want to analyze God. They want to "jump in," and "swim in" God. They're not interested in the chemical composition of cereals. They just want their Cheerios-- and now!

To these special types, trusting the senses is an absurdity. These same senses lead to nightmares, fantasies, illusions of all kinds. The mystics hunger for something more Real, something Absolute or Ultimate.

Further, they have discovered a new world, which has barely been explored. this pioneering "territory" is, as the "Twilight Zone" was described, "a dimension ... of mind." It is an exciting, exhilarating new world to be mapped, and the mystics can hardly wait to get started!

Many of the main trails have been sketched in, for people have been traversing them for thousands of years. But there are always new and bright highways and byways still unexplored, and the area to be mapped is nothing less than infinity. Because the roads are so variable, and change with each person who traverses them, the mystics cannot promise that you will have the same experience that they have had. But they can promise a whale of a good time!

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 28/ MORE MYSTERIES OF THE MYSTIC MINDWORLD

\*\*\*

Time to wake up! Wake up! Sleep is comfortable, but it is hardly living. When you were younger, and had to get up to go to school, you hated to leave that warm bed, and those sweet dreams, behind. But the real world was calling. And now, Reality calls to you again! Mystics say that the average human mind, in its normal state, is quite asleep. A part of the waking process is to realize that you are asleep and dreaming. For as long as you believe that you are already awake, you will have no motive to awaken. One does not awaken from awakening. The senseworld of spiritual "sleep" is seen as unsatisfying, unreliable illusion. To the mystic, it is the daytime experience that is the "dream." It "fools" everyone, because it is collective, and also because it is contiguous. It truly appears as if the same phenomena remain day after day.

Oddly, a bit paradoxically, mysticism claims to deal with "selfevident Reality." But to whom are the obscure discoveries of the mystic "selfevident"? Mystics argue that you cannot prove even to yourself the existence of an independent object. "All that you can really prove, as we saw earlier, is the existence of mindimpressions or sensory responses. These in themselves do not imply the real existence of real, independent material objects. These mindimpressions instead verify the existence of only mindobjects.

This, say the mystics, is selfevident. If it is not, it takes very little time and attention to figure this out.

The existence of mind is selfevident, and the existence of a Mind of many layers, called the "unconscious Mind," is also selfevident. It takes the most nanoscopic jump to move from the existence of a deep unconscious mind to the discovery that the Superconscious is the balancing polarity of the subconscious. This forms perfect natural symmetry, and implies that the mystery known as the Ultimate, the Absolute,

or God, is deeply hidden in the unconscious Mind. It exists there as the profound Love-nature.

It has more than one function, however. As the Love-nature, its function is to embrace all things and people, to universalize Love until it embraces the entire world. One comes gradually into union with this Mind by beginning to embrace all things as "good," or the goodness in all things. As universal Mind, its function is to create nightmares, as well as to provide spiritual, artistic, poetic, musical, and other forms of inspiration.

As Dreamer or Creator, its function is the creation of a vividly realistic, but not entirely Real, "material external" world, and to dream up various environments to stimulate us to develop our best spiritual potentials.

So, when things reach the screaming-point of tension, the mystic finds real and deep peace by reassuring herself, "None of this is real," and that awareness can carry her through the most tendentious tornadoes of emotion.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 29/ IT'S ALIVE! MYSTICISM AND VITALISM

\*\*\*

Active, vibrant living creatures flourish enthusiastically, darting, shooting, wiggling in just about any nourishing ecosphere. Life has an astonishing vivacity that makes nonliving things seem dead by comparison!

The ancient mystic Heraclitus of the fifth century BC embraced and taught a form of vitalism. He was famous for his dictum, "All things are in a state of flux." The "Spirit" or "energy" of the vitalists he defined as the Logos or "energizing fire." It was seen as a power at once indwelling and creative. This was thought to be the "immanent" soul or inner reality of things.

This concept was both Hellenic and Christian, and was later to influence the concept of the "indwelling Holy Spirit" working through the human heart, and throughout creation. Aristotle and Aquinas both spoke of similar views.

One of these popular views was the philosophy called "vitalism." The main difference between vitalism and other schools is that vitalism focused on the active process of becoming, not the static condition of being. Its emphasis was always on the "energizing thought" of the Absolute. This creative Logos, the energy within all creation, was seen as the supreme Reality. But it was also mystically seen as accessible to human consciousness. The "real" is viewed as dynamic, always moving and creating movement and change. It is not seen as being perfect, or as perfect being. Instead, it is seen as **becoming** or growing into a state of perfection.

It is this precession, flux, change, or fluid movement of things that is the very "stuff" of Reality itself, say vitalists. Bergson defined "reality" as "pure creative life."

So, some variants of the philosophy of vitalism actually excluded all ideas about perfection and finality. So, this flatly contradicted the idealist concept of "pure being." (This idealist ideal portrayed the Absolute as the "unchanging One.") Life, the vitalists said, was always changing, and was fed from within, not supported from outside. It is always evolving. The source of this evolutionary process was life's own "inherent and spontaneous creative power." Creation, movement, change mark the Real, vitalists said. The "Real" condition of the cosmos was apparent chaos, continuous fluctuation and metamorphosis, not law and order, not wholeness. This incessant mutability of life was seen as the Real itself. The very zenith of this process was, in the words of Alexander, "the universe flowering into Deity." Vitalism was influenced by pantheism. The cosmos is accurately represented, said vitalists, only by continuous change. In the nineteenth century, many professional biologists ascribed the enthusiastic activity of living systems to a mysterious but invisible "activating force." This was essential vitalism. "Vitalism" held that all life was saturated, filled, with a quality called change. No doubt vitalism was powerfully influenced by the new fad of Darwinian evolution, which at the time, seemed very "respectable" and even "scientific," though today we smile at its naivete. In 1896, it was taught that a "free and spontaneous life" was the "essence of reality." In 1907, the famous philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) incorporated vitalism into his overall worldview. Vitalists measured "truth" by experience, not by reason. They taught that the entire cosmos was "alive." "Nature" itself was defined as a mysterious "force." It was thought to be "pushing out from within" all lifeforms. The so-called "laws" created by determinism were dismissed simply as descriptions familiar to those who made them up.

The lives of human beings were thought to be included in a transcendental phenomenon called "cosmic life." The universe was circularly seen as an "expression of universe." Life, however, was **not** seen as an expression of the universe. Instead, it was an expression of the mysterious "life of the All," presumably synonymous with "cosmic life."

In time, vitalism was accepted by scientists and metaphysicists alike. It seemed to satisfy moral and religious impulses, and some spiritual ones as well. Mystics were presented as the "true possessors of freedom," which is how they have always seen themselves. After all is said and done, we must agree with the ancient Heraclitus, who said, "There is but one wisdom: to understand the knowledge by which all things are steered, through the All." Union with this wisdom is union with the Mind of Reality. In vitalism, union with Reality is union with the most intense life. This is deliberately created harmony with the inner Logos, or guiding principle, pushing all reality through rapid transformations. This union can be seen as conscious joining with a spiritual existence, a universe, that is itself conscious. This is at once the "life of the cosmos" and of human beings.

How can we know, with gnosis, this Life in which we are continually bathed? Intellect is not enough, for it is duped by its own categorizations. The intellect is a very specialized component of the Self, but it is specialized for dealing with words and ordinary concepts, not with Reality. It is simply the wrong tool. It has evolved to deal with the "material and external" world, not for dealing with spiritual or inner realities. When taken from this comfortable, familiar milieu, the intellect becomes confused and vacillating. For vitalism taught that speculation about, or experience of, spiritual Reality is "unnatural" because it is "supernatural." The essential function of consciousness, said this myopic view, is to promote the survival of life, not to know or understand it. A merely mechanical model of reality might work for all practical purposes, but it cannot be real because it is not alive, said vitalism.

Today, in the twenty-first century, it is still a mystery exactly how, by what mechanism, molecules do a "dance," involving millions of members, in an orchestration and choreography so detailed and intricate as to boggle the mind. Molecules are continually being dismantled and reconstructed by the millions, every second of time. Certain researchers ascribe the mysterious movements to forces of attraction within the atoms or molecules themselves. But exactly what series of nanoforces could keep them all moving at exact speeds and precise sequences is still essentially a mystery.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 30/ THE CALL OF THE MYSTIC

\*\*\*\*\*

The material cosmos is no more actually "solid" than a snowstorm. We, using our brains and minds, convert these storms of vibrations into forms, colors, sounds, and other related phenomena. Still, by the very fact of our perceiving them, we change them. We are active participants, cocreators, of our personal universes or worlds.

Humility, and a little commonsense, imply that we create not **the** world, but only **our** personal worlds. Mystics change the condition of consciousness, and in this way, change how they know the cosmos. They perceive a more real layer of Reality.

For the surface consciousness, used by almost everyone almost every minute of every day, can be dramatically different from the deeper levels of the unconscious Mind. These deeper levels have a certain talent or gift for sensing "truth" or Reality directly, without nearly as much distortion.

Mystics say that this "truth" is mind. You are already "in" It, as a fish is "in" the sea, and it is "in" you, as water is also "in" the fish. The vitalist urges us to give up our shaky faith in the senses, and throw ourselves into an abandoned trust of life. The mystic recommends the same, only then, to throw ourselves fully into the trust of Mind, specifically, Lovemind. Both agree that we should try to make our interests

coterminal with the interests of the All, or of Lovemind. The restrictions of the "material and external" world can be escaped, say mystics, only by fullest relaxation into the deepest Mind. For the mystics, this implies a necessary abolition of personhood as that term is usually defined. We must abandon ourselves to what Plato called "the saving madness of ecstasy." Full selfsurrender is the only Way that this "union with the inner Beloved" can be fully discovered. We must, paradoxically, "die" to live, and "lose" to find. For Christians, for centuries, this has implied a meek and loving union with their inner Beloved, Christ or God.

The first step is deliberately, tenaciously, and repeatedly to empty yourself of all the false images generated by the intellect. These include false notions about who or what you are. Then, you must attempt to retain the consciousness of transcendental enlightenment. You must learn to neglect the bright, fascinating "movie" always being "played" by the senses. What the Sufi mystic Jalalu'ddin call the "flame of separation" is that terrible burning hellstate apparently "separate" from the deepest inner Mind. (Unlike the standard mystic, the "vitalist mystic" never sought union with God, as the deepest Ground or Mindcenter of all being. Instead, she sought a union with the "living cosmos.")

Human nature, when in service of the higher nature, is not at all satisfied with a mere "glimpse or taste" of this Mind. It insists that it wants to live there, permanently. "This requires, the mystic knows, a permanent and total adjustment of her being to the new Reality that is also her new "Home." This great harmony between the self and the Spirit can, oddly, result in some disharmonies between the self and the "material, external" world.

Why is this? Does not the Mind with which she is one create that world? Yes, but the created or dreamed world is not the same as the inner Mind of Reality. For the world is affected by karma, by millennia of pain, evil, hatred, and ignorance. Though pristine and pure at its center, the world nevertheless contains these psychic contaminants. The Mind of Reality, by contrast, is purest Love, unstained wisdom, untroubled tranquillity, and the deep stillness of undisturbed joy.

Since human beings, as we have seen, can prove to themselves only the existence of a self, the most elegant and symmetric solution that presents itself to the mystic is that the self can be divided into two modes: one is the self for the world, the worldself or egoself, and one is the Self for the spiritual experience, the wise self, the inner Self, the higher Self. This is the soulevel of Mind. It is like a half-bridge connected to only one bank of a river. At first, it grows, reaching, from the Spirit, out towards the conscious mind. In time, it will grow to unite the conscious-side of the Mind with the deeper Spirit-side. That is, with the passage of time, it merges with, and brings together, both the conscious mind and the inner Dreamer. Then, it will contain a little of both. In time, the mystic wants it to merge completely with the inner Mind of Reality, the core-Self, the Creator or Dreamer, God. At that time,

the soul will "die" into the Spirit, and identification between the two levels will be complete.

The deeper Reality, as we have seen, is this "inner world" unaffected by senses. The highest human destiny is to move into this world, and live here. In order fully to live here, however, it is necessary to renounce the dominance of the senseworld. In time, that senseworld must be rejected as reality. The mystic must be "reborn" as a "citizen" of this inner "kingdom," or "world." She must shift her center of interest and being from the "natural" to the "supernatural." She must work hard to shatter and sever the natural continuous "communion" with her own "movie," or sensory reality.

A mystic is never created by a single visionary experience or altered state. She becomes a mystic only when she embraces an entirely new lifepattern, complete with its own joys and obligations. The mystic does not "take a quick dip" in spiritual life, but is completely immersed in it, twenty-four seven.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 31/ THE EVERYDAY LIFE AND BEHAVIOR OF THE "ORDINARY" MYSTIC: GOD "IN" THE SELF

\*\*\*

Drop the mask, and quit the game. Stop pretending to be only human. Awaken to, and explore, your newly discovered Self. A mystic moves, is moved, irresistibly towards a new identity. This implies an entirely new collection of interests, much different than those which used to entertain her. It also implies an entirely new circle of friends.

She is selective about her new friends, as she might not have been about her old ones. Now, to be her friends, people must meet certain minimum standards. Not that she would ever snobbishly turn away anyone needing aid or comfort. But she is selective when she invites people to be her comrades, confidants, strong, loyal, intimate friends.

She now insists upon the following qualities in her friends: Intelligence, wisdom, kindness, goodness, fairness, nongreed, nonbigotry, service, compassion, love, and perhaps a list of related qualities.

All her interest, in fact, all her life, begins to center around Love, union with Love, expression of Love, sharing of Love. So, Love must be on the top of her priority-list when evaluating people as close friends. She will immediately reject any Love-abuser, anyone who sees sex, for example, as "recreational" or "casual," and who uses it immodestly and unwholesomely to gain power over others. She will also reject chronic criminal or cruel behavior. She will **not** reject people simply because they have human weaknesses. Instead, she will try to cooperate with them in their own inner strengthening and healing. She will turn away from only behavior, but will

always be interested in helping the person.

As she grows in Love, she becomes herself a radiant source of healing energy. People are healed just by spending time in her presence. These healings might or might not be physical. For people are in need of greater healings on the social, intellectual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, or other levels as well. For the wise mystic, her "mysticism" is **not** just a matter of "psychedelia," of visions, trances, and altered states, of revelations and ecstasies. Instead, mysticism becomes, for her, an entire way of life. The whole "package" involves the way she responds to, and treats, the mail-carrier, the check-out person, the hair-stylist, and the mechanic. It regulates the kindness in her voice when she speaks on the telephone, and gives her an aura of gentleness even when she pays her bills.

So, mysticism is not some quirky and odd-ball lifestyle marked by hermetic behavior and solipsistic solitudes. It is a complete way of life. It is a system that carries its own guarantees and obligations. The mystic is immersed in her spiritual life, but this does not make her "spooky" or fanatical. Instead, it makes her compassionate and kind. She becomes a good citizen, a trustworthy person, and a fine, caring neighbor. Mysticism makes her a better daughter, a friendlier sister, a more competent wife, a more attractive woman. It does **not** make her a "freak."

Remember, she is moving all the time and steadily towards a new identity. That new inner identity might be very intensely personal, so she does not seek to advertise it. In fact, if she does advertise her transformation, she is no mystic, for a real mystic is always marked by humility, especially spiritual humility. Since her new, and truer, identity is Love itself, she moves forward to higher states of mental health and emotional wellbeing, as Love heals her. She becomes better adjusted, to all people, and so, to the community in general.

Specifically, she unifies the community, encouraging communication and understanding, and discouraging conflict, disagreement, and fights. She seeks to become a peacemaker, bringing, creating, or discovering harmony between even "battling" groups of "enemies." She brings together people as friends, and sets the example for friendliness herself. All this peace, all this harmony, all this personal, family, and community healing occurs precisely because she has found the great treasure of inner "union with the Absolute" (Love). Loving herself, she can easily and delightfully extend herself effortlessly to love all others.

She has transcended, or risen above, every form of neediness and clinging, so that she is not a "drain" on resources. She does not draw energy from others, impoverishing them. For she has discovered the ultimate Source of energy within her own heartmind. Now, she actually has energy to spare, to give to others, enriching them. She is powerful because she is happy, and she is happy because she is complete in herself.

For she has touched, and found, the inner "Beloved" of which the mystic poets



write so beautifully, especially among the Sufis. So, she is never alone. This grants her an enormous strength, which she is only too happy to share with all others.

She does not try to "convert" others to this Way. She is not "preachy," and does not "sermonize," for humility prevents this self-righteous action. But she does share, very quietly, her discoveries with anyone who asks. She would love to see the entire world find the inner spirituality that she has discovered, would love to see the entire world remade in the image of Love. But she will assiduously avoid the "Jehovah's Witness" approach of knocking on the doors of strangers to "sell" a religion.

Instead, she goes about her daily and normal routine and pursuits in the most "normal and ordinary" way. Alan Watts said that the most holy people were marked by their "extraordinary ordinariness." She tends to be quiet, even silent, unless she is asked. Most mystics live exactly this Way. The exception might be that mystic who receives a "calling" to teach. She will tend to talk quite a bit, but, again, only when doing her teaching. Even she will tend to be, by nature and by preference, a quiet person. She will never be loud or obnoxious, and will at all costs avoid the exhibitionism displayed by so many ridiculous, white-garmented gurus or Christian preachers.

Although refusing adamantly to show off, a mystic who is called to teach always realizes that there is a great, unbridgeable gulf or abyss between her experiences and mere words. As beautiful and descriptive as words can be, especially in a poetic frame, they do not come close to expressing, describing, or fully capturing the great mysteries of the deeps of the "inner sea" of the unconscious mind. Fortunately, it is not the job of the mystic teacher fully to describe these inner mindscapes. Instead, she is directed by her urge to teach simply to share as much as possible by way of indication, analogy, metaphor, or parable. Her real calling is to encourage the "fruit" of the inner Tree of Life, and that is Love. So, the mystic teacher is not a purveyor of exoticities, but an instructor in the practical. She teaches "agapology," the "artscience" of Love, the psychology of Love, the poetry of Love.

She goes into this calling with the full realization that her task will by no means be easy. Her eyes are wide open, and she knows that a great gulf yawns widely between her exquisite luminous vision and the common world-mind. Her task will never be easy. In fact, it would be analogous to teaching Swahili to American preschoolers. For the great and very exciting truth is that no one will ever really understand her until/unless they are caught up to her state or level. The good news, she knows, is that, someday, everyone will be.

Trying to use words to describe the mystical and inner world is like trying to use a screwdriver to pound in nails. It can be done, but it is never easy, and involves a lot of extra work. The tool does not fit the job, and the tools of words were never designed to describe the subtle but powerful luminous inner realities.

The inner journey is often indicated by poetry. Even this, however, in its most

exalted and ethereal forms, is inadequate. For the journey inward is the most romantic and idealistic of adventures. In the "heart of hearts," one "falls in love" with the Self. But this is not nearly so silly as it sounds. For this deep inner Self is so gigantic and so unconscious that it feels very much like another. In fact, it is all but irresistible to see it as if it were another. So, it is the "inner Other," or the "Beyond within." Historically, all but the mystics have insisted on projecting It as if It were another. This is the origin of the myth that God, or the gods, live in the sky. Even the mystics call It the "inner Beloved."

And, literally, for all practical or reasonable purposes, It is another Being. For when the inner unconscious or Superconscious Mind is encountered, it genuinely **feels** like another. In fact, it is called "unconscious" precisely because we are unaware of its existence or its contents. And when we first touch It within ourselves, it is we who tend to feel like "strangers in a strange land." For It is a "stranger" to us.

For all practical purposes and perceptions, then, God, or the deep Love-nature, although within us, part of us, is "another." Seen another way, more literally, perhaps, It is our higher Self, the "indwelling Holy Spirit" that is God. This is why mystics are not learning to see, or interact with, Reality. Instead, they are learning to **be** Reality. To use an old mystical phrase, "They are That which they behold." The Jewish thinker Buber might characterize this as the "i-I" relationship, in which a tiny, microego encounters a Self that is vast and infinitely more real.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 32/ ONE WITH THE ONE: HINDU MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

How is the Self discovered? How are we awakened to its subtle, invisible presence? For millennia, people have been asking this crucial question.

In the East, where mystics are famous for inner exploration, the masters developed a number of positive, efficient spiritual paths under the single heading "Yoga." Later, this Hindu system of mysticism evolved in to a complex and elaborate body of wisdom. Literally dozens of varieties of "yoga" have developed.

"Yoga" is comparable to the English "yoke," and arises from a root in Sanskrit meaning "to join." So, the various yogic paths have been designed to "yoke" us with our higher Selves. The ultimate goal of all yoga is that of universal mysticism: Full union with the deepest Coremind, the Creator/Dreamer, the Superconscious Mind. Yet, strangely, after millennia of evolution, yoga is not as wellknown as it needs to be in the West. People do not even know that it is a synonym for "mysticism."

When people hear this word, they often picture people tying themselves into painfully uncomfortable knots, or twisting their bodies, pretzel-like, into tortuous positions. Although one form of yoga does involve the body, almost all forms of yoga

are mental disciplines. Most forms do not even involve these strange contortions. (They mark only one form of yoga, called "hatha" (pronounced "haht'-hah").

Hindu mysticism is expressed in many forms of yoga., which consists of forms indigenous to the ancient Indian culture. It is one of the oldest and most complex and comprehensive varieties of mysticism. In fact, mysticism is the core of Hindu tradition and religion. In many ways, it is precisely parallel to Western mysticism.

Mysticism is the heart of the ancient Scriptural texts called the "Upanishads" (pronounced "oo-pahn'-ee-shods"). These record teachings of the sages who lived between the eighth and sixth centuries BC. So, Hinduism is not only one of the most complete forms of mysticism, but is among the oldest. (Some legends hold that Jesus was educated in the ancient Indian traditions.) So, here, we will take only the briefest look at this venerable and magnificent mystical body.

Much in Hindu thought is based in the language called "Sanskrit," a language so old that it was an oral tradition for centuries before it was ever written. In the ancient Yogasara Sutra, for example, we find a description of Yoga. Yoga is most simply, succinctly defined in this ancient text as the "state in which there is no thought." The text then expands it to mean "the control of mind and its modifications." It is said to represent the mid-point of existence between the individual soul (called *jivatma* in Sanskrit) and the cosmic soul or mind (Paramatma). Anyone studying this path can correctly be called a "yogi," or, if female, a "yogini." (These words are not reserved for masters.) The ultimate goal of all yoga is a "thought-free Superconscious state." (It is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*.) This is a state of enlightenment.

The form of yoga that is pure meditation, a quest for this ultimate state, is called *raja* yoga, or *dhyana* yoga. (*Raja* means "king" as the chief form of yoga, and *dhyana* means "meditation.") This form, "rajayoga," represents a single Mindfocus, an intense "one-pointed" concentration on Reality. This Reality is the "Absolute" "Ultimate," or "cosmic Mind." This is the Coremind or Superconscious. In Indian tradition, It is called "Brahman." The intense, pure focus of rajayoga is achieved by voluntary control of all thoughts, or "thought-waves" (called *vritti* in ancient texts). Rajayoga has two concerns: 1) mindcontrol, leading to 2) mindpurification. Another name for this yoga of soulmind is *ashtanga* yoga, meaning "yoga of eight parts."

The sacred texts which describe the yogas are called "*Sutras*," which means "thread." The idea is that these teachings are like jewels. The "thread" that holds them all together is the Sutra. These texts express the highest, most sublime ideals of Hindu mystical realization.

Animals and human beings share many functions in common, but human beings are marked by their ability to discriminate with intelligence. This discriminative power is called *viveka*. Even more, humans have the power of inquiry (called *vichara-shakti*).

It is with the help of these "spiritual powers" that the human being can know her truest Self, her real, deep, genuine inner nature. In short, these abilities can be used

to discover enlightenment.

Even the devas (extradimensionals or light-beings) are said to envy human beings. For these beings can experience only "birth for enjoyment" (*bhogayoni*), but humans can experience karmayoni, or "birth for action," as well. So, a human birth is a wonderful opportunity to learn-- so beautiful that it arouses the envy of the "gods." Higher beings, that is, can know more pleasure, but human beings more progress, learning, and growth. For this reason, human beings can gain real progress through selfless service (*nishkamyā karmayoga*), and come into the state of supernatural "knowing" called *jnana*, the same state called *gnosis* by the Greeks. This is direct, immediate realization of Reality, touching of the deepest Mind. This occurs through, and with, "purification of heart" (*chitta-Shuddhi*).

The origin of yoga was, in ancient times, traced to one of the "gods," or "people of the stars," named Hiranyagarbha. He taught human beings methods for curbing their "outgoing" minds, and bringing the mind back to its mystical Center. This all begins with introspection, or turning the senses away from outer stimuli, and focusing them all on the interior Self, with concentration. Paradoxically, by going very deeply into the deepest Mind, one can go "beyond mind." There, at the very core of Mind, one finds a state or condition called "divinity," and one is "deified." One then becomes a pure, stainless mirror of Love, having discovered an inner "ocean" of light and Love.

The Mind, by its active and creative nature, is continuously transforming its own substance, or "mind-stuff," into objects. Yoga is the suppression by discipline of this tendency. Instead of spraying, scattering, projecting, or exteriorizing Mindenergy into the "world," the yogi(ni) seeks to call it back, introspectively, to the Self, and concentrate, distill, or coalesce it there, within the Self. Like other forms of mysticism, yoga draws attention away from the "outer, material" world and directs it instead to the inner Mind, the Creator/Dreamer. Yoga demands tenacity, and steady, continual practice. But its promise is well worth it, for it will become an inner Fountain of unlimited peace, bliss, knowledge, and Love.

Yoga is not all done suddenly, but it occurs in increments or steps. The mental "ladder" has many rungs, but at its top is the supreme goal, the very highest superconscious state (*asamprajnata samadhi*). In this state, impressions (*samskaras*) from the environment evaporate and vanish. Then, as the Origin or Dreamer, one lives forever in unutterable, indescribably delicious bliss, tranquillity, and Love.

This is the promise of the various forms of *ashtangayoga*. This is yoga of eight parts. These parts are: voluntary self-restraint (*yama*), spiritual observances (*niyama*), postures or positions (*asanas*), breathing, control or restraint (*pranayama*), turning inward of the senses (*pratyehara*), inner concentration or focus (*dharana*), meditation or mind-clearing (*dhyana*), and total absorption in core-Mind or ultimate Self (*samadhi*).

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 33/ ONE WITH THE ONE, 2: MORE NOTES ON YOGA

\*\*\*

As the flowers, yoga has blossomed into a polychromatic splendor of many forms or types. The forms of yoga developed during the past six thousand years can be divided into the following kinds: karmayoga is service to the Real by serving others. No results are **sought**. Instead, every act is simply laid on the "heartaltar of Love." Upasanayoga or *bhaktiyoga* are different names for the yogas of devotion, in which one chooses a particular form or image of the Imageless Absolute, and concentrates all devotion through that image. (Common examples relate the Invisible to Jesus and Krishna.) Rajayoga, the "king" of yogas, is regular meditation or mind-clearing without any object (but it might make use of a *mantra*, or repeated phrase). Finally, *jnanayoga* is the yoga of direct, immediate, experiential "knowing of the One," the touching of the deepest core-Mind, ultrultimate Reality, or the inner Absolute.

Mantrayoga is a special classification, and is a meditative practice that uses the repetition of a syllable or syllables to "clear the mind" of conscious content. This is in order to permit direct penetration into, or communication with, the deeper levels of the unconscious Mind, including the Superconscious (*Brahman*).

Layayoga is the yoga of mindabsorption, when the tiny egomind is actually drawn into the larger superstructure of the unconscious Mind. *Laya* means "dissolution," and refers to the dissolving of the egomind in the Absolute, core-Mind, or Superconscious. A popular subsystem within Layayoga is *kundaliniyoga*. In this form, energy is awakened at the bottom of the spine, and allowed to energize certain points or *chakras*, which also lie along the spine. The last, highest of these energycenters is at the top of the head.

Another subsystem of Layayoga is nada anusandhana, concentration on the mystic sounds of the heart. Egomind, under the influence of this form of yoga, loses its identity as separate. It is then recognized as illusion.

Hatha (pronounced "haht'-hah") yoga is the yoga of physical body-postures. Their purpose is to make one "forget" the body, transcending it. The body is used, paradoxically, to leave the body behind, as one flows into profound altered states. The goal, as in all yogas, is mystical enlightenment.

*Hatha* is closely related to pranayama (breath-regulation). *Pranayama* purifies the pranayama-kosha ("vital sheath"), one of the energyfields surrounding the physical body. It also purifies the *yoganadis* ("astral nerves," microscopic lines of force that criss-cross every millimeter of the body). It also creates a condition of stability known as "steadying of the mind" (*Chitta ekagrata*). Symbolically, *hatha* refers to the "union of the sun and the moon," or the male and female energies within every person. This also refers, by extension, to the union of *prana* ("energy" from air)

and apana-Vayus ("vital airs").

In common usage, the word *hatha* means "determined." It implies tenacity. When a person in India is being stubborn, for example, it is said, "He does hatha." The implication of the word *hatha* is that one is "tenaciously sticking to" some spiritual practice.

Yoga is designed specifically as a spiritual, not a physical exercise. So, sometimes, it is accompanied by other spiritual practices, such as *mouna*, a vow of silence. Another spiritual training exercise that helps to cultivate yogic concentration of mind is *trataka*, or "gazing." (By extension, this word also means "crystalgazing.") Many commentators say that *hathayoga* is designed to lead a person, and prepare her, to take up *rajayoga*.

"Yoga" comes from the root yuj, "to join," and shares a root with the English "yoke." The ultimate purpose of yoga is to join the individual soul with the cosmic soul or Spirit, the core-Mind, Absolute, or Superconscious. When this state is discovered and entered, the "world of appearances" (*samsara*) is no longer mistaken for Reality. Because of its many effects on psychology and understanding, even before it brings one to this state, it does away with many pains and much misery. For it is a system of spiritual psychology. And, unlike other approaches in psychology, yoga promises ultimate freedom from dominance by environments, or by the "world."

Union, or fusion, with the inner Absolute is the goal of all life. The deepest inner Mind, called Ishwara, is invincible. It is invulnerable to changes in the environment. This inner Coremind or Absolute is what is indicated by the most sacred syllable in all history, *om*. *The sound of this tiny word is said to contain, and to unlock, great inner Power. In fact, simply repeating this sound is itself a form of yoga.*

In the Vedanta-sara Upanishad, it says, "This world is unreal. It is mere appearance. The *jiva* [individual soul] is identical with ... Braahman [universal soulmind].... Meditate on *om* with *bhava*, and realize the Self in this very second.

When this realization grows absolute and perfect, you will awaken to the fact that You are the Dreamer. You are, in short, everything and everyone whom you encounter. This is the meaning of the famous trilogic formula, *Tat tvam asi*. ["Thou art that."] This means that your Mind is inside everything that you encounter, for You are dreaming up the entire world. There is nothing outside the Self, and so You "are" everything that you see.

All that is necessary for this inner higher Self to shine through is the eradication of ignorance (*ajnana*). All things visible to the eyes are like a mirage in the desert, like the bubbles in the Ganges River, like lightning in a summer sky. None of this all around you is real. It is all a very complex, internally-generated "virtual" reality.

As a parable, when gold is purified in fire, it shines with a luminous splendor. That is because the shine of gold is intrinsic to the metal. It is within it. You need not add any gold color to the fire to make this happen. It is simply natural for gold to

shine. In the same way, the higher, perfect Self already exists within you. You cannot possibly add to It or make It richer. It shines not by selfimprovement, but by selfabnegation, or egodeath.

It is natural for this Self to shine. You don't have to do anything, to add anything, to try to "create" this luster. Just remove the impurities or impediments, and You will shine. **This is not a matter of trying.** It happens spontaneously.

This Self or soul is called the "Selfeffulgent Atman," and it is the "silent witness" to your life, watching from within your own psyche. It is pure, invisible, unchanging, eternal, indivisible, filled, self-contained, and an embodiment of peace and bliss.

It is called *sat*, "being," because it is never affected by time. It is called *chit*, which is "consciousness," because it knows itself and others. It "illuminates" the world of material objects by perceiving them. And it is called *ananda*, "bliss," because that is its only nature.

This Upanishad continues, "This world is a fair for two days. This life is play for two seconds. This body is a bubble for three seconds. ... Lands, wealth, power, name [and] house...are like things in a dream,...They are evanescent and transitory, like a mushroom."

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 34/ SINGING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC VERSUS LETHAL MATERIALISM

\*\*\*

If I were to type the word "great" a thousand times, it would not even begin to indicate the joy and glory of the inner journey. Compared with the resplendent and glorious inner Self, the "external, material" world is indeed as evanescent and transitory as a mushroom. Language cannot touch the mystical state, for it is so far elevated above anything that words can describe. Even the most vivid, tender, ennobling poetry of mindbending Love and ecstasy cannot capture its essence. But there is one form of artistic expression that comes a little closer, and that is music. Since music is expressed through the human body as song, mystics have long used song to enhance their inner, especially audiorevelational, experiences.

Singing, at its best, is like meditation. It is not only a spiritual art, but can lift us into altered states of consciousness, as well as expressing those states. At times, it can cause us to soar so "high" that we might actually approach the periphery of the higher Self or soul.

Here, analogies can be confusing, for the "higher" we become, the "deeper" into the Mind we must plunge. Music, and song, can trigger in us a resonance to the movement of the cosmos. That, in turn, can serve to awaken the deepest Core of the Mind, cosmic Mind or "God." So, music can aid us to plunge directly into the experience of the Absolute, where we can "know" Reality with *gnosis* or *jnana*. (These

are the Greek and Sanskrit names, respectively, for the special kind of knowing that is purely mystical.)

When we drift away from creativity, as expressed in music, art, poetry, and song, we drift away from the inner Fountain or Source of all creativity. We slipslide away from the higher Mind, Self, or soul.

This tragedy of losing touch with our Selves is largely the result of materialism. It infects people not only as philosophy, but as lifestyle. As a philosophy, it manifests as the "nbc universe," which is the "Newtonian-Baconian-Cartesian" paradigm. This is an antique view, and is already, even as these words are being written, passing into the museums of ossified history. It is a materialistic view. It says that the universe consists of random objects, randomly evolved, interacting randomly, and hence, devoid of meaning. In this view, you are simply one of innumerable "objects" in a universe filled with objects. Actually, you are not even a very big object, and it is certain that you are by no means important. From the material viewpoint of earth relative to the galaxy, your body is no larger than a bacterium. Compared with the cosmos as a totality, you are no bigger, or more significant, than the tiniest molecule.

This view is discouraging, and leads to despair. It becomes easy to see why materialism is souldeadening and mind-numbing. Materialism is lethal to spirituality, and vice-versa.

Materialism as a lifestyle or lifepattern is equally soulcrushing. For its offspring is greed, the source of any number of spiritual fatalities. "Every person for herself" and "the survival of the fittest" are two of the most damaging and destructive forms that this philosophy often takes. Another form is the arrogant and selfish complacency of "I've got mine, to hell with you."

Greed transforms people of potential sweetness and light into selfserving monsters. They then care nothing about their fellow human beings. But materialism need not be quite so vicious in order to promote its pathologies and souldestruction. For it also comes in more subtle and "benign" forms. In this sickness, more serious than heartdisease or cancer, people become lost in a fog of unconcern and selfservice. Their "kingdom" or lifecenter becomes their tiny lives. These people never stop buying more or newer clothes, newer and shinier cars, or more "stuff" for their "collections." Since they have lost all meaning in their lives, they actually "worship" material things. In "improving" their personal lives, they forget that other people, with much greater needs, also share this planet. These ill people use up non-renewable resources as if there were no tomorrow. They are wasters, who do not practice recycling. At their worst and most pathological, they actually dismiss ecological concern as a "liberal," and hence, unreal, ideal. They care nothing for the rights of animals, which they dismiss as "silly," and are usually so busy improving their houses that they neglect those who live inside. While contracting to expand and



build rooms onto their houses, they contract their minds. They often end in an inner hell of splendid isolation, and lonely abundance. Their view of the universe tends to be narrow and exclusivistic. They are superior), but paralyzed. These people never grow.

Materialism is spiritual paralysis, an unwillingness but not an inability to develop and grow. It really contrasts quite stunningly with the mystical dreamuniverse. The Navajo shamans speak a great mystical reality when they say, "You are the center of the universe." A bit more accurately, "You are the center of your universe."

Since the world is a mindworld, not a free-floating and random nbc universe, it all comes from within you. It lives within your mind. "Outside" is an illusion, analogous to a "psychoptic illusion." For space itself is a projection of inner Mind, exactly as matter is.

Since there is nothing outside yourself, and the main purpose of life is to learn to love yourself, you must try to love all. For everything is Your projection. And to love the Dreamer completely is to love **everything** in his/her dream. So, if you hate anything, you are actually hating and rejecting a part of yourself. You become hopelessly incomplete, and of a double mind. This "bipsychic" or double-souled condition, creates only confusion and pain.

The only solution is to unify all parts of the mind, and the only way to do this is to cultivate the ability to love. For only Love is the great power of fusion or union. When you have united self with Self, you can then dissolve the little self or ego. Then only the higher Self, or soul, will remain. Your identity will have been fundamentally altered. You will be reborn as a birthless, deathless, timeless being.

This is identification with the soul. It is a powerful and positive inner shift. But it is only a phase, not the goal, of the interior journey. The mystic wants to go even further. She wants to go more deeply into the Mind, all the way down, until she "hits bottom." That is, she wants to touch the Coremind, the indivisible Center. This is the Absolute or Spirit, the Ultrultimate or Reality (Truth), the Dreamer or Creator.

## Chapter 35/ LOVE IS LIKE A MELODY: INNER SOUNDS OF SILENCE

\*\*\*\*\*

In those magical, mystical days of yore, God seemed closer to earth. Science and hitech had not yet repelled Him/Her into the distant stars, and it seemed that He/She could be found in every rainbow, could speak from every flower. Because it was less materialistic, in many ways, the medieval mindset was a bit more conducive to the mystical than is that of the twenty-first century. So, much of the cultural heritage from this time-period can teach us some things-- perhaps even lessons of cosmic import. This applies even to such "minor" matters as its music. Richard Rolle (1300-1349), the "father of English mysticism," continually uses musical analogs

to describe the wonder of his indescribable inner states of bliss. He likens "joyous and awakened Love," known by the mystic only when her period of "purification" has ended, to a "state of song." Richard, unlike so many other mystics, does not seem so much to see the mystical state and its wonders as to hear them. He calls this state a "heavenly melody, intolerably sweet." He was the tender, sensitive recipient of audiorevelation. When sweet divine Love overcame him, he said, "thought into song is turned." "The mind" itself, he continued, "into full sweet sound is changed."

His God was not just the great Lover and Dreamer, but the great Singer. Like the Hindu and Norse gods, He/She "sang the world" into existence. When He/She was known by gnosis, both the mind and the world melted into melody. Rolle went so far as to say that the mystic, in joy and exultation, did not even pray as others. Instead, she expressed and was overwhelmed by "marvelous mirth and goodly sound." "Descended" into the divine Mind, "with notes His prayers he sings."

Gertrude More (1606-1633) might have been speaking literally when she referred to a "song of Love." This was the paradoxical song learned through deep silence. One of the transitional lifepassages described by mystics was the passage from burning Love (*calor*) to "song Love" (*cantor*).

In one of his mystical experiences, Richard Rolle felt himself to be surrounded by singers. Unconscious of the cause or effect, abruptly "in me the sound of song I felt."

The God of the mystic has no real image, and so He/She is quite incommunicable to others. Melody or sound might also be said to be nebulous in a similar way, and so might come closer to a portrayal of the One than any number of wordpaintings. But the truth is, this God is so formless that He/She cannot be actually represented at all, even symbolically.

Mystics paint a picture of the glass of water that satisfies their thirst, but that painting cannot really satisfy thirst. They have developed a "menu" of divine delicacies, but no one can satisfy real hunger by eating menus.

This is why real mysticism cannot be reduced to, or even identified too much with, visions and voices. In many, if not most, mystical states, the divine is perceived much more subtly than this. Because it is the deepest level of the inner Mind, one would suspect that its presentation would be subtle. And it is. Many mystics see no literal "visions," and hear no voices. It is only through deep ignorance that these phenomena are seen as necessary or inevitable mystical accoutrements by the public.

Most often, the "still small voice of God" is not a voice at all, but a feeling. This is the essence of the mystical experience: It is a sudden but major shift in feeling-tone.

Feelings and perceptions about the self and the world undergo radical transmutation. A feeling of unutterable freedom, sometimes gilded around the edges with bliss, arises in the midst of the experience. Those borders, such as skin, that usually divide one from the rest of the world are neutralized in mind, or even

disappear. One is struck by the sudden realization that the entire cosmos is not "out there," or "over there." It has never been outside the Mind, and never will be. The reality of this new perspective, that the cosmos is a "projection" of Mind, hits the mystic like a ton of bricks. She is then enveloped in a sweetness and tranquillity that are bottomless, and feels genuine and profound Love for all beings.

All these radical shifts occur within mere seconds, or minutes, during the mystical experience. The mystic might feel even overloaded, at least consciously. But everything is so "okay," **almost nothing matters**. The world slips or falls away, like an old snakeskin. Past and future drop away, leaving only the "eternal now," which is too small even to quantify, for the moment that you can even say "now," it is gone. But it is still now.

All of this has no appropriate symbol or image. The mystic uses symbol and image simply to communicate her all-important experience with others. This is simply because she cares about, loves, others. She wants, is eager, to share the most exciting and enjoyable event that has ever happened to her.

The mystic also realizes that what has happened to her, with all its glory and ecstatic joy, freedom, peace, and bliss, can happen to others. So, one reason why mystics are driven to try to describe the indescribable is out of Love. Love prompts them to want to have, or even to invite, everyone to join in this exquisite experience of purity and Love. Ecstasy loves company.

To help people enter this altered state, and taste of this delicious inner fruit, a number of systems have been developed for altering brain-function in healthy ways. Drumming is one of these psychotechnologies. It spans many cultures on every continent, and during every century. Perhaps Africans and native Americans are best known for drumming, but it existed in every other culture, at one time.

Rhythm, like music, has the ability to lull the mind into altered, very restful, states. The iron doors that separate the conscious from the unconscious Mind begin to dissolve, and what was formerly unconscious "floats up" to the level where it is made aware. In turn, the conscious mind is allowed to "descend" quite deeply into the "private sea" of inner Mind. At times, while doing "deep-sea diving," the conscious mind is allowed to catch glimpses even of the Spirit, far below.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 36/ MYSTICAL MYSTERIES: SOME MORE IDENTIFYING MARKS

\*\*\*

Rhythm and pulse fill the cosmos, from the syncopated spin of electron orbits to the throbbing of pulsars and galaxies. Like the beating of the heart, or the rhythm of the drum, the mystical life moves in resonant harmony with larger systems of the cosmos. For her, as for all life, everything happens in phases and cycles, but she

tends to be more aware of them. For one example, many sensitives are moon-sensitive. (Not all sensitives are mystics, but all mystics are of the "sensitive type.")

The mystic, at her zenith, feels resonant harmony with all the rhythms of nature and the world. Others, coming close to her, tend to have their own nervous and mental systems fall into a state of entrainment or energetic harmony. So, in their minds, they reflect the mind of the mystic. As noted, this often results in some notable form of healing. If not, it might remain unconscious.

There can be no real doubt that a genuine mystical experience results in change, often profound transformation. This result is also a sign that the mystical experience is genuine. William James, the pioneering psychologist, recognized four factors that, he said, always marked the real thing: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity.

This might actually be true, but some have found this simplistic and unsatisfying. So, Underhill suggests that these be replaced by: 1) active and practical, not, as James said, passive. The experience is not theoretical, but has real results that alter for the better everyday life. 2) Its aims are transcendental and spiritual. It lifts self-definition out of the ordinary world, restructuring identity as the "incarnation of Love." Its aim is not self-improvement, or making better of anything in the physical world. 3) The One is, for the mystic, not only Reality, but often appears as a living and loving object of the mystic's personal Love. It draws her to her inner "home," under heart-direction. 4) Living union with this One is a definite lifepattern guided by Love. This union or fusion is not reducible to intellectual or mere emotional processes. While these must be present, they are not enough. 4) True mystical union arises from an arduous and prolonged process of spiritual growth and discipline. It is the result of mental training, and exploration, and preparation, of inner space.

The mystic Way is the process that permits, or prepares the mind for, the onset of mystical fusion. This process either liberates a latent, dormant form of consciousness from deep within the psyche, or else it creates a new form altogether. In most, it is probably the former. This utter metamorphosis brings, in time, ecstasy, bliss, or the "unitive state."

Since the experience that marks and defines it is objective as well as subjective, mysticism is much more than a mere opinion. It has much to say about the inner state of the psyche, about its depths and levels. By extension of this principle, it educates about the cosmos, and about the transcendental Absolute at the Core of the mind.

The objective factor enters because so many people have had similar experiences, or essentially the same one, for so many centuries. So, mystical experiences and states are facts of psychology and spirituality, not just fantasies, illusions, or pleasant dreams.

Mysticism gives birth to a guiding philosophy. It arises from a deep interpenetration by the principle of Love. This appears in many varieties, and at many power-levels. So, while mysticism itself is not a mere philosophy, it creates in the experienter a special knowledge of "agapology." This is the psychology of Love, which does blossom into a guiding "love of wisdom."

Mysticism concerns the most basic, essential, fundamental Mysteries of life and Mind. But public ignorance, and the universal misuse of the word "mysticism" is woeful, backwards, and inaccurate. For example, mysticism and psychism are very different. Psychism still concerns itself with the things of this world. Mysticism is interested only in the components of the inner world, and human relations and reactions to Love. (All that these two share in common, in fact, is that they are inner pursuits.) Mystics care nothing about the development of "powers" such as telepathy or precognition. Mystics do not teach that psychism is "evil," but simply that it is inferior to the Way, and will tend to paralyze the student at a lower level of development.

Mysticism is not just the intellectual, or even the poetic, ruminations about eternity. Nor is it just some unorthodox religious perspective. These false definitions are just yet more examples of public and ignorant abuse of the word "mysticism." Astonishingly, this abuse and misuse are often promoted by otherwise educated people, which only makes a bad situation worse.

So what is mysticism? It is the quest for fullest union and integration of the Mind, the quest to unite the conscious Mind with the deepest Coremind, which is Love. It is the natural, inner, organic process that involves the perfect fulfillment of Love. That is why it "pushes every button" in the entire psyche. It is that for which we were created, the satisfaction of our most basic needs, summed up as the "will to Love." Mysticism implies the "here and now," or immediate, achievement of the deepest heritage of the human race. It has been called the "immortal heritage," by Underhill.

Mysticism is the art of establishing a fully conscious relation, and ultimately, Mindmeld, with the deep and unconscious Absolute, the inner Creator, Spirit, or Love-nature.

The mystical experience is not always an explosive or dazzling event "out of the blue." Instead, it is usually an ordered, sequential, incremental movement, by steps, to higher and higher levels of Realityperception, culminating in a mystical event. So, a person can have more than one dynamic vision of the inner Mind, and each can represent a different level of "revelation," truth, and intensity. The overall goal must never be forgotten: Mystical experiences are not "spiritual entertainment," to make one feel good. The overall goal is fullest **identification** with the inner Infinite or Absolute.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Joy to the world, dead to the world. Both are mystical gifts. Fully to enjoy unification with the deepest inner Mind, the mystic must become as dead as the proverbial doornail to the external world of sense. Only a genuine mystical experience can end with the famous declaration of an ancient mystic: "I live, but no longer I, but God in Me." When at last, the self is identified with the Absolute, in mystical psychology, this is called the "term of identification."

This is a major paradox: Consciousness finds itself aware of being unified with a Superconscious Mind that is simultaneously greater than itself, by a factor of infinity, and yet strangely, identical with that self. Under the "commonsense" conditions of the everyday world, this would be quite impossible, for it seems totally illogical, even antilogical. But in the spiritual or inner universe, it happens exactly this way. And, as that cosmos is literally supersensible, it does not have to "make sense."

This new fusion identity is at once, to restate the paradox, great enough to be God, but intimate enough to be "Me." This mystical union is the fullest flowering of mystical Love, its end and goal.

This is why mysticism is not **just** philosophy or religion. It insists on the action-component, which means that "mysticism" is something to be **done**, not just something to be believed or thought about, or even felt. It is deeply intimate and personal, not something that can be shared, or probably even known, by large, impersonal organizations. This is a major reason why mysticism has never fossilized or ossified into a separate religion, and never will.

Mysticism is the core-belief essential to many of the most profound faiths of the world. It is the very matrix of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. It was an intrinsic and essential aspect of original Christianity, which was a form of "small g" gnosticism.

It is also widely represented in the "jewels of Islam," itself a non-mystical tradition, as "small s" sufism. And in Judaism, it appeared as Kabbalism.

Mysticism, although it contains and implies teachings, is not a body of doctrine, dogma, or teachings. Instead, like Taoism and early Christianity, it is a "Way." Mysticism is often called the Way by its adherents.

It is, above all things, an experience. It is intense, vital, and final. It is experience in its purest and most intense form. It is the "highest high" of which the human brainmind is capable.

Like all the greatest events of life-- birth, good feelings, sex, altered states-- it is an intensely personal experience. However much you might love another, you cannot take her with you on your personal inward journey. You cannot "give" her your mystical experience. Like eating, drinking, and sleeping, it is a personal and solitudinous pursuit.

When you go into your own mind, you must go alone. That is why Plotinus famously called mysticism "the flight of the alone to the alone." It's a catchy phrase, and has some truth in it. But the Mind of the Absolute is never literally "alone." On the other hand, if viewed through Hindu mystical tradition, this Absolute is the "One without a second," and so is always "alone." This is yet another example of that bane of spiritual truth, which nonetheless makes it more fascinating--paradox.

To be a real mystic is no piece of cake. It is a challenging, rough, often tortuous life. It requires much inner discipline, much commitment, much attention and focus.

While it is true that mystics believe that they have discovered a truth of ultimate importance, just cognitively knowing this truth does not by any means make one a "mystic." A genuine mystic will know this truth, true, but it will be because she has discovered it, not because she has learned it. A true mystic must have submitted to the interior travail of the evolution of mystical consciousness. She must structure into her mind discipline, training, and mindfulness.

So, beware: Just as not all "spiritual teachers" are reliable and trustworthy, but are often frauds, fakes, and charlatans, so there are many falsely labelled "mystics." People often claim to be "mystics" because they feel that this will impress others. But since the real mystic has **no interest whatsoever** in impressing human beings, you can be certain that this marks a fraud.

Some others who fake it do so because they genuinely realize that mysticism is the very zenith, the jewel, of spirituality. But it is much easier to say that one is a mystic than to undergo the arduous training, renunciation, and deprivation of the genuine Way.

A couple of things to look for if someone claims to be a mystic, and you want or need to know the truth: No mystic will engage in egotistic activity. Gurus who distribute photos of their egofaces are indulging in a shameful form of egotism, betraying their own selfloathing. Avoid any "guru" who advertises him/herself, or anyone who claims to have any kind of special exclusive relationship with the Infinite. Also, avoid anyone claiming to have special "powers." Avoid anyone who calls him/herself a teacher, but then talks about, and tries to draw attention to, him/herself. Avoid all "publicity-hounds," who are filled with obvious pride because they have been the teachers of famous celebrities.

Also, a true mystic will never be greedy. So, avoid all self-styled "teachers" who over-charge for their work. While mystics, like others, need funds to live, no real mystic will fall into the demonic and hurtful snare of trying to get rich. Again, being egoless, mystics do not want literal spotlights shining on them. They do not grub for attention, or try to impress the "crowd." They will not invite large crowds to hear them, and then, charge money to every person attending, to add up to thousands of dollars. Real mystics live in utter simplicity, and so, do not need much money. And they do not want more than they need. This makes real mystics stand out like

elephants at an ant-carnival. For they have sincerely and permanently renounced greed and materialism.

Thirdly, no real mystic will ever take advantage of power over students. No real mystic will **ever**, under **any** conditions, take sexual advantage of a student.

So, if you see any of these factors-- ego, greed, or abuse of power-- in any self-proclaimed spiritual leader or teacher, run, don't walk, away from that person. For she will not only **not** take you to "heaven," but will assuredly take you to "hell."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 38/ READING, TALKING, WRITING, AND WALKING MYSTICISM: THE ARDUOUS CHALLENGE OF THE WAY

\*\*\*

Lovers of all, of the world, of nature, citizens of the galaxy-- these hallmarks, not intellectual or religious criteria-- mark the true mystic. Some philosophers are not mystics, and many mystics are not philosophers. Most Platonic speculators, for example, were not mystics. Very fortunately (or, perhaps blessedly) for us, some mystics did ruminate about the "big" questions, leaving behind their writings.

These people tell us that we are all on a predestined journey. The road leads from the outer world to the inner, and the freeways of the mind are clearly marked by those who have come before. To move, as they say, from the life of "sense" to the life of spirit, is no easy voyage. Nor is it quick. In our culture of "instant" coffee, tea, oatmeal, etc., there is no such thing as "instant" enlightenment. I am well aware that certain gurus say that this is possible, often by gazing at a photo of their egofaces. I have an explanation for this: They are lying. For this is an absurdity of the highest order. These are the types of gurus, in fact, who "fleece" their followers, and who practice egotism and greed. So, they already have "three strikes" against them. I'd say it's time to call them "out," and put them out-- of business, permanently.

For the genuine article, the path to true illumination, demands much effort, commitment, steadiness, tenacity, and constancy. It does NOT demand conversion to any particular faith, religion, or philosophy. And it has nothing to do with the narrow gurucults.

Again, and not surprisingly, it involves yet another paradox: "paradoxical quiet." This means that outer stillness or silence is the mark of inner hard work. Still waters contain the Spirit.

The mystic "wannabe" can learn only so much by study. Words and speech can take her to some beautiful interior places in her psyche. But sooner or later, the Way will call her to take up the actual inner activity of personal exploration and experimentation. This is indispensable, and a mystic is always marked by the fact



that she does not just talk, but "**walks** the talk."

There comes a time in the life of every mystic when books and words-- even books such as the present one, on the target-topic of mysticism-- can no longer fill the bill.

Books start to seem dreary, old, and boring. One starts to feel that they will never be enough. And it is true. As much as I want people to read these words, I must be completely honest: You can never **learn** your way into the inner "kingdom of light." You must **work** your way in, and **love** your way in.

When the idea of more books starts to make you feel a dull throbbing pain in your head, or an empty weariness, that is the signal from your inner self that you are now ready for actual experience. You might want even to give your books away. Please do not throw them away. This would create a double problem: 1) You would be wasting books that could really help others, and 2) you would be contributing to the massive waste-material glutting the planetary environment. So, when you have reached this point in your spiritual development, do yourself and the world a favor: Give your books away.

According to the old mystical classic called the *Theologia Germanica*, no one can come to mysticism through mere "reading and study." Nor, says this work, is "great learning" any real advantage. Education, of course, has its valid place, even in the mystical journey. The "trip" begins there, but it certainly does not by any means end there. Books are good and wise, insofar as they can aid the person to discover the inner road, that long and winding road to the Center. But books cannot take you all the way.

Books are useful. They are like steps that lead to a beautiful and comfortable bedroom. But if one sleeps on the steps, she has missed the point entirely. Besides which, she will never really be comfortable!

Even the highest and best mystics have recognized the enormous value and immense usefulness of books. This is proved beyond doubt by the fact that they themselves often wrote books. Lao Tzu, mystical representative of the most reticent and nonverbal form of mysticism, Taoism, wrote a book to aid those who came later. The Upanishads of India were written by the greatest, highest caliber mystics. Solomon, a great Hebrew mystic, according to legend, wrote Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs (Canticles) in the Hebrew Scriptures. Mystics also wrote the great Sutras of Buddhism, and the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The point is, mystics do not regard books as "evil," or as stumbling-blocks on the road to the Absolute. They know just how extremely valuable books can be. When you need books for guidance, nothing else will do. Historically, mystics have been big on books, great and prolific bookwriters.

Writing can, in fact, be a manifestation of the Absolute. This occurs when a book "writes itself," as every great book has done. The mystical writer considers herself "inspired," literally, "in-spirited." This does not mean that she is infallible. It simply

means that she is writing reliable truth, dependable perspectives about Reality. This is especially necessary when writing about mysticism, the Absolute, the Mind, and deeper spirituality. I don't know whether I would trust a book about these subjects if it were written in the usual way-- the "grunt and groan," laborious, time-consuming, inefficient "piecing together" of individual data, and then, the gigantic, time consuming, labor intensive task of weaving these facts together into a coherent whole.

The mystical experience is not merely a pleasing, sweet sense of the "divine" everywhere in the world. In the final analysis, it will include this perception, but mysticism is anything but a breezy, airy, effortless or lazy "sinking down" into inertia. It causes one to grapple with evil, pain, confusion, and uncertainty. Religion, compared to mysticism, is a real cake-walk. In fact, mysticism, by contrast, is the most difficult and challenging of all spiritual paths. But the reward is invincibility, topped by bliss.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 39/ "MIND-POWER," ABUNDANCE, THE WAY, AND MAGIC

\*\*\*

"I want it all." These words, spoken by a spoiled American "princess," usually imply a shallow mind comfortable only in the wadingpools of Mind. But to the mystic, they imply that the best of Love and the best of life and joy are fully compatible. Mysticism is the "best of both worlds-- Love and joy." It is at once a path of total Love and of absolute, ultimate surrender, holding nothing back. All mystical varieties of the Way involve the renunciation of the greedgame. So, if you are not serious about the Way, this is a challenge that you will not successfully meet. For as long as the value of your self remains attached to job, intellect, car, house, social status, income, neighborhood, or any "external" or "material" factor, you are already off the path.

**Mysticism is entirely spiritual.** That means that if you have to give up some material thing(s) to walk the path in integrity, there is no contest: The material "stuff" that's holding you back must go. The ancient mystic Paul said that he considered the loss of all things to be insignificant when compared with the glory of the Way, and that all his "valuable" losses were like so much trash.

Be careful here. Some people have tried to "spiritualize" their greed. Not that they have tried to justify greed on spiritual grounds. This would be impossible for even the most clever of wordmasters. They have, instead, fully accepted and surrendered to their greed as if this were normal, as if it held the place of the Ultimate. In fact, it far too often does hold that place in the average life, but it is a god that must fail miserably. This is antimystical, for it is antiagapic (against Love).

"Thoughts are things, and things thoughts," they like to say, in a timeworn cliché that still passes for cleverness in some circles. But it is at this point that they make their gigantic mistake: Knowing that the world is the creation of Mind, they assume that because the ego wants something, then that want must represent the divine will. Clinging to ego and desire, they deny and contradict the very essence of the mystical Way-- minimizing desire, and surrendering ego to the One.

Then begins the process that arises from the ludicrous and greedbased assumption that "ego is God." They begin strenuously to affirm, say their magical prayers, or do their magical rituals. All of this they do to assure themselves of personal "abundance"-- their euphemism for selfishness and greed run amuck.

They have found their inner master, and it is not Love, but greed. Since as the true Master said historically, "You cannot serve two masters... God and money," they have turned their backs on Reality, and flatly contradict it. Remember that they do all this in the name of "spiritual" endeavor. Some even abuse such terms as "mystic masters," because it gives their silly ideas a ring of exoticity and authenticity.

These pseudomystical systems are not even historically or traditionally related to genuine mysticism. Instead, they are related, in a direct line of descent from a very different tradition--magic. Even in its most exalted forms, magic never becomes mystical, and never overlaps with it. Stated variantly, magic is never spiritual. The many forms, in fact, called collectively "black magic" are clearly unspiritual and antiagapic.

What about "white" magic, used only for good? Schools of magic seek to "improve" the material, physical, visible world by appealing to a similar interior world to that of the mystic. But while the mystic goes straight for the gold at the Center, the Coremind, magicians waste timenergy playing with archetypes and powers that dwell in the profound but still more superficial collective unconscious.

While the mystic's goals are selfless, the magician's are selfish. She wants to increase her personal power and control, while the mystic wants to let go of and surrender all control. The magician wants to make her personal will the "god" of the universe, as is true in extremist "affirmation" and even "positive thinking" schools. This path is directly opposite to that of the mystic, whose major aim is to fuse and lose her personal will in the union with the greater will. For the mystic, direct intuition of the Absolute is lethal to all her lesser and personal cravings. The enlightened, truly mystical Buddhist seeks to "annihilate cravings," but the magician seeks to satisfy them. Her ego, far from vanishing into the Mind of the Absolute, is set up as a monstrous "false god" by whom she is enthralled to serve.

The mystic is willing to throw her timenergy without a second thought into the service of life and of human beings. She wants only to become an "agent" for the eternal and the good. She is stripped bare of all ambitions for expansion or elevation of her ego. This too is the polarized opposite of magic.

The mystic is also unlike the magician in that she craves no occult knowledge of personal power. In fact, the mystic most often turns deliberately away from the silly metaphysics usually indicated by that antique word "occult." For so many metaphysicists have used it for so long to play hollow games. They have hinted at the possession of "secret knowledge" that they never reveal "because the world is not yet ready for it." Usually, they are frauds and phonies, with nothing really new to share.

They simply hide their shameful ignorance of real spiritual principles under the catch-all bushel-basket of the word "occult." These are the same kind of antics that make the overuse of the word "secrets," or even the distorted phrase, "mystical secrets," when they have nothing real or solid to teach.

The magician wants everything, the mystic nothing. The mystic's soul is "sunk" and "lost" in the inner Mind of the Deity or Absolute. The mystic seriously has stopped living as a separate ego. She has "died" into the Infinite. How can she then want anything? She has truly lost the sense of distinctions between creatures. Her mind has lost its boundaries. She does not know where "she" ends and the "other" begins, but suspects that the borders were artificial anyway. She has literally "become one" with all, in a sweet euphoria of union. Her being also has been so penetrated by and saturated with divine Mind that she has actually lost herself in this Mind. In a sense, she has "become" this mind. Losing her entire self, she has become everything and everyone.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Chapter 40/ THE WELL AND OCEAN OF PERFECT LOVE: MORE SIGNATURES OF THE TRUE MYSTIC

\*\*\*

When the mystic touches the Absolute, she vanishes. Like a drop of water in a bottle of strong wine, the mystic merges with the "substance" or Mind of the inner Absolute. Her soul is so "sunk in the abyss" of dazzling glory of the cosmic Mind that she loses all distinction between herself and her inner Love-nature with which she has merged

This is Tauler's "secret still union, without cloud or color." She loses all desire for anything to originate with her tiny self. Only what originates with the divine cosmic Mind is important, is real. This is Catherine of Genoa's "sweetest Love."

The great Sufi mystic Rabia (died 802) expressed a similar sentiment. She asked God to give to his "enemies" whatever portion of this world that she deserved. And whatever portion of the next world that she deserved, she asked be given to God's friends. She then concluded, "Thou art enough for me."

When a mystic touches, and then plunges naked into, the inner Fountain of Love, she is so fully satisfied that immediately she loses all other interests and desires.

That is why the voluntary renunciation of personal desire is also a preparation for enlightenment. The soul, says Plotinus, "amputates" everything else once it has found the inner Love, so utterly satisfied is it.

Only pure Love can satisfy all the needs of complex human beings. They must be saturated and drenched within an ocean of Love in order to be filled, for half-measures will never satiate the enormous thirst. And this Love is precisely the end, goal, and concern of mysticism. This fact sets true mysticism off from any other transcendental or spiritual pursuit.

This great "Love" is not merely sentiment or superficial affection. It is not just attraction. It is not sexual. It is instead a passion to surrender the self wholly, to give up the will itself, to want nothing else but the inner Beloved. It is created and amplified by access to the inner Fountain, connected to the inner Ocean, of Love. It can never be exhausted, for it is infinitely deep. Contact with this massive Love amplifies, humility. The results are more valid, when activated in even the most ignorant, than the most intellectual vision of the most influential people. So, God can be found only by reaching out with a heart full of love, passion, and desire for Reality, the Absolute. This can never manifest by mere intellect. That is sad and pale by comparison.

Underhill beautifully writes, "The jewels of mystical literature glow with this intimate and impassioned love of the Absolute." The mystic Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) wrote that Love was "great above all other goods....Naught is sweeter than love, naught stronger, naught higher,...There is no more joyous, fuller, or better thing in heaven or on earth. For love is born of God...The lover ... is free, and cannot be restrained. He gives all for all, and has all in all....'My God, my love, thou art all mine, and I am all thine.'"

The remarkable mystic, the Sufi Jalallu'Din (died 1273), wrote, in his usual poetic fashion, "While the thought of the Beloved fills our hearts, all our work is to do Him service.... God will ... seem to you a sweet garden,...He will infuse into your soul a new soul, so as to fill you like a goblet with wine Take up your abode in His soul,... O bright full moon...."

The mystic Tauler (1300-1361) stated it as clearly as possible: "The well of life is love, and he who dwelleth not in love is dead." This was the "perfect love" of union mentioned by Walter Hilton (died 1396).

This love burns in the heart, with warm sincerity. It has nothing to do with pious selfdisplay or attempts to impress others with one's religiosity. It is a real and concrete force that moves the mind and the body to service and friendship. When any soul comes to love the inner Perfection, and sees It, naturally that soul cannot love anything else as much. So, it lets go of, and even renounces, the material world. "To give all for love is a most sweet bargain," said Gertrude More (1606-1633). The love-writings of this mystic were patterned often after the love-songs of

Elizabethan poets. In poems to her God, she confessed that her love, their love shared, was indescribable. Never before did such a love exist, and it was beyond even the power of imagination, she said. Even angels could not describe this love. Only his praise could make her happy, and nothing could be a comfort when she was separate from Him. God, she said, was more hers than she was her own. "'O love, love, even by naming thee, my soul loseth itself in thee."

The mystic's worldview and feelings are those of the lover. The same components of uncontrolled responses, selfless devotion, Quixotic idealism, and the same blend of bliss and humility mark both the mystic and the lover. Only the passion and ardor of the mystic is far more heated, for the Object of her Love is even more immediately real. And It is Itself perfect, flawless Love. Nothing could be more natural or powerful within the psyche than the Love of Love.

Love permeates and saturates every phase of the mystical life. It is a clearly defined state of consistent consciousness, including joy and peace. The mystical experience is analogous; it is a clearly defined psychological event. But it is not just an "attitude," arising from, and formed by, the conscious mind. Instead, like the cosmos itself, it arises from deeper levels of the psyche, including the Absolute. In fact, mystics have often said that the mystical state was "Love calling to Love," or "God desiring God."

The experience of God or deep Love causes an entire restructuring and reorganization of Mind, both conscious and unconscious. This metamorphoses the total personality, along much improved lines. A major improvement of the revised, reformed mystical character is the absence of insatiable personal desires. But not all desires are useless. Inner desires, even if they are spiritual, are worthless only if they do not result in the process of mystical experience. Also, desires that do not honestly and fully serve Love are jettisoned.

So, a fullblown mystical experience has two facets:

1) an awareness of "perfection" in the Absolute, and 2) inner metamorphosis of the mystic. This occurs more perfectly to reflect the Perfect. Powerful, permanent changes in the mystic result from the sheer Power of exposure to the Absolute.

Spiritual transcendence is the only state that can link this Absolute with the soul. The soul then reflects or transmits this vision to the conscious mind. This linkup with the Absolute is the condition called by some mystics "sanctity."

Since the Absolute does not adapt to our needs and wants, the only alternative is for us to adapt to It. This, in turn, implies the cultivation of sincere inner sacred conditions of Mind.

Moral and ethical virtues must be defined, then sought, then cultivated. Immediately after the first mindblowing mystical experience, a desire for "moral perfection" is quickly born in the mystic. Unless this accompanies her vision, she is no real **mystic**.

She knows that the unconscious processes which made the inner "vision" possible are quite important. Cultivating these states of Mind must, in fact, become the new Center of her life. The goal of this inner "alchemy" will be to raise the process from an automatic one to one which she is able to influence. Then, union would be deliberate, conscious, and absolute.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 41/ THE REAL MYSTIC: ATTITUDES AND DISCOVERIES

\*\*\*

Real mystics are as rare as platinum hens' teeth. They are more precious and scarce than thousand-carat diamonds.

### CHARACTERISTICS THAT MARK THE TRUE MYSTIC:

To become a genuine mystic, one must have: 1) A strong desire and motivation to explore the world of the inner Mind, and to touch the Absolute. 2) A strongly moral or ethical, but not necessarily religious, and never fanatical, character. 3) A selfimage positive enough to believe herself both worthy and capable of the mystic "vision." 4) Love for herself and for all other creatures. 5) An appropriate psychological make-up, consisting in Love, sensitivity, empathy, compassion, tenacity, focus, concentration, etc. 6) A very high sense of goodness interwoven into her emotional nature. 7) A sensitive, somewhat artistic temperament, capable of sensing and recognizing ultimate beauty.

\*\*\*

The mystical process of development, which precedes the actual peak-experience, occurs in phases. Because these do not always arrive in sequence, or in time, the mystic type must be a durable, tenacious "bulldog" type who does not easily give up. The Way might involve several unsuccessful attempts to walk the trail. St. Theresa of Avila warns that the "cost" of mysticism is "rather dear."

Each stage is accompanied by a particular state of consciousness. The objective reality of mysticism is indicated by the fact that the same stages always produce the same states. This observation arises from the analysis of different schools of contemplation.

St. Theresa, for example, describes "orison" (inner prayer) as having "degrees." They are, in order of their occurrence: 1) recollection, 2) quiet union, 3) ecstasy, 4) rapture, 5) the "pain of God," 6) the "spiritual marriage" between the soul and God. ?This latter is "union with the Beloved."

True mysticism has nothing in it of selfseeking. No one becomes the real thing in pursuit of supernatural joys, ecstasies, hidden knowledge, or "mystical powers." The satisfaction of personal ambition is an unthinkable motive for a genuine mystic.

The real mystic is NEVER motivated by a search for the personal happiness (joy) of

the "beatific vision" or mystical experience. **She looks for no personal reward.** "O love, I do not wish to follow thee for the sake of these delights, but solely from the motive of true love," says St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510). St. John of the Cross is even more blunt: He calls those who seek personal rewards "spiritual gluttons." If anyone approaches this path with personal ambitions or desires, she is no mystic, but only a "wannabe" magician. The sincere seeker enters with no promises, and makes no demands. She has no expectations. She goes because she is driven to the gates of Love and Infinite in inner space. She will never again be able to rest from her search for union with the inner Beloved. St. Bernard (1090-1153) defined God as one who "can never be sought in vain, not even when he cannot be found." This means that the search for God has great value **even without visible results.** The quest itself produces patience, strength, wisdom, and powerful tenacity. These are all spiritual treasures of enormous value.

The Absolute tells the soul that, even before the founding of the world, It longed for the soul, and It still longs for her. The soul, in turn, longs also. When the two desires converge, divine Love is fulfilled and completely satisfied. This was the revelation of Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210-1290).

The mystic, in finding her Love, is happy to serve without even hope for reward. Her satisfaction upon touching the Absolute is so striking and beautiful precisely because she does not want or demand, not expect or control It. In her seeking, she completely lets go of all desire to influence anything, and trusts God to do all the work, in Love and grace. She becomes a complete being precisely because she has the faith and strength to give up her old self, and everything else. The goal finally arrives, but only after the surrender of all things, including the self, as Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500) pointed out.

The mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) wrote: "I am not come to this meaning... through my own will...I sought only for the heart of God, ..."

The mystic tends to be a supreme realist. She is, in this way, willing to pay a fair price for whatever she gets. But what is a fair price for eternal Love and wisdom? Mystics have decided that the only "price" that would be fair is everything. So, they renounce the world and everything in it, and their very selves, and everything in them. Mystics do not hesitate to renounce even knowledge. This leaves them in a state of receptive, humble ignorance. From this "absolute ignorance," a kind of "knowledge" is drawn, says Dionysius.

This paradox means that when one is empty of oneself and one's own knowledge, only then is she properly prepared for a "direct transfusion" of wisdom straight from the cosmic Mind. The only way "out" of the complex patterns of the world is also the only Way "in."

The world, mystics claim, is "illusion." (Hindus use the Sanskrit word *maya* to indicate this.) Because this world is a dream, the only appropriate attitude is to



recognize intrinsic freedom from its control. This is a crucially important phase in mystical development. Mystics call the state or condition that results "detachment." Detachment, as the term can be used technically by mystics, does not mean aloofness, coolness, or irresponsivity. Instead, it means simply that the mystic will no longer allow herself to be controlled by the environment or its many factors, or by other human beings. Instead, she has turned complete control of her life over to the inner Love of her heart, with fullest faith that It will never abandon her. Being Love, It can do no harm. Being Love, it is trustworthy. Being Love, It heals and illuminates. Being Love, It will never mislead.

The mystic also uses detachment to cushion her final departure from earth, which she sees as a good thing. For her, there's simply no downside to death, which she genuinely regards as a shattering of the shackles of this limited life. When she leaves this world, she will then go into the dreamworlds of her psyche, and there live in joy, peace, and Love. Plotinus (c.205-70) says that this hope is to "fold ourselves about divinity." So, everyone in life is guaranteed at least one truly mystical experience-- upon leaving the earth. Mystics, however, are wise enough to seek this kind of experience while they can still use its transformative Power.

The kind of mystical experience that occurs at death, though genuine, does not have the phases or parts that mark the life of the real and living mystic. It is sudden, and might well be the very last experience the person knows as a person (earthego).

The Neoplatonist and medieval mystics codified three stages of mysticism as: purgation, illumination, and ecstasy. (Later mystics used the same classification to describe three "Ways" within the overall great Way of mysticism, but substituted for the last phase "union.")

So, the great Way of mysticism, which we will study in the remainder of this book, consists of the following three stages: purgation, illumination, and union.

The first, as its name implies, was often a long stage of purification. "Purgatory" was originally meant as an allegory of all those conditions and factors on earth which, although challenging and even painful, led to greater purity. Purgation means clearing away all attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and responses contrary to Love.

Illumination consisted of inner visions of light, but passing rather than permanent. The light of Love was discovered in the heart, giving hope and motivation for future work.

Ecstasy or "union" was a state of bliss that lasted so long as the mystic "cruised at the higher altitudes" of soul and spirit. When she "came back down" to earth, she lost touch with this ecstasy, which was nevertheless a permanent, although potential, aspect of her psyche. She was commissioned by Love to bring back to earth the results of her inner "union." This meant that she would shine the Light of Love into the darkness of earthly life.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 42/ THE "SUPERHUMAN" MYSTIC: REVELATIONS AND KEEPING THE PEACE WITH RELIGION

\*\*\*

The mind implodes into oblivion, and later explodes into the cosmos as a brand new, regenerated Mind. The fascinating and accurate study of mysticism contains two parts: 1) the "destructuring" or destruction of the mystic's old life, and the restructuring of her new, and 2) the teachings of the universal Way that result from her dramatic experience.

The mystic's "revelation" and transformed worldview include her positively altered selfimage. She now sees herself as a "daughter of God," no longer just human, although still part human. She now knows herself to be part spirit, reflecting the purely spiritual nature of her Father/Mother in "heaven." She knows, at the core of her being, lies the perfect and the eternal, the unblemished and stainless Love-nature, the inner Absolute. Her selfimage is ignited with an unquenchable Love-- her truest nature. For she is an actual incarnation or embodiment of this uncontaminated Love, this same Absolute. Her mystical experience has taught her these things.

Other elements that she has picked up from that psychedelic (soul-manifesting) experience include:

### THE BASIC DISCOVERIES OF THE MYSTIC:

- 1) The *via negativa*, or the attempted description of Reality by saying what It is **not**.
- 2) The *via positiva*, the mystic Way of affirmation, which seeks to describe this same Absolute in terms of what it is.
- 3) The contents of objective revelations.
- 4) The contents of subjective revelations.
- 5) A view of the universe as "emanation" from God as its Source. In other words, the cosmos is viewed by mystics as "shining" from God as light from a candle. This projective aspect sees God as the Dreamer of the world, whose Mind shines or projects "matter" into "space."
- 6) The "immanent" view of God and the cosmos, which teaches that God "indwells" all matter as Mind. This is yet another Way of seeing God as the Dreamer of the cosmic dream.
- 7) To find union with this inner God, one must surrender all, especially personal will and identity.
- 8) When union with the inner One is complete, a being is deified, or metamorphosed into the same substance (Love) as God. In this way, one becomes God in nature, although not in totality.
- 9) God is found in the "inward darkness," for to the untrained senses, the Absolute dwells in a deep "abyss" of the unconscious Mind.
- 10) As the "inner eye" adjusts to this darkness, it becomes a resplendent and effulgent inner Light, and the Absolute shines into the heart. The disciple John, in his first Epistle, wrote, "God is light, and there is no darkness at all in Him." (1:5)

\*\*\*

### SOME NOTES ON MYSTICAL THEOLOGY:

There are many mystical philosophers who are not mystics. There are also theologians, such as Augustine, who, although describing mystical experience, were not themselves mystics. This can often be proved by close analysis of their writings, or by examination of their lives.

Still, most mystics were intelligent and educated people. So, most came to some conclusions about what had happened to them. "They presented what appeared to be "theories," or "speculations," like theologians. To the mystic herself, these accounts represented absolute truths of revelation, but to the outsiders, they looked like mere interpretations. Since they occur in wide variety, they are probably a combination of both.

Anyway, it is a collection of these blazing and dazzling accounts that evolved into the gems of mystical literature. Their analysis also constitutes what is known as "mystical theology." This consists of the comments of the intellect on the experiences of the soul and its intuitions. Don't worry; it is not nearly as dull as it sounds. In fact, it is much more fascinating than ordinary theology. These intellectual comments run parallel to the empirical or experiential descriptions of the mystics. In part, mystical theology is an attempt to classify the mass of data, such as, for example, different "types" of mystical experience. It attempts to analyze, differentiate, categorize, criticize, sort, and explain. In its attempt to elucidate the amazing nature of the mystical event, it seeks to translate it into symbols. These can be more easily analyzed. The balanced mystic has, in this way, attempted to take an objective perspective of her experience, often through the lenses of traditional religion.

The balanced mystic always avoids all extremes. So, she is not hostile to religion, even when she herself is not religious. Traditionally, however, most mystics have belonged to religious bodies which have already possessed evolved, intricate theologies. So, quite naturally, some mystics have tried to fit their experiences into the cubby-holes of mainstream theology. This attempt is especially apparent in the lives and writings of saint-mystics of the Catholic tradition. In some cases, the alternative was death by slow torture. So, motivation was high to make mysticism look as "mainstream" as possible.

The mystic might actually, secretly have been, however, in her heart of hearts, a kind of "spiritual anarchist." Certainly the modern mystic believes in unlimited spiritual freedom, when it comes to religious affiliation. She is fully and completely independent of any hierarchy or council, or of any other human influence. It was in order to preserve the peace, and in many cases, their own lives, that the mystics of history attempted to conform their experience to accepted interpretations of Scripture and church.

Still, because they were peacelovers and peacemakers, mystics bent over backwards to please the powers that be. Most often, most of them were at peace with the official church, even though they were suspiciously different from the average churchgoer. For the sake of tranquillity, mystics never presented themselves as distinctly different from the official member of the church, or from even the average churchgoer.

This kind of compromise is still possible today with most mainstream religions. But it is impossible within the framework of ultrarightwing religions or cults. When I was first dazzled by the realizations of mystical Love, I tried to share it with the members of my church, the Jehovah's Witnesses. They experienced an explosive, terrified kneejerk response. Their superstitions drove them to view me as "satanic"--exactly as the respectable religious community had done with Jesus. A wall of iron descended between me and all my former friends, for when one is expelled from this cult, even one's family is to regard one as "dead." So, even the wisest mystic cannot communicate her vision with those horrified by its message, or those who are extremely judgmental.

Mystics could communicate their vision in mainstream words. This should not be mistaken, however, to indicate that the mystic found her complete spiritual fulfillment within the often tight and restrictive structure of the organized church. Mystics could have made significant waves, could have rocked the boat to pieces, if they had been so inclined. But by nature and preference, they were peaceful people, not rabblers or troublemakers.

So, for example, St. Theresa interpreted her remarkable experiences in clearly Catholic terms, using standard Catholic language. This might have represented a deeply ingrained effort, one feels, to be a "good little girl," and not to cause trouble. She made these often painful accommodations despite the blazing fires of Love that ignited her so many times, driving her to the brink of inner Infinity. She still managed to come across as a harmless good Catholic. In her lifetime (she died in 1582), any other course would have been quite lethal, as the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition lay around every corner.

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) also struggled mightily to contrive to force his dramatic transcendentalism to conform to the duller "incarnational Christianity" of his day. And while neither Theresa nor John would have had any trouble reconciling their mystical experiences with early, primitive Christianity (that of the mystic Jesus), making and keeping the peace with the Catholic institution of the sixteenth-century Church was quite another matter entirely.

The mystic Boehme (1575-1624) held fast to the ironclad idea that his magnificent mysticism was quite consistent with the teachings of his Lutheran faith. This virtually proves the contention that mystics were peacemakers rather than true believers in the traditional faiths of their times. For no two groups could have been more at

odds, could have more violently disagreed, than the Catholic and Lutheran churches. Both could not be theologically accurate, or doctrinally sound, but mystics managed the elasticity of thinking to agree with both.

By that same token, Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.-50 A.D), and some other mystics, followers of the Kabbalah, were orthodox Jews. Mystics did not really embrace organized religion, with all its tendentious teachings and exclusiveness. But they loved peace enough that they did not usually deliberately offend the orthodox religious organizations of their time. For if one tries to literalize their acceptance as inner belief, one would have to argue that Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Judaism were all accurate in their organized teachings and dogmas. In view of their many conflicts, this interpretation is an absurdity.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 43/ SPINNING THE WORLD OF LIGHT OR LIVING WITHIN IT: FUSION OF TWO THEORIES OF COSMOGENESIS

\*\*\*

Mystics have been nailed to crosses, and driven from town by angry, stupid mobs. But this did not happen because they sought conflict. To the contrary, they were extraordinarily elastic, adaptable peacemakers. Plotinus(c.205-70 B.C.) is a good example. In his presentation of "the Absolute, or "Real," he adapted his message to his pagan culture, and explained his wisdom in **their** language, not his own.

**Mysticism cannot, however, accurately be identified with any single religious tradition.** To attempt this counterlogical argument would be analogous to saying, "Since pennies are made of copper, all copper exists in only the form of pennies." So, while it is valid to say, "Pennies are copper," it is not valid to say, "Copper is pennies." A more amusing and memorable example is, "All ducks have flat feet," and "my brother has flat feet." The conclusion, "My brother is a duck" is not warranted.

So, while mysticism can be explained in terms of any religion, it does not follow that it is a religion, or that it can be limited to the circumscriptions of any faith. As with copper pennies, all the great faiths have mystical components, but this does not mean that mysticism is only one faith or another.

Even though they don't conform, or possibly even subscribe, to the tenets and dogma of organized religion, mystics do have a crystalclear matrix of cosmic understanding. It is in this context that they understand their mind-blowing experiences. The worldviews of various mystics agree sufficiently that they are not really divided as are religions, but there are slight varieties in exactly the manners in which the cosmos is interpreted. A valid reason for this is that mystics have never sought to circumscribe truth in a codex of intellectual dogma, a creed, a statement of "acceptable and correct" belief. Variations among mystics are due precisely to the

great freedom and elasticity that they so treasure.

A good example of this spiritual variety, which is nonconflictive and nondivisive, is the minor difference between interpreting the universe in terms of either emanation or immanence.

As noted before in brief, "emanation" teaches that God "shines forth" the universe out of the "substance" of his very "being." Immanence teaches that God "dwells within" matter as a guiding and loving energy or intrinsic mental force.

Both views can find convergence and agreement in a clarifying mystical position--one not even noted by Underhill, and also ignored by other intellectual students of the Way. But it cannot be ignored by the mystic writing these words, because it is the understanding that the dramatic vision has given him.

Stated simply, mystics see the universe as a dream. It is a mindcosmos. Nothing is really "external" to this Mind, and so there is no such thing as "outside." God, as the Source and Origin of all the universe, can be interpreted correctly as the "Emanator" of the cosmos, since He/She is the Fountain of all being. In an analog, a nightdreamer, as the source of her dreams, might be seen as "emanating" the mindpictures. But this same God, in this same worldview, can be said to be "indwelling" the cosmos, "immanent" in it. For as the nightdreamer actually "inhabits" mentally every symbol of her dream, so God or Mind literally "inhabits" or "indwells" every item in the cosmos, because it is His/Her dream.

So, especially from a mystical perspective, it is a dire error to see the "two views" as in irreconcilable conflict, or even as infusably variant. They are not in conjunct or opposed views. They are complementary. They can both be reconciled in the dreamimage of the cosmos.

Of course, this interpretation of emanation does not imply that God is forever transcendent of and separate from His/Her creation, as some traditional forms assert.

In this form of emanation, God is not mentally separate from the cosmos that He/She emanates by dreaming it into being. How can the Dreamer be "separate" from the dream?

Traditional emanation, then, must be distinguished from the form called "mysticemanation." The historical form of emanation accepts that God is both transcendental and separate from creation. It originated in early Greek philosophy. It was developed, embellished, and elaborated by Dionysius (c. 500 A.D.) and the mystical Kabbalists. It was accepted by the mystic Dante (1265-1321), and is implicit also in the writings of St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). In these old forms of the view, God is pictured as analogous to the sun in the solar system. Like the sun from earth, God is said to be a "vast distance" from the sensory world. In other words, he is completely, irreconcilably separate from matter. This Godimage is represented by such picturesque analogies as the "unplumbed abyss," or the famous "cloud of unknowing." In this view, we can attain knowledge of God only by His/Her

perceivable qualities. Still, God is infusably external to this world which bears witness to Him/Her.

This view affected mystics because it was so popular for so very long. As noted, mystics are conformists to the extent that this supports peace. This emanationview of God as forever separate from creation was taught by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

So, it was official church-teaching. The question arises, then, Did the mystics really believe this idea, or did they just pretend to accept it in order to keep peace with their neighbors? Suso (1295-1366), the mystic who interpreted Aquinas, says that if emanation is true, the real transcendence, the mystical experience, must be a literal journey. The soul, that is, must go literally outward and upward towards this God, as if He/She is located in space.

One school of mysticism did emphasize the great transcendence of God, although this did not imply his complete severance from creation. For it was the Dionysian school of mysticism that originated the phrases, "The abyss" and "the divine dark" for the Absolute. To come to this God it was necessary to move through a complex series of states or progressive stages. (According to the Kabbalah, they numbered thirty-two.) Both the *sephiroth* (aspects of God) of *Kabbalism* and the "hierarchies" of Dionysius symbolized these stages. Human was normally split off from divine, and temporal from eternal. So, God was irreversibly separate from creation.

It was due to his acceptance of traditional emanation that St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) said, "God is inaccessible." A great gulf or abyss can be envisioned to separate the Creator from the created, including the soul. That is why standard theories of emanation were accepted by very few mystics.

The alternative popular view was called "immanence." Immanence plays a large part in traditional theology, and is also fully acceptable to the mystic. For the mystic, the discovery/aquisition of the Absolute is no long journey. It is but the mere waking up to Something that has always lain dormant deep within. Some schools of Buddhism teach, "You are already the Buddha," and early Christians had an exact equivalent: "You are already the Christ." This implies the need, not for radical change, but for simply awakening to the Reality that already exists within the psyche.

When the "inner eye" is opened, the soul senses a Reality, the Absolute, in which it is already immersed, with which it is already saturated. Oneness with this Absolute is not a distant goal, but an undeniable fact of present life. Earth, when perceived accurately, is "crammed with heaven" everywhere. This echoes the famous discovery of the mystic Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), "All the world is filled with God." "Thou wert I, but dark was my heart. I knew not the secret transcendence," wrote the Sufi Tewekkul Beg in the seventeenth century. "God," said Plotinus (c. 205-70 B.C.), "is not external to anyone."

The idea that God "indwells all" need not degenerate into pantheism-- the shallow idea that God IS the material world itself. Instead of actually **being** the material

cosmos, God can be seen as its Source or Origin, "indwelling it" in exactly the same way that a nightdreamer indwells every image of her dream. They are all "in her," as we are all "in God." She is "in them," as God is "in us." But she does not **become** the elements or components of her dream. The dreamer does not become her dream. It would be terribly inaccurate so to reduce her. For, as the dreamer, she is so very much more than her dreams. So, God is much more than the material cosmos.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Chapter 44/ IMMERSED IN THE MYSTERY OF LOVE: SOME NOTES ON THE INTERIOR GOD

\*\*\*

"I am God," is a statement common among mystics. But they do not mean by this that they are God in totality, but only in nature. They do not claim lordship of the universe, but that they have been transformed by Love into Love. Even in her transfigured Self, the mystic does not become identical with the indwelling God. To believe that this perverted claim is "mystical" is simply seriously to misunderstand the entire process. The mystic is never "deified," if by that term, it is implied that she is metamorphosed into the all, the totality, of everything that God is. The mystic does not become omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent.

Instead, her "deification" is only reflective and relative. it occurs because she so perfectly mirrors the divine image of Love. It is so bright, so tsunamic, that her very self is blown away in the experience. The Self that replaces it is a totally different being, in fact, a different **kind** or order of being. As noted, she is no longer "merely" human, but part spirit, part divine. She has become a humanspirit fusion.

By intense introspection, and even more intense Love, she meets the inner God face to face, and is dissolved in Him/Her. The dissolution can be so thorough that she requires to be remade over again. When that Power recoalesces her, she is a brand new being. She has been forever, irreversibly transmuted, altered irrevocably. She emerges as a perfect, stainless mirror of living Love.

She brings back a part of her old humanity with her, however. For no matter how much she is transformed, she still uses a human body-brain system as her vehicle on earth. /That is her inevitable human aspect. But she has been infused with eternity and Love. She has become numinous and luminous in humanspirit fusion.

As Aquinas (1225-1274) pointed out, God is the sole Cause of being, so wherever anything is, God must also be. More specifically, God is perfect Mind, the root of all mind. So, God is wherever mind is. This is literally the secret of how God can be "omnipresent." A "space" or "place," like an object, cannot exist without a mind to perceive it. So, wherever there is a place, there is a mind. The two arrive inevitably as a set, a package. That is how God is in every "place."

A divine Essence dwells at that place in the soul which mystics call the "apex."



This Essence has two facets: 1) It is cosmic Mind, and 2) It is Love. It is this that is touched during all real mystical experience. This Essence of Love is the basis for the teaching, in the Christian Greek Scriptures, of the "indwelling Spirit." This Essence of Love has been called the "inner light," "spark of the soul," and, "Ground of being." It is the inner divine Principle, the Fountain and Source of the "true life" of spirituality. This is the immediate Presence of God within the human heartmind. This is the Absolute, Reality, the Ultimate, cosmic Mind, the Superconscious, the Creator/Dreamer.

Like the water surrounding a saturated sponge in a pool, God is within us, penetrating us, and all around us. God is in us, and we in God. God "indwells," however, not just the human heartmind. As the Dreamer of the cosmos, He/She exists within all matter. Inside every molecule is God. Within every person is what Boehme (1575-1624) called "the whole heart of God."

The mystic Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) concurs. He says, "God is nearer to me than I am to myself. He is just as near to wood and stone,..." This is the God of the Eastern mystics, closer than hands and feet, than breath.

"Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me. Cleave the wood, and there I am." These words are ascribed to Jesus in ancient writings.

Mystics are very friendly towards, and very supportive of, the view that God is immanent. But they are just as easily interpreted to indicate emanation. This is because, as we have seen, the idea of God as Dreamer can be interpreted through both lenses, or either. As these theories are only symbols, mysticism confirms and reconciles both. In this larger overview, many apparent contradictions are selfresolved.

For example, mystics regard themselves as "friends" of God, but are as quick to note that his major attribute is "unknowableness," or "agnorability." But one does not have to "know" Love in order to Love it, for this Love is not at all the function of normal knowing. To be a friend of God, you do not have to know **about** Him/Her, but you need to know God directly.

The "perfect beauty" which Plato ascribes to Reality cannot be known by the mind, but is enjoyed and experienced in the same nonverbal manner as is God or Love.

It was this deep Love that called out of the heart of the mystic Julian (died 1416), calling her "My darling."

It might be a mistake to call this God "impersonal," for that word commonly means emotionally cool, aloof, or distant. But we can recognize this God as "nonpersonal," in that He/She, despite the pronouns, does not present as a "separate" person, or even a separate Mind. God is conjoined with all reality, especially Mind, which is why He/She is so readily accessible. The Hindu mystics say, "God is closer than the air you are now breathing in." (In Plotinus(205-70 B.C.), this nonpersonal God is also "formless.")

God is truly immanent in the world, say mystics, but in order to find Him/Her, it is necessary to distance oneself from the distractions and intrusions of that very world.

This is because, in the world, God is manifested as universal Mind, but the mystics largely seek His/Her other manifestation-- pure Love. This, of course, can be found only in the heart. So, we have the interesting paradox that, in order to know God as Love, one must turn away from clinging to God as cosmic Mind. Restated, to know God as heartmind, one must turn away from God as world, at least, in the beginning of the inner journey.

This pattern, so commonly found in mystical life, is "renunciation." Taken to an unhealthy extreme, it becomes the caricature of mysticism known as "asceticism." This is voluntary selfabuse, and betrays an absence of the selflove so vital for mystical balance. It includes excessive fasting, selfpunishment, and other forms of selfdeprivation. The healthy mystic always avoids these extremes.

In renunciation, by contrast, the mystic rejects the idea that she is controlled or dominated by the "material, external" world. That would be to subject herself to dreamimages. She is first master of her world, and Love is her master. Renunciation implies a turning away from all excess, especially greed. It implies that this, and all other worldly masters, have been summarily rejected. It implies a life committed, not to poverty or even minimalism, but to simplicity.

Simplicity implies a life stripped of all excess. But one must be both careful and moderate in this lifedesign. Some things of beauty, arguably, are not technically "necessary for life." But does that make them "excess"? Not necessarily. For the soul has needs as well as the body. Among these are needs for things of beauty, intellectual stimulation, and the maintenance of other soulfactors.

Still, the material possessions of the mystic arise from need, not greed. (A moderate and flexible perspective implies that this "need" can also include things of beauty and comfort.) So, in most cases, renunciation will imply that her home is not large, or her car new.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 45/ PSYCHOCARTOGRAPHY: MAPPING THE INNER JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE SOUL

\*\*\*

The world is blasted away by the supernova of Love. Full consciousness of God can be discovered only by active renunciation of the world. This means undoing and rejecting the utter dominance of the "physical/external/material" world. Its false power must be pulverized before one can know the freedom to sink entirely into the depths of the unconscious. One then fuses with That which produces the world. In

time, the mystic, as psychonaut, travels inward to a mental state that is timeless and spaceless, where there is no "outside." The God that she touches is simultaneously immanent and transcendent.

By way of a quick review: Immanent means that God "indwells" creation. "Transcendent" means that He/She is greater than creation. God is within all creation, in a mental way, for everything is saturated with His/Her Mind. God is "in" the dream, and it in God.

But God is also literally transcendent because He/She is greater than the dream. As the Dreamer, God is the Producer or Origin of the dream. And as any person is in totality greater than her nightmares, which she produces, so God is greater than the cosmos, which He/She dreams up. Remember, although "transcendent" usually means, or implies, "separate from," it does NOT imply that in the mystical definition.

God is at once one with, unified with, and greater than the worldream. As the mystic recognizes that God is within her own heartmind, she knows that the "journey" or "pilgrimage" is not to any literal place, but allegorical of her "trip" to the inner Center of her being. For God dwells in that Center.

"God" is her only and exclusive pursuit, if she is a true mystic. If so, she has also renounced the false glamour and excitement of the world. Turning her back voluntarily on all fame and riches, and sensual over indulgences, she fixes her attention like a laser on her one target-- Love. The Latin word for "God" is *Deus*. It arises from a root related to "day," and means "shining with transcendent light." The Greek word for "God," the one used in ancient manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures ("New Testament") is *theos*. Its literal meaning is "supreme desire." So, understood completely, "God" is the light or enlightening Presence that is our ultimate desire. This is precisely how the mystic sees God.

When the mystic decides finally actually to take this thrilling inner voyage, she often uses "maps" created by earlier travelers into the unconscious Mind. These are descriptions left graciously by mystics who had already gone deeply within, profoundly enough to touch the Absolute, or to catch a "vision" of it. (But these descriptions are rarely literally visual.)

She carefully studies the writings and whole ideas of other mystics. She seeks out books such as this one. She immerses herself in the literature of mysticism. Sometimes, this Mindmapping implies going boldly where no one has gone before. For example, two mystics, Boehme(1575-1624) and Blake (1757-1827), made new maps, or descriptions of their inner journeys. For they were exploring new territory, moving through the tangled, complex jungles of a new continent.

It's not long before Mindmapping leads to greater depths of Mind, and then becomes soulspiritmapping. Many maps have arisen from many cultures and, while Underhill seems a bit prejudiced in favor of Christianity, a number of exquisite and detailed descriptions of this dark mindscape have been produced by Buddhists and

Hindus. Taoists, Sufis, Kabbalists, and others have also produced excellent psychocartography. Neoplatonism has refined and sharpened many of the descriptions of Christian mystics.

The "unconditioned Absolute" is also called the "unknowable God," by some mystics and is the target of this great quest. In this most amazing of all journeys, these pioneers have, as noted, reconciled the immanent and the transcendental. Now they must similarly harmonize Infinite with intimate.

God, being the Infinite, is no cold, irresponsible king, lawgiver, or general. Although infinite, He/She is primarily a Lover. God is tender, warm, and welcoming. So, the infinity of God does not imply a cold aloofness. It does not imply emotional distance, as one might feel from a very popular and famous, or powerful politician. God is the part of the psyche which is the world's greatest "agapologist," or expert on Love. It is God's great delight to love. He/She is the world's greatest Lover, and He/She is eager to love and to forgive.

But not only that. **Loving is the only function of God.** We often lose sight of this simple fact when we mold God into various other humanized images. We see Him/Her, correctly, as Master/Mistress of the universe. A human being with such unlimited power would be intolerably arrogant, but God is incomprehensibly humble. A human being would be too busy for us, but God is never too busy. He/She is welcoming and eager to love us.

So, for the mystic, infinity and intimacy are not polarized opposites. They make an easy complementary blend.

The mystic begins her unforgettable journey into the infinity of inner space as a full human being, which means that she starts as an ego. This means that she begins with a fairly high concentration and full complement of egoistic desires and concerns. Even the rapture of Love is grasped as a selfish possession, something personal, to be enjoyed by the ego. It is only in time that she grows from this blind and egotistic state into the magnificent state of fruitful and selfforgetting Love.

The "long journey to God" is an allegory that symbolizes just how much time, and how many steps in transformation, are required to move on the path. It is a long voyage, from the state of a dull and unresponsive ego, to a tender, sensitive, Godfilled being of Love. The being projected by God has now returned to the inner God.

This again illustrates the truth that the two theories of emanation and immanence are but the two sides of one coin. Even Dionysius (c. 500 A.D.), the father of emanation, recognizes also an "indwelling" God. On the other side of the doctrinal spectrum we find another mystic, Meister Eckhart(1260-1327), who preached a type of immanence that actually bordered on pantheism.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 46/ GHASTLY AND NIGHTMARISH "TRUTH"

\*\*\*

Mystics as damnable heretics is a common theme in Christian history. This began as early as 200, by which time "Christian" doctrine and teaching had hardened into inflexible dogma. By then, the official Church was so strong that it began to persecute, and damn, even murder any other Christian who dared to disagree.

The mysticism implied and taught in the words of Jesus was preserved for some time in the teachings of the Gnostic Christians. But to the orthodox church, they were completely lost. So was the Love. The Christian Church, at this time, had almost no resemblance to the simple but powerful teacher from Nazareth. The Church had become a political and economic institution, insecure and concerned for only its own survival as a coherent entity.

By then, the period that some historians call the "Great Corruption" had set in. Fanatical "Christians" were actually slaughtering other Christians in the name of "doctrinal purity," and intellectual "truth." Early gnostics (Christian mystics) knew that "truth" was a life of Love, and that the mistaking of dogma and doctrine for truth was catastrophic in the extreme. It transformed the organized church into a hell of blood, torture, murder, and fanaticism.

The Church suffered terribly from a dismal and destructive case of "Plato envy." The Church wanted to appear as respectable and sophisticated as Greek philosophers. So it made the terrible error of deciding that "truth" was, as in science, the logical structuring of words and ideas, a correct arrangement of data. The Church turned away from the mystical truth that is Love, and replaced it with this sham and shabby substitute. The "doctors" of the church made their reputations, not by goodness or kindness, which quickly fell out of vogue, but by producing endless drones and tomes. These were designed to expound and expand the "correct" doctrines of the official Church. Love was forgotten, lost in the shuffle. Lists of "correct" and "officially approved" teachings were drawn up, and disagreeing with these became lethal.

The Church had also inherited a destructive habit that was respected in Judaism--religious hairsplitting. Combined with the Greek influence, this dealt a double deathblow to the knowing of Love as living truth. The intellectuals, who knew nothing about Love, took over completely. Mysticism fell out of favor into disrepute. Smug, overeducated "doctors" now became the only arbitrators of truth, and the more books that were written in elucidation and commentary, the worse the Church deteriorated. The attempt to define clearly every iota of Christian belief led to a nightmare of conflicting words. Soon, immense political power-structures evolved in order to pronounce one teaching "good" and another "evil." Everywhere, the "people of Love" hated and massacred one another, in the name of the gentle teacher of

compassion. A stark and astonishingly unfriendly political/economic structure, the "official church," further added to this corruption, throwing gasoline on a white-hot fire.

Further, these brutal and vicious intellectuals argued, if their "truth" were from God, then all "falsehood" (misinterpretation of dogma or doctrine) must originate with the evil nemesis of God and man, Satan. So, not even the most harmless variations were permitted. The only acceptable standard was minute conformity. Amazingly, unbelievably, it actually ceased to matter whether one lived a good life. If one did live a good life, but believed the wrong things, she was damned. Symmetrically, if one believed the proper "truths," one could live as a monster, and that was okay.

A surprising number of these fanatically despised groups were mystic. In fact, the Greek word for "mystic" is "gnostic," and the Gnostics represented an especially ferociously hated group of early Christians. While it is true that "capital G" Gnostics did evolve into a number of sectarian groups, some of which had strange ideas, "small g" gnostics represented a teaching that was common in the simple first-century church founded by Jesus.

These gnostics believed that adopting the right doctrines was not enough to make one a real Christian. In order to belong to the faith, the practice of Love was imperative.

The gnostics derived their generic name from the fact that they believed that God wanted direct and personal interaction with the believer. This manifested in a kind of "revealed knowledge" that was starkly different from the "knowledge" of the church doctors and church fathers. This was gnosis-- a direct, powerful, immediate, revealing of God to the person. This was an inner spiritual experience, and did not depend even on whether one was a Catholic Christian in good standing with the Church. It was a spontaneous act of grace. Further, in this revelation, one usually learned "damnable falsehoods" about God, such as that God communicated with people outside of the church, and that God lived in the heart.

It was this special mystic gnosis that was mentioned by Jesus in John: "This is timeless life, directly to know You, the only true God,..." (17:3) This direct knowing of God was foreign, and anathema (cursed), to the organized Church, which had a paranoiac terror of heresies or false teachings. And the existence of a condition or state which Jesus called "timeless" life was not even recognized by the Church, although gnostics (mystics) knew all about it. This reflected another teaching in the Christian Greek Scriptures that said that the "Holy Spirit" could engage in teaching the "heart" of a person. Elaborate intellectual councils, books, and theories were unnecessary and even damaging, the early Christians implied. But the unforgivable sin of the gnostics was that they dared to ignore the pompous, pontificating, selfimportant men who had set themselves up as the exclusive mouthpieces of God.

The gnostics loved everyone. But they became the objects of deadly and vicious hatred by the "fathers" of the official Church, including Irenaeus, Justin, and their cronies. These guys weren't playing games. They would just as soon hand you your head, or tear out your heart, as look at you, if you dared believe the wrong things. They did not hesitate for a nanosecond to use every atrocity in the book to enforce their "truth." Burning alive at the stake was a favorite entertainment, and that would certainly show those heretics! This atrocity was, after all, done for the sinner's own good; better fry for a few agonizing, hellish minutes in the fire than to go to hell, where their god would roast and toast you forever in his barbecue-orgy. They tortured and killed entire families of **other Christians**, their sisters and brothers in Christ.

The gnostic approach has always powerfully attracted certain psychological and social types. These are the ones who treasure the poetic, the beautiful, and the "rightbrain" aspects of life. They emphasize feeling over cold intellect, and treasure Love. Besides the widespread gnostic groups, the history of the Western Church also includes a diverse spectrum of related and fascinating "heresies." These include the Fraticelli, the Friends of God, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Quietists, the Quakers, and other tiny and independent groups. So, although officially dead, the mystic/gnostic strain in Christianity has survived, century after century.

Many memorable mystics have not belonged to these groups, although they would have been quite harmonious with them. Amazingly, unforgettable mystics have arisen as saints within the official Catholic Church. In view of the early brutal hatred of gnostics, how did they manage this? How, and why, did mystics come to be part of an antimystical, bloodsoaked church built upon violence, intolerance, and stupidity?

For centuries, anyone who wanted to follow Jesus had only one church, the Catholic. It was not as if the mystic had a real choice. Of course, she could have lived as a spiritual independent. But there were both social and intellectual disadvantages to that path. Mystics are, by nature and choice, people-lovers, and hugely enjoy cooperation and fellowship. Contrary to popular myth, most mystics were not cave-dwelling hermits who couldn't stand the sight of other people. They were kind, friendly, courteous people who actively sought out companions. Also, sincerely wanting to please God, many mystics were probably convinced that it was impossible to do so outside the organized Church.

But would not the revelation of a God of pure Love and forgiveness allow mystics to deny this myopic and exclusivist teaching? Yes, but we must remember that even the most enlightened mystic still carries within her heartmind a large chunk of humanity. This part of her nature could still respond to early programming and education. So, all mystics might not have outgrown teachings that, had they considered them compassionately or objectively, they would have known to be stupid.

They were very careful to clothe their mysticism in the right words, in this way guaranteeing approval and acceptance. Also, many were admired leaders in the Church or community, and the Church would have been sticking a knife in its own eye to have murdered its best saints as heretics. Heresiologists (specialists in "heresy," or false teachings) always suspected, and some of them hated, the mystics. But they always had insufficient evidence actually to convict them of heresy.

Not that "evidence" was even needed by these monstrous men of the Inquisition. But mystics were quite careful always to cover themselves by communicating only in officially approved language. It required some intelligence, in fact, to figure out what, exactly, they were even saying. And the torturers were not outstanding for their intelligence. Often, there could be a very thin line between a saint and a heretic, and they believed that if they accidentally killed a saint, they were headed straight for hell.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Chapter 47/ FROM THE MANY, ONE: THE MULTIPLE ORIGINS OF ORTHODOX "TRUTH": BLAKE, THE "WORD," THE INCARNATION, AND THE TRINITY

\*\*\*

When they murdered their most creative people, the Church stabbed its own heart with a sword. The Church's greatest power lay always in its catholicity, such as it was. Many leaders and scholars did recognize this obvious fact, and Church doctrine became wide and flexible enough to embrace input from many Greek, Jewish, and other sources. Still, after a teaching hardened into dogma, to question it was an immediate free ticket to eternal damnation in hell.

Early Christianity adopted such words as "Logos" and "Hades" from non-Christian and pre-Christian cultures. It follows, then, that the greatest crippler of the Church was its offensive and hateful policies of exclusion. The Church, despite its philosophic and theological myopia, had, in its beginning, fused thought from many different systems into a coherent theology. But, having forgotten the origin of these intellectual systems, leaders fell victim to the hideous dogma that these understandings and interpretations fell out of a cloudless sky, nicely wrapped by the infallible Mind that sent them. They were carved in unnegotiable stone. The patchwork quilt of Christian dogma was arrogantly declared to be infallible.

In fact, there were very few things theological which were not the familiar staples of the teachers of antiquity. What was truly unique about the revelation of this religion was the mystical revelations made to the man Jesus, and his relentless bulldog insistence on universal, unconditional Love.

Ancient Egyptians recognized the same cosmic Mind, and called "Him," exactly like Christians, the "Savior." Platonists referred to the same Reality as the Beautiful and



the Good. Stoics, like Jesus, called this Absolute the "Father" and "Companion." The Gospel of John is anticipated, and perhaps influenced, by Cleanthes (331-232 BCE). Heraclitus (544-484 BC) spoke of the same "fire" as Christian mystics, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote, "Our God is also a consuming Fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

Christian mystics often deliberately imitate the very language of Plotinus (205-70 BC). Even the mystic Blake (1757-1827), that "hater of the churches," often expressed his beautifully inspired insights in language that was thoroughly and unquestionably Christian. (Like any good mystic, he knew well the vast gulf that separated Christianity from the "Christian" Church.) He was, at the same time, astonishingly honest and human. He wrote, "If I were holy, I never could behold the tears of love." "If I were pure," he says elsewhere to the divine, "I should never have known Thee."

This is how Blake proved that it was possible to be both Christian and human, or even humble. In this, he was starkly contrasted with the pomposity and selfrighteousness of early leaders of the Church. Not surprisingly, the source of his goodness and balance was his mystical recognition: "For man is love, as god is love," he wrote. His mysticism was based on practical kindness: "Every kindness to another is a little 'death' in the Divine image. Nor can man exist but by brotherhood."

These were the fundamental and core-teachings of genuine early Christianity. For Christianity did have some clear teachings, but **never was the eternal value of a person to be judged on the basis of belief.**

Many of these teachings, such as they were, became distorted through over-elaboration and embellishment. Writing useless but complex and wordy commentaries was analogous to the proverbial exercise of beating a dead horse. Every single word of Scripture was analyzed literally to death. The living Word or Logos was originally a term meaning the living Christ. This was its only use in the Scriptures. Later the same dynamic phrase, "Word of God," came to mean dead things-- literal words on paper. In this way, the illegitimate use of the phrase "Word of God" to refer to the Scriptures. This was a totally non-Biblical use of that term. "The Word of God is alive," said the ancient text, blowing out of the water the idea that the Bible is the "Word of God." (Hebrews 4:12)

But by transforming the "Word" into literal words, the early leaders of the Church intellectualized what was originally the living and active Spirit or Logos. This is how they killed the living Word. The word "Word" is never used in the Bible to refer to the Bible. This is a deadening of that Word.

The early Christian teaching of the living Logos was related to another teaching about the "incarnation." According to mystics and early Christians, Jesus was not a freak to be worshipped as a man. Instead, as Peter said, he was a "model, for you to follow his footsteps closely." (1 Peter 2:21)

If Jesus was a model, he was a prototype. In other words, mystics said, he was what we were to become. In the teaching of the Incarnation, it was taught that Jesus was the exclusive historical incarnation of God. Mystics agreed that he was the embodiment of the Love-principle, but deny his exclusive status. Jesus himself seems to come down on the side of the mystics when he says, "The things that I do, you also will do, and things greater than these." (John 14:12)

If Jesus was an older brother rather than a one-of-a-kind being, then the idea of the "incarnation" was about all of us, not just about the unique Jesus. We all exist on earth to learn the lessons of Love, so that someday we might disown our human identities and identify with Love. Like Him, we are all incarnations of nonphysical entities, called "souls." So, we too will become the incarnations of Love or God.

Early leaders were massively confused and confusing when it came to the understanding of the Incarnation. Things became even more muddled when this gigantically complex doctrine got all tangled up with another enormously complex idea called the "trinity."

The official teaching of the trinity is a cumbersome, ultracomplex mass of tangled and elaborate ideas about the nature of God. Much of it centers on the question of how three "persons--father, son, and holy spirit--can really be one God. Early Church councils argued rather violently about this issue, finally arriving at a verbal consensus called the "Athanasian Creed," to which everyone was supposed to conform.

But not all Christians did conform. This precipitated major explosions within the Church that rocked it to its foundations. A guy named Arius(c.250-336) enthusiastically, rather warmly, disagreed with the creed. Other "heretics," called the "Nestorians, (5th century) insisted on a rather mild distinction between the historical man Jesus and the everlasting spirit called "Christ," and were immediately damned to hell.

The trinity does not have to be so complex. If we drop the idea of "persons," it can all become quite simple. Since the word "person" means "mask," implying a false self, it is safe to say that God is not a "person" in the literal sense. Not being a person, God can more fruitfully be regarded as a state of consciousness, or a process. That's called Love.

Another group of damned heretics, the Modalists, taught that "father, son, and holy spirit" were modes of the expression of one God. This simple explanation makes everything remarkably clearer. It was rejected by the Church, in fact, because it was too simple, and made too much common sense.

A mystic variation of Modalism goes something like this: God is Love. When Love expresses itself in the act of creation, or in the maintenance of nature, or in caring for creatures, including human beings, it is called the "Father." When that same Love incarnates into a human body, it is called the "Son." And when it is manifested through human consciousness, as teaching, healing, love, or any of a thousand other

forms, it is called "Holy Spirit."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 48/ GOD "INSIDE OUT": THE INNER MYSTIC DIVINE AND THE PRIMITIVE PROJECTED GOD

\*\*\*

Does God have three heads? What is the deeper meaning of this old argument called the "trinity"? It is only a symbolic way of trying to understand truths about God, for nothing very literal can make any sense when discussing the Infinite. It seems to say that, although there is only one God, He/She manifests in many forms and/or modalities. Roughly, the mystic can see "Father" as God in all of nature, and "Son" as human intellect, emotion, and spirituality, and "Holy Spirit" as the inner observer and watcher, or judge, of the world.

God, often called the "Godhead," can be known under different aspects. And all of these, although different, might be right, correct, or accurate. God is comparable to the light shining through a large clear jewel. A person standing at one place will see this light bounce off the facets of the gem as red another as blue, still another as yellow. And they will each and all be correct, for, from their angle and position, the light really was the color described and perceived. Now, multiply the variables in this simple parable by a million, and you might get some idea of the complexity involved in trying to decipher with mere words the Illimitable.

The final Object of the mystical quest, for Catholic, Protestant, neoplatonic, and Eastern mystics, is the "unconditioned One." But this rather abstract interpretation of Coremind or Creator does not, cannot, satisfy the deeper emotional needs of human beings. That is because it is partial, reflecting only one facet of a billion-faceted crystal. So, realizing that a single aspect of God can never satisfy fully, mystics use at least two patterns of understanding to embrace the Superconscious Mind. The first, as indicated already, is the indwelling Holy Spirit of divine life. It is known to be "within" the seeker. It is the concept comfortable for almost all mystics, for they have actually found this intrinsic God deep within the unconscious Mind.

The other symbol by which the Ultimate is approached is in the form of "a transcendental Spirit, outside." This is, of course, only symbolic, and includes "projection" of the inner Mind outward, as it were, onto the "screen of space."

Mystics recognize "externalization" or "exteriorization" as symbolic processes only.

These "two" expressions of the divine Unconscious are only conceptually separate. Every mystic realizes that they are, at root, one and the same. They symbolize only different approaches to the same intrinsic Lovemind. More technically, they are patterns of interaction. Due to their training, and sometimes their culture, some mystics are more comfortable behaving "as if" God were "another," even outside. As

we have already noted, God is actually another, even though He/She is within. He is the "Friend within," the "Beyond within," or the "inner Other."

If God were, however, a literal Other, then mysticism would be split or torn asunder by dualism. But pure mysticism is a form of monism. This means that it recognizes only one Reality, one Mind, in all of creation. That Mind partakes of every mind, and every other mind of It. And It has no opposite. Dualism, by contrast, teaches that the cosmos can be meaningfully divided into opposites, all the way up the spectrum of being, including even the cosmic Mind. So, dualism is said, by mystics, to belong to the world of appearances only, or illusion.

The Zohar, the classic text of Kabbalism, says God is "immanent in all that has been created or emanated." This nicely blends the views of immanence and emanation. It also unifies the apparent duality between the "external material" world and the "inner spiritual" world. For the entire cosmos is unified in its immanence in the one Mind that emanates it. In a similar vein, Sufis say that God is to be contemplated in two ways:

1) outwardly, by deeply considering the beauties of earth, even though these are imperfect, and 2) inwardly, through deep inner search and meditation.

Since He/She is "one, and in all things," as the mystic masters wrote, to consider oneself "separate" from this Mother/Father is a serious error, a radical misperception. Yet this unity does not imply full equality. The creature is still the creature, remains the created, while the Creator retains His/Her position as supreme Being. Only this Being does not live above the clouds, which are part of the dreamworld, not out among the stars, which are also part of the dream. This Lover lives in and through the human heartmind.

But it is, oddly, as the Sufi mystics say, only when one acts "as if" God were separate that one can reach out to God, establish a loving relationship to Him/Her analogous to human relationships. This is how some mystics, notably Jesus, refer symbolically to the inner Lovemind as "Father." Others, from Goddess traditions, call the Absolute "Mother." Still others project this Reality into the forms of nature or mythology. Indian religion is the most obvious example of this outer projection, a kind of game of "Let's pretend." God is projected into many god- and goddess-forms, each symbolizing one aspect or component of His/Her polychromatic and ultracomplex nature. But Hindu mystics are by no means literal polytheists. Instead, they use the many forms to represent the One, the eternal Brahman, the inner "One without a second." He is the "one Mind" behind the cosmos, and there is literally "none other." So, Hindu mystics are "polymorphic monotheists," meaning that they do not literally worship or even believe in many gods, but believe that all gods symbolize some component or part of the One, Brahman, or Mind.

So, one god or goddess might represent God's love, another His/Her peace, another divine joy, another gentleness, another justice, etc. Each quality of the One

is first personified, or turned imaginatively and symbolically into a separate person. Then, it is projected as if it had a selfexistence outside the Mind. In this way did the marvelous and beautiful pantheon of the more than three hundred million gods/goddesses of India come into being.

In Christianity, Theresa also symbolically "exteriorized" God. At the very time that she was discovering the inner God of her heartsoul, she conceptually imagined an external God. Part of the reason for this was that any teaching of an "inner god" flirted with deadly heresy. But another part was that she did this for psychological reasons. It was just easier, and made "more sense" within a Catholic tradition, to set up an outer image of God and worship that.

Part of the reason that Christianity is so bewildered about the inner God is that many Christians are hopelessly confused about the nature of their God. If you want to learn anything about Christianity, don't ever ask a Christian! Many Christians confuse their God with the ancient god of the Hebrews.

This god, this "Jehovah-myth," was completely outside of, transcendent above, all creation. He had about the same relationship to creation as a carpenter has to a table-- not exactly intimate. Jehovah was dominant and all-powerful, but was not noted or remarkable for his unconditional Love for creation. He was a little feeble in the Love-department. He was too busy being jealous and defensive, following around a tiny nation and trying to talk its members into worshipping only him. (When they did not, he became terribly upset. He was also deeply involved in the politics of this little state, and actually went into their wars with them.) In fact, he did not like even people that much. His favorites were the early Israelis, and he barely tolerated them. He was always wearisomely punishing and forgiving, punishing and forgiving. His emotions had all the stability of a rollercoaster, or a yoyo.

But one thing could be said very clearly about this god, as was true of all the other ancient gods: He was definitely external. When the Israeli prophets had to address the implicit question, "Just where is Jehovah?" they became vague and evasive. But the consensus was that he lived on a mountain called Sinai, or else, that he lived in the "heavens," ostensibly just above the clouds. (Not having planes, the Israelis could not know better or prove otherwise.)

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 49/ THEOPSYCHOLOGY: GOD AND THE INNER TRINITY

\*\*\*

No plane, no rocket, no shuttle, has ever run into God. None has even seen Him/Her. This is because He/She just isn't "there." In fact, there's no "there" there, but that's a completely different story. Anyway, as flying and astronomy became more sophisticated, God was never found. Even when outer space was explored, no

one ever bumped into, or saw, God. He was, then, understandably, projected into "somewhere in outer space" by many. Shamefully, even the official churches yielded to this childish conception of a "big daddy in the sky." This was reinforced powerfully by the neojehovist tradition, which sought to resurrect the old wargod of Hebrew mythology and dress it up as the God of Jesus and Christianity. This is what also allowed for the brutality and atrocity of war among selfstyled "Christians." They said, in effect, "If war was good enough for God, it's good enough for us."

For the ignorant, this extrapolation of the "big daddy in the sky," into outer space, made perfect sense. Many people still seriously, with a straight face, claim that God is in space-- the ultimate Extraterrestrial.

So, St. Theresa(1515-1582) was forced by cultural pressure, as well as by the ignorant mob, to set up an "external" image of God even while personally knowing very well, intimately, the inner God of her heart, the God of pseudo-Areopagite and neoplatonic mysticism.

This "exteriorized" God had other advantages, especially for people who had selfimage and selftrust problems. For Theresa, as for other mystics, it helped to clarify the dividing line, symbolic though it was, between God and the mystic. It prevented her literally losing her self in God. So, while the loss of the self is a longterm goal of mysticism, it must occur gradually and safely. A sudden ripping away of the self, an abrupt loss of boundaries and psychic membranes, can be radically damaging to one's mental stability. The mystic does not want to be violently "sucked" into the Mind of God, without preparation. This could cause psychological damage, or even harm to the soul.

The mystic has some unusual challenges in psychology never faced by the average person. ?For example, where does she end and God begin? How does she clearly delineate those parts of her psyche called the "personal unconscious," the "soul," the "collective unconscious" and, finally, the "Superconscious"?

It is much easier, and conceptually, much clearer, to deal with an "external Other" than with the bizarre and alien concept of an "interior Other." This is another way in which the symbol of an outer God helps lucidify the mystic's conceptual life.

Theresa and other mystics had to be careful lest their God become too indistinct and fluid. For states or levels of the Mind tend to be liquid, flowing into each other, overlapping, mixing, diffusing. The "indistinct" God could be accused of being "non-Christian," and the mystic would surely pay for this concept with her life. An illucid God could be quite dangerous, especially if not complemented, accompanied, or explained by a more traditional external image. Keep in mind that the mystic God is so utterly incomprehensible that some mystics say that **nothing can be said about Him/Her at all. This God could never be explained to hostile critics of a severe and restricted religion.**

Mystics used even traditional images, although inaccurate, to explain God, in

order to prove that they were "harmless." They used often the trinity, for example. The "Father" they saw as that aspect of God that is transcendental. The Father was the origin of all, the "unknowable One" of neoplatonism. This was the aspect of God said by theologians **not** to exist "in the soul." This was the great Emanator, the "first person" or "Father" of the trinity.

Secondly, the "Son," by contrast, is precisely the same God in incarnational form. In the same way, when any human being is enlightened, she knows that she represents the "Son" due to her humandivine or humanspirit interface. The soul becomes a "mirror" of pure Being, Deity, the nonpersonal, inexhaustible, responsive Source of life deep within the Mind. This is the Object of all Love.

Thirdly, the "Holy Spirit" is the inner Source of human transcendental consciousness. It is the intermediate "chain" that links the soul with the Spirit. Love is the "glue" that brings, and holds, them together. Without the action of this Spirit, communion with God would be impossible.

In the bottomless inner cavern, or "abyss," selfhood evaporates, vanishes, ceases even to have meaning. Then, the individual soul touches the Life of the All Itself, Absolute or Spirit. At the other end of the spectrum of being, this same soul touches the conscious mind, bringing it into unity with that Spirit. Here, all distinctions fade away.

The German mystics described some areas within inner space as the "still wilderness," or the "lonely desert of Deity." This was because, at this stage of the mystical experience, it appears that, although one has gone very deeply into the unconscious Mind, God is nowhere to be found in a recognizable form. This has been called the "limitless abyss," and is sensed as nonpersonal, often empty, lifeless, or barren.

Still, in a subtle, indescribable, somewhat frustrating and unclear way, the Absolute is sensed to be communicating to the soul. Here, the mystic senses the strong forces represented by another trinity. For she feels the intuitions of 1) creation,

2) temporary existence, and 3) dissolution. Creation is, in Hindu mythology, symbolized by Brahma, temporary preservation by Vishnu, and inevitable dissolution by Shiva. Neoplatonists had their own trinity of modes of the One: He/She was presented as: 1) the Absolute, 2) the Logos or Maker, and 3) the divine Essence.

The mystic John Scotus Erigena (810-877) elaborates: "The three persons of the Trinity...are modes under which our mind conceives the divine substance."

Julian of Norwich (died 1416), a wellknown mystic, became renowned as the "poetess of the Trinity." She "saw" the "Fatherhood, Motherhood, and Lordhood" as one, in this way presenting a unique trinity. Of God, she said, "He is our Mother, Brother, and Savior." "Might," she said, was "Father," and "wisdom...Mother," and "love...Lord."

God, said Paul, is "above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:6) Whatever they might have thought about the "mystery of the trinity, all mystics everywhere agree that their God, the only real God, is Love. "Thou, my God, who art love,..." began Nicolaus of Cusa (1400-1464). Beyond Love is nothing that is amenable to human consciousness, but only unfathomable infinity. Love is all that we have of God, all that we can know of God, but Love is quite enough. It is all that we need of God.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 50/ A CLARIFICATION OF THE MYSTICAL TRINITY

\*\*\*

Weak, paralyzed, sad, and poor were the traditional images of God offered by the standard organized churches. So, naturally, mystics sought for visions of greater dynamism and beauty.

They also defined the "kingdom." While the secular churches tried to falsify various political structures as manifestations of that kingdom, mystics pointed out that the word "kingdom" means "domain of a king."

Christ, they said, had absolutely **no** interest in ruling mountains, pastures, rivers, and countries. He was apolitical. Especially after having seen the vicious and brutal atrocities promoted by politics, so were many mystics. No, Christ was interested in ruling only heartminds. Therefore, his "kingdom" existed as an allegorical structure within the human heartmind. In time, as loving people came together for Love, it might represent even a literal "kingdom," but would not be geographically limited. It would be a worldwide "inner" government of Love. Its subjects would be known not by formal affiliations. Nor would they be identified by citizenship in a particular country. They would be known only by their practices of Love. The mystic William Law (1686-1781) defined this kingdom as "eternal nature." Jesus said that it was "within you." (Lk. 17:21)

This "kingdom" was threefold, reflecting the trinity. The "Father" manifested as fire, that is, light, warmth, and support for life. the Son" manifested as this very light in the human heart. The "holy ghost" was manifested as "Spirit," which is also generated by the other two. It is this trinity of fire (burning, passionate Love), light (wisdom, understanding) and Spirit (the deeper levels of the Mind) that collectively constitute the inner "kingdom of God." ([Law borrowed some of his thoughts from his mentor Jakob Boehme (1575-1624)]

Another "threefold" design of the Absolute, common among mystics, is the more generic but profound Light, Life, and Love.

Light, in the mystical literature, is the perfect symbol of pure Being. In the mystical trinity, light is the "Father." It is regarded as "uncreated." The pure Being



produced by it is still in a state of wholeness or oneness. It has not yet "differentiated." In other words, light represents the condition of Mind when it is one single focus, on one single task: Pure Love. The Mind in this condition is not even dreaming up the world, but is potential and still. This light cannot be understood or even explained intellectually, but it is known to "him who loves." In Dionysian mystics, this is the state symbolized by "dazzling darkness," a light so bright that it blinds the inner eye, and so appears to be "darkness." It is the inner "Father" or Fountain, Source of the universe.

In another, but related usage, this light is the bringing to awareness of the "material, external" cosmos. So, it is the same Mind, in the active proliferation of dreams. It is the "ten thousand things" of Taoism, the polymorphic and multiplied expressions of many thoughts, all arising from the "simple" or "single" principle of unified, undivided Lovemind. This "Father" is the "supreme Subject" of the cosmos, the Origin of all godhood in every creature and being. He/She is the ultimate Ground of all being. All live "in Him/Her." His/Her attention is turned always towards the Son, as a mirror of eternal wisdom. That great wisdom, in turn, causes creatures to loop that same attention back to the Father. In other words, when a mystic is wise enough, the wisdom of God in her will turn her towards the contemplation of God, in this way returning her Mindenergy to its original Source.

The "Son" is the veiled regulator of the universe. This is the "generated thought" of the Father, in whom, says Ruysbroeck, the Father "contemplates Himself and all things." The Son is that part of the psyche which controls and modifies the dream. So, it is deeply unconscious. It is the Logos, or the "soul" within "matter." This means that all matter is pervaded by living thought, because it is nothing but live images in the dream of cosmic Mind. The Son represents the Father's Mind in its function of forming concepts, which are then projected into "space" as "material and external" things. It is "eternally generated" by the "Light" of the Father. The Son is also the total collection of all those unmanifested or potential thoughts in the Father. When those concepts are poured forth into the universe, or manifested, they are also collectively the "Son." The Son is the perfect expression of the Father's character. This is the part of the infinite Mind that becomes personal and lovable, accompanying and guiding the mystic on her wonderful adventure. This Son is also the deepest nuclear principle or power which sustains the universe. This is the hilarious, bumptious activity of the birds, the movements of waves, the playing and working of human beings. It is the swelling of buds during the Season of Resurrection, the Spring. It is the sacrificial beauty of the flower. This is the "Christhood of nature."

The "Holy Spirit" is the principle of active, dynamic Love itself. It can specifically be pinpointed as the Love between the part of the inner Mind called the "Father" and that called the "Son. But it is also our Love for God and for each other. "The love

wherewith we love is the holy spirit," said the mystic Eckhart (1260-1327). " It is attraction, and an interface between the transcendental and created worlds. It partakes of both. Aquinas (1225-1274) defined it as "the love wherewith God loves Himself." And God "loves Himself" through the mystic. Aquinas says that the love of God for us, and ours for Him/Her, both "belong" to the Holy Spirit. The mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) calls this "fruitive love."

By way of quick summary: The Father is life, the Son light, and the Holy Spirit Love. The father is Absolute and Source, the son the dynamic flux of continuous change, the Holy Spirit desire.

The Holy Spirit, as desire for God, is the agent which triggers the fusion between selfhood and the Absolute Self. Under its influence, these two merge. For the soul, very deeply ensconced in the unconscious Mind, is driven by an urge to return to its Source. This is the magnetism behind mysticism. It is the reason why the Way is so impelling to a certain psychological type. This is also part of the longing desire of the Absolute, which is symmetric with the impulse of the soul for union. Nothing but union will satisfy it, and nothing but union will satisfy God.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 51/ THE MYSTERIES OF "PREINCARNATION" AND INCARNATION

\*\*\*

The bastard brother or evil twin of religion was how the old heresiologists (haters of heresy or wrong teaching) defined mysticism--at least, some schools. Mysticism appropriates what it needs from religion, and then, often radically, modifies it to serve its own purposes. Then, it throws the rest away, like so much trash. No wonder that, at least to the strict and constricted, mysticism seems irreverent.

This is what it did with the Trinity. This was also how it handled the doctrine of the Incarnation-- a teaching particularly friendly to the mystical view.

Most Christians still believe, as people did in Medieval times, and earlier, that the "Incarnation" is a teaching about **only** Jesus of Nazareth. The story tells how his pre-existent soul, in the form of the Logos, which "was God," descended into a flesh-and-blood body. Many mystics, like a large number of early Christians, hold that pre-incarnational existence is and was not unique to Jesus. They believe that the same soul (consciousness) that exists after our death also symmetrically existed before our birth. If death proves that the soul is in no way dependent on the body for survival, why should it not be postulated to have existed before birth? But if this fantastic notion were true, wouldn't someone somewhere have memories of this prebirth life?

Many claim to. They further claim that their memories, which are generously seasoned with large portions of imagination, constitute a body of evidence for "preexistence." This is the belief that the soul existed before birth, in another

dimension. This "Home" from which the soul descended to earth is comparable to the "heaven" of Christianity.

The majority of the world's population has always believed in polybiography, more commonly called "reincarnation." This view holds that the soul does exist before birth. But again, it might be objected that you personally have no memories of that time.

But look at just how frail and full of holes is human memory. You lived for twenty-four hours every day, for 365 days, during your first year on earth. Even if you, like most people, have no memories of this time, you do not, cannot, suggest that that year never happened to you. The same is true of your second year, your third, your fourth. Out of all those thousands of days, most people can remember very little.

Besides, metaphysicists teach that, at birth, nature provides a great kindness by supplying "karmic amnesia," so that we do not enter on our new life carrying the old baggage-- a mountain of it-- from previous lives. Not that we are completely blank slates. Every person is born with a very defined personality, and a set of strong likes and dislikes. These are not physically genetic, but I suggest that they are "karmogenetic," or carried over as a part of our larger soulpersonality. Very young people, also, might well have many more memories than we give them credit for. They are simply preverbal, and so can't share all the vivid drama going on inside their heads.

At any rate, every time a soul comes to the earth, it is another opportunity for the emergence of the divine Life of Love. For earth is the perfect laboratory for the creation of those states of consciousness that allow a person to become aware of her spiritual potential. The schoolcourse offered on earth is Love 101, and related, more advanced ones, in the same area-- agapology, the psychology of Love.

So, mystics regard the Incarnation, not merely as a historical event that occurred two thousand years ago, but as a drama that is repeated with every birth. Every human being is really a magnificent spiritual being moving through a temporary "physical" experience. Every time a baby is born, the Absolute gets another chance newly, through new eyes, to discover Itself, and to walk the exciting spiritual path anew.

In this incarnation, the Logos, the divine expression of Reality, as the Love-experience, penetrates the lower, duller realms of the universes. /This it does through every act of Love, for every act of Love is an enlightenment-event. This "penetration" of the "physical" world by the Logos of God "saves" that world from ignorance and from being overwhelmed by the terrible/beautiful force of karma.

The world of people is literally "rescued" from its otherwise dismal karmic destiny by an infusion of Reality in the form of the Spirit, and this happens all the time, everywhere, in every heart. It is amplified and enhanced whenever anyone has a mystical experience. So, every mystic greatly enriches the world simply by her

enlightened presence. Her activities of Love amplify this effect. This also redefines, incidentally, the word "Savior," which no longer refers exclusively or only to the historical Jesus Christ, but to all who follow his bright, compassionate Way. These "let God into the world" through loving each other, and all creation.

So, every life, not just that of Jesus, is "divine" and archetypal. This means that the greatest drama of the cosmos-- loss, ignorance, selfdamnation, enlightenment, liberation, and salvation-- is worked out in every life.

So, with every birth, the Logos of God is, to use the word of Nicolaus of Cusa (1400-1464), "humanified." And with every awakening to full enlightenment, human beings are symmetrically "deified."

The mystic Boehme (1575-1624) says that the "eternal Word" must "become man," and be "born in you." This embodies the same principle as that of Angelus Silesius (1624-1677): "Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, Until He's born in you, still are you forlorn." This mystical experience is a higher octave of the meaning of "incarnation." For this is its spiritual meaning. This special, direct "knowing of God," this gnosis, was called by the Greek mystics "hypostatic union." ("Hypostatic" is a word relating to a certain special type of intuitive understanding.)

When this happens, the "breach" between the world of appearances or *maya* or "illusion," on the one hand, and Reality, on the other, is bridged. Reality is then superimposed onto the world of illusion. And although the mystic continues to live in this common world, she does so now with new eyes and a new heart. She has been electrified and burned to ashes by the Power of incandescent, luminescent Love, and from those ashes, like the Phoenix, has arisen a reborn being.

This new life liberates her from the gigantic burdens of the past, with all their guilts, and from the future, with all their worries. So, huge quanta of psychic energy are liberated within her, since they are no longer fed into these inner black holes of fear. She is freed from many selfcreated hells.

God talks to Catherine of Siena (died 1380) about the "bridge of My only-begotten Son," which "reaches from heaven to earth." "Humanity is joined to the greatness of Deity thereby." It is, says God, "the union I have made with man." This bridge, God explains, was created to bring "true happiness."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 52/ PANTHEISM AND MYSTICISM, AND JESUS AS THE ARCHETYPAL PATTERN OF THE MYSTIC

\*\*\*

Nature becomes God when loved, and the lover becomes God when loving. "The communication of Grace to nature," says Julian of Norwich (died 1416), "[is] that the second Person [of the trinity] should become our Mother." This second aspect is

usually regarded as Son or Logos, but Julian was saying that God uses it to facilitate our inner rebirth. So, it plays the part of goddess or feminine symmetry with God. It is that aspect of divinity that nurtures, nourishes, and tenderly cares for us.

This process is designed so that it can be assimilated by all, not just by a chosen few. Like breathing, it is a universal life-supporting, although spiritual, process. This kind of transformation and rebirth was not just a pretty idea, but an actual experience granted by grace. (Grace is the Power of Love's unearned gifts, bestowed by the Absolute.)

This entire rebirth process includes, but is not limited to, "absorption" into the mystical "body" of the Absolute. This "body" is, from one view, the communion of loving beings, or mystics, everywhere. Although they have no religion in common, and want none, mystics enjoy an international, even interplanetary, Communion of Love.

Their greatest experience, their inner union, is not artificial, a hallucination of the senses. To the contrary, it alone portrays the physical and illusory world as everywhere saturated by Reality in the form of Mind. As we saw in the discussion of immanence, there is not a particle of "matter" anywhere that is not indwelt by this creator-Mind, the Dreamer of the world. This is a detailed way of saying that God is everywhere, or "omnipresent."

So, the natural and "physical" world becomes the vehicle, manifestation, or reflection of spiritual Mind. This is the most powerful and solid metaphysical basis for mysticism. God, awakened as perfect Love in the heartmind, is seen to dwell not only there, but, by projecting itself, in the entire world. For the mystic, this transforms the world and the self with a single stroke, "resurrecting two birds with one crystal." When seen in this way, the world is "very good," even perfect, just as it is. This realization returns us to the principle that the mystic seeks elastically, fluidly to adapt to the cosmos as she finds it. She does not arrogantly expect the cosmos to adapt to her. She drops wishes, demands, and expectations.

Looking at this world through your mind is the Way in which God comes to know Him/Herself. As the Hindu mystical proverb says, "Water makes everything wet, but not itself. Fire burns all things, but fire does not burn fire. The sword cuts all things, but not its own blade. So, the knower knows everything, but not Itself directly." In other words, the way that God comes to know Him/Herself is by pouring that Self into a billion billion mirrors and then gazing into them-- through your and my mind. Everytime someone has a mystical experience, this is just yet another way that God comes to know another portion of Him/Herself. The world is a vehicle and means for the Selfawareness of God. God sprays his/Her very being into the world of matter.

But this does not mean, as in pantheism, that God is only the material universe. For God also manifests as Mind-- yours, mine, and ours-- and everyone else's. It is clearly the teaching of incarnation that prevents the mystic from falling into

pantheism. For pantheism teaches that God is nothing but the material universe itself, while mysticism teaches that God is the Mind that dreams up the universe. Both teach that God is "in" everything and everyone, but the views are far from identical.

For pantheism is reductionistic. That is, it reduces God, saying that God is **only** or **merely** the material cosmos, and nothing more. Mysticism, by stark contrast, is a spiritual idea. While pantheism unites God and matter by trying to "materialize" God, mysticism unites them by "spiritualizing" matter.

Another problem with pantheism is that its "God" is seen as a naked force, an essence, without Mind, intelligence, wisdom, or personality. This is how some ancient Hindus viewed the force that they called "Brahma," which they said was universally pervasive. Mysticism insists, by contrast, that God is adorable in the literal sense, for He/She is Love. In pantheism, union is reduced to absorption of the creature by a massive force. /This might be analogous to being "assimilated by the Bork," in the science-fiction series "Star Trek." In mysticism, union could not be more different. For it is the loving, voluntary communion between two minds, gently merged in light. /They both generate tender, exquisite, warm Love between themselves, and so, it is humanspiritual by nature.

The very fact that such a loving communion is possible, and in fact, represents the very lifezenith of the mystics, verifies that they possess a high spiritual nature. And we are all only too familiar with the flipside of this high nature of Love, the lower nature of fear. This view gives to all human nature two aspects. The ancient Greeks called these "flesh" and "spirit." Many mystics call them more simply the "lower and higher natures."

The challenge of the mystic is to discover, awaken, and then cultivate her highest nature, that of unconditional, universal Love. Happily, she is able to walk this difficult path without feeling terribly alone and isolated. For the great teachers and masters, such as Jesus, served as prototypes and archetypes of the highest aspects of the human condition. This means that what they were, we all shall be.

For example, just as the being of Jesus Christ can conceptually be divided into a human self, called "Jesus," and a divine Self, called "Christ," so can everyone's being be so understood. While the phrases "John Christ" and "Mary Christ" might sound odd to our ears, so accustomed to using "Christ" as if it were Jesus' last name, this usage is more accurate. For if and when John and Mary come into creative and productive union with the Love-nature deep within the unconscious Mind, they will have been literally "christened," or "Christed."

It is precisely because of this distinction between Jesus and Christ that mystics have never made the common error of worshipping the man Jesus. That is not what Jesus himself wanted. He wanted, instead, for his followers to worship the inner God. That God dwelled perfectly in him, true, but it also lived within the heartmind

of every person. That is why, in the Gospel of John, he explained that, unless he left, the "comforter" or Paraclete could not come. For as long as people were worshipping the external, literal, human Jesus, they were effectively blocked from seeing the God in their own hearts. In this sense, Jesus saw himself as a distraction from God, precisely and paradoxically because he was God's perfect manifestation. Because of his own radical enlightenment, even his lifestory contains lessons and symbols.

This Paraclete, this Holy Spirit, for example, is "born," in the metaphor of Jesus' birth, in a "stable." In other words, rebirth occurs within the very midst of the lower animal nature. It grows in "poverty," which is its temptation, mortification, solitude, and rejection of too much material or sensual indulgence. As it begins actively to live through the person, she increasingly turns her life over to the practices of Love, including service and contemplation. Love moves her to "sacrifice" her life-- or, at least huge chunks of her timenergy-- to help and serve others.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Chapter 53/ THE CROSS IN THE ROSE: THE "DARK NIGHT" AND THE "REBIRTH"

\*\*\*

You are "Jesus" Christ, and He/She is you. by analogy and symbol. For, as we have seen, the life of Jesus is/was archetypal, meaning that it is illustrative or symbolic of your own spiritual, inner life and mine.

This seems great when we see Jesus as master of the universe, subjecting natural law and experiencing the miraculous. Who would not want to live such an abundant and joyful life, always at one with the profound tranquillity of the inner God or Love-nature? To "be Jesus," or even to reflect his life, one comments with a childlike smile, would be the greatest possible destiny.

But the flipside of his, and every, life is the sacrifice, pain, and darkness, the utter isolation and aloneness that his spiritual quest sometimes made him feel. These states, which mystics call the "inner desert" or "the dark night of the soul," are all poignantly and touchingly summed up by his words on the cross: "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

To hear this spiritual giant of a man express his own doubt and fear links him more solidly with us than could any other factor. It is his essential humanness, his human weakness, which impellingly attracts us to this "true man" who was also "true God." We don't enjoy seeing him in pain and despair. That's not the point at all. But we can relate to this man, weighed down and crushed by the burdens of hopelessness and earthly life. In fact, in some ways, he is most glorious when he is most human. This paradox is extended to the fact that his moment of greatest triumph is also his greatest crisis.

People were usually crucified naked. This was yet another part of their deep humiliation. At this moment, at any rate, Jesus' very soul was naked and exposed. He felt so terribly vulnerable. Here, at the final chapter of his life, we have a touching portrait of human helplessness. The Master of the universe hung helplessly, agonizingly, in physical and mental hell. He was crucified on the intersection of the coming together of opposites-- the "yang" energy represented by the vertical pole of the cross, the "yin" aspect by the horizontal. So, his ego was crucified on the sigmoid line that divides yin from yang in the yin-yang symbol. That line is the perfect Tao, or expression of divine will.

This state illustrates and portrays, in the life of Christ, which was itself a parable, all the pains which we all must experience. We all undergo "crucifixions in miniature" during our lives. That is why, in fact, the invitation of Jesus Christ is, "Lose thy self, pick up thy cross, and follow Me."

This, though, is the agony that leads to ecstasy. The way that the cosmos is structured, there can occur no growth without pain. "No pain, no gain" is a truth as well as a truism.

Mystics are hyperelastic people who squarely, unblinkingly face the existence of pain in their lives. They are not whiners or complainers, who act like five-year-olds in the presence of even massive, overwhelming agony. They never follow the common path, "When in trouble, when in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout."

Nor do they resort to temper tantrums, indulging in the frustrating "Why me?" game. Instead, they try to take a clear-sighted and objective view of their lives, pain and all, and ask how they can use even the terrible and terrifying power of pain and suffering to bring them closer to Reality, the inner Absolute. This inner courage by no means indicates that they have deadened their nerves to pain. To live as a dead person, out of fear, is to close the single mindgate that permits the entrance of both pain and pleasure. No, mystics are among the most tender and sensitive people, made even more so by their empathy and Love.

Due precisely to this exquisitely sensitive Love, all mystics must, sooner or later, pass through a phase or period called the "dark night." During this time, often after a number of initial very bright and light-flooded encounters with the inner nature, somehow the inner light appears to get shut off. This happens rather suddenly, so abruptly that it can be a real jolt. Why, however, does this darknight happen? Several factors converge to guarantee it. First, the mystic's nervous system has become overloaded by exposure to dazzling inner Light. Second, added to this exhaustion is the inner will, which wants more than anything to strengthen the mystic's Love and resolve, and uses the darknight to accomplish this.

During the darknight, mystics, who thrive on God as on air, can't seem to find a trace of the divine anywhere in their lives. At their moment of greatest crisis, it really feels as if Love has completely abandoned them. As we'll see, in order for the



darknight to work, they must pass through these feelings.

Actually, the darknight is a very good event. If it did not happen, the mystic would never grow up into a strong, wise, independent, selfreliant being. The mystic, true, is supposed to rely always on God, not on herself, for everything. But she is not to do this in a childish way. She is also not to do it in a pathological way, as if God were a crutch to support and reinforce her weakness. Before one can rely fully on God, paradoxically, one must become fully adult, fully selfreliant.

So God allows, even engineers, the tragic crisis of the darknight.

The mystic is challenged to believe that her soul has deliberately dreamed up the present situation out of Love for her. The soul longs to give her the very finest, most valuable gift imaginable: spiritual growth in Love. This package is wrapped in blood and tears. It is not pretty, but it contains a luminous glory that is far more precious than a box of rubies, emeralds, diamonds, and sapphires. For this gift is spiritual treasure. The mystic's inner strength and power of faith are being put to the test: Can she really suffer, with God nowhere in sight, and still hold on to the realization that the loss and pain are "gifts" given by her soul in order to perfect Love?

Even inner absorption in the Love-nature might not be enough to allow her to ignore the bombardment from the "environment." (The pain literally arises from the inner Mind, at the levels of soul and spirit.) She feels attacked. The need is for her to go deeply within, to withdraw from any attempt to "fix" the world. Then, she must try to come to the point where, recognizing that she is totally out of control, she simply finds detachment from any outcome. She must be compelled to the point where she really does not care what happens. She is forced to the state where she knows that, whatever happens will be for the good. This is the disguised grace of the death of control, which can, if successful, lead in time to the death of the egoself. (That, in turn, can lead to her whole new identity as a "Christ.")

She knows that the world is still a beautiful place. It is the loveliest of divine roses, and the rose is the supreme floral symbol of the mystic's opening to the sun of divine Love. (In old mystical writings, the rose was called the "mystic rose.") But the cross is deeply embedded in the petals of this rose, and, if she looks clearly enough at its petals, she will see that the dew shining there is really tears-- her tears. /The cross inside the rose is crystal, implying that only clarity of a lucid mind will aid her to survive the darknight.

Jesus, she knows, was a template, an archetypal model, a symbolic life that represented her own. His crucifixion was terrible and agonizing, but it was followed by the incredible, bottomless joy of the resurrection. So, despite all its blood and tears, the life of the mystic in the world does have a "happy ending." She does end her life "living happily ever after."

If the life of Christ Jesus can be allegorized, as the mystics insist, and applied to the life of every person, then each life is shot through with the golden rays of divine

Love-- even, or especially, during those moments when we feel abandoned, isolated, even betrayed.

Speaking of Jesus, in the old church, Christmas was celebrated by three masses: one, at midnight, recognizes the "eternal generation of the Son," the second aspect of God in the trinity. The second, at dawn, celebrates the incarnation. The third, later, recognized and rejoiced over "his birth in the heart." So, Christmas was a celebration not only of the fact, "Christ is born," but also of, "Born in Christ." This latter is the "eternal" birth, which the "Father/Mother" never stops "bearing," but which is continuous in all persons.

This inner "birth" of the "Christ" has both personal and cosmic ramifications. Eckhart said, "The soul brings forth the Son." So, we must descend to the soul-level of Mind for this enlightenment. This "birth" is, in fact, the first step of the truly mystical path.

How does this occur? In deep contemplation and/or meditation, the mystic allows all thought to settle into stillness. This she must do over and over, thousands of times, during her lifetime. But one special day, when she enters this stillness, she changes. It is subtle, but when she emerges from her meditation quiet, she has begun reidentification. If her name is Mary Smith, she no longer feels that this is her truest Self, or even her real name. It is at this point in transformation that many, not all, mystics actually change their egonames. The being who now lives in the body of Mary Smith feels that she is "lying" when she says that she is Mary Smith. For that is no longer the being whom she feels that she has become.

This type of subtle, almost imperceptible, change often marks true mystical transformation. Mystical experience is very, very rarely bells, trumpets, and whistles, and almost never fireworks. Mystical transformation, instead, consists of minor and subtle inner shifts, changes in thought, concept, and worldview. It occurs mostly through fine-tuning, not explosions. The effects are cumulative, so the mystic does not need to be hit in the face with a four-by-six. The gentle tickling of an inner feather will usually do the trick. Zen masters say, "If a person is not ready for enlightenment, ten thousand words will have no effect. But if she is ready, the snap of a single twig will trigger the inner luminosity."

So, as the mystic sinks down into the stillness, there floats up from very deep levels of the unconscious Mind an awareness of a different Self. It is deeper and more loving, more joyful and tranquil, than the egoself. Both coexist for a time, until gradually the mystic de-identifies with the ego, "Mary Smith," and re-identifies with this new and transcendental Self. In Western Christian tradition, this is called "regeneration," or "rebirth." And this new "Self" is the humanspirit fusion in the soul. At this point, the aspiring mystic is not divine; but no longer is she only human.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 54/ BEGINNING "BABY" STEPS: IDENTIFYING WITH THE NEW SELF OR SOUL

\*\*\*

A being of glowing, indestructible unstained Light has emerged from the chrysalis of the mystic's egoself. That old self, after the darknight, is left behind, hanging on the cross of Tao, or the will of God. For God's will was its death, even though that might well have triggered pain responses.

Human beings do not create the "new Self" revealed during a mystical experience. Instead, they simply discover it. It is created entirely at an unconscious level by the incubation of Love.

You make a conscious choice to Love-- consistently, unconditionally, and universally. You think about this regularly. You strive consciously to make Love a tool for the restructuring of personality. All these efforts drive Love into the unconscious Mind, which never stops. Day and night, your unconscious Mind continues to work on your spiritual development, because it knows that this is the only valuable pursuit in the world. In the final analysis, it is the only thing worth doing. So, unconsciously, you are compelled to work on this Self of Love, joy, and peace, day and night, without ceasing. The soul is obsessed with your inner or spiritual growth. In the final analysis, it really cares for, and about, nothing else. It will do anything, out of its Love, to cause you to grow. It will expose you to every kind of pain, disappointment, illness, and poverty if it feels that your spirituality can be enriched by a single psychon. This is its great gift to you, out of Love.

Nothing that you "do" can evoke this new Self. It must be triggered or awakened by that same Lovepower that formulated and created It. Love continues to nourish and perfect It. This new Self is the soul, but stripped of its negativities and impurities. It is designed specifically to sweep the mind into the mystical state. Fuller identification with your soul is a vital step on the way to identification with the perfect inner Spirit, Love, or the Absolute, which comes later. Meanwhile, identification with the soul is recognizing your Self as being, not the ego (Mary Smith), but a timeless, spaceless, birthless, deathless nonphysical being. Its only purpose is to learn, and reflect, Love.

So, when the time is right, the egomind is abruptly made aware of this higher (deeper) Self. And when the time is right later, the Self is made suddenly aware of the Absolute within.

Some practical changes occur as you identify more and more with your soul. For

one thing, you are not so limited to living on the material plane that you suffer from the extremely common pathology of material obsession. As you grow more spiritual, or, literally, soulful, you spend more time and energy "going within", studying the mindscapes of the inner psyche. An awareness begins to dawn about the impermanence of material things. This gives rise to a strong and strange sense of euphoria. You realize that the entire material world is hurrying to turn to dust, but that the mind is forever. You begin to turn your mind from the frivolous to truly significant pursuits. You become much more introspective. You like meditation and dreaming. You grow into a quieter, more silent person. You begin to find your own mind immensely fascinating and entertaining. A practical definition of a person who has begun this voyage inward is "one who enjoys her own company." Mystics do NOT become hermits, or antisocialites. They might seek a brief vacation from social stimuli, but this does not, in the healthy mystic, evolve into a lifestyle. No, the healthy and balanced mystic remains interpersonally active and socially alive. But her relationship to friends and community has changed dramatically.

Not all mystics are called to be teachers. But whatever you do, your attitudes and behaviors will be remarkably altered by the mystical reidentification with the soul. For every mystic becomes a server. And chances are good that you will want to create, design, or discover a life of maximum service to others.

The "new consciousness" that rises in you is "divine," or Love-saturated. To be reborn means to return to the inner world of soul and Spirit. This implies that, whatever you do in the "outer" world, your real career is that of psychonaut, or inner explorer. Anything else will be secondary in importance to this great calling.

In this inner world, spirit or Love rules, and human, even animal, nature obeys. Further, the soul, knowing that God is Love, becomes more Godlike every day, as it continuously polishes and improves its own Love-nature. This is accomplished through the consistent living of kindness, goodness, detachment, toleration, and related qualities.

The legend of Jesus' birth shows, as noted, that the Christself is born in the very living-place of the "animal" nature. As Jesus was born of a "pure" virgin, so as not to be "stained" by the human nature, so our personal rebirth occurs through an archetypal virgin called Sophia, or "wisdom."

This is all part of the soul's growth to the point where it can be a "mirror" of the Being of God. In Zen, they call meditation "the polishing of the mirror," using a similar parable. The goal is to keep the mirror as "dust-free" as possible. (Dust represents the tiny impurities that add up to form an opaque film that blocks the light.)

As noted before, mystics have made valiant attempts to create "inner maps," or "maps of the inner world" by describing their inner voyages. While we can use them, the journey itself must be personally made. It is unique for everyone who takes the

trip. We must step carefully on the inner path, and make no pretense to precision. For this trip, like this life, is an experiment. And the only way to tell how the experiment is going to turn out is to DO THE EXPERIMENT. St. Bonaventura (1221-1274) says that this experience can arise only from grace, not doctrine. It comes, he says, from desire, not intellect, from prayer, not mere schooling, of "that fire which inflames all, and rapt us in God."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 55/ THREE TYPES OF MINDMAPS

\*\*\*

It's terrifying to become lost in the psyche. Its caverns are endless, its seas bottomless, its grottoes infinite, its inner paths without limit. That is, in fact, why mystics always make "maps." These are simply descriptions of their own inner voyages to the Center of the soul.

Mysticmaps seem unreliable, though, simply because each inner trip is a unique and very different experience. Each voyage, by and within each mind, is incomparable. Some of these "maps" or descriptions might seem even irreverent. But we can still all be very grateful that mystics have left a fairly long and detailed record of their adventures in the psyche. Collectively, these descriptions form the matrix or backbone of mystical literature.

These diagrams, insofar as they can be abstracted, detail the inner history of mystical consciousness. In the forms of dreams, poetry, songs, biographies, descriptions, fragments, philosophies, and aphorisms, these exhibit an almost infinite diversity.

Still, they are somewhat thematic or topical. Since all writing depends on, not just the subject being described, but the temperaments and personalities of the describers, this applies even more to such a subjective subject as mysticism. Also, the entire issue of relative accuracy is blurred, and even sabotaged. This is because no complete description of the Subject (the transcendent Absolute) is even possible. And all writers agree on this. So, we're left with an attempt to describe the indescribable, or at least, to indicate some of its broad and abstract outlines. Be warned before you read any mystical works: Almost every statement will be obscure, oblique, suggestive, even poetic and ethereal. The last thing that you are ever going to find, among a bunch of mystics, are precise scientific descriptions, complete with measurements and accurate calibrations.

The Absolute is much more amenable to description by the creative than the literal type of person. So the visionary or poet is probably better equipped for this task than the philosopher, metaphysician, or scientist. At any rate, the less literal

and precise the descriptions pretend or aspire to be, the better. For the less literal a description is, the greater the suggestibility and elasticity of the symbols used. More truth will be implied by this kind of amorphous, nebulous, or plastic symbolism than from a more rigid or literal form.

Good symbolic writing, then, must be more than mere diagram or mere allegory. It must engage the deeper passions, including a passion for Love, and for beauty. It will have minimal appeal to the brain, for its target will be the awakened and lightfilled heart.

There are three great families of symbols. Each appeals to a particular deep craving or need of the heartmind.

The first is that hunger for unobstructed, unrestricted freedom and adventure that causes people to want to live as "pilgrims" and "wanderers." In a way, it is really a longing to escape from the "normal" world and its many obligations, mindnumbing boredoms, and constrictions. Expanded, this is the great archetypal dream of flying, of dropping all baggage and soaring into the wide, free sky. It is the perennial fantasy of the wanderer, completely free of responsibility, who just wants to "play" her way through life.

There is within everyone a distant indefinable longing. This is usually best felt when looking at a clear view of the Milky Way on a moonless night in the country. There is a strange, semiconscious hunger and yearning for a "lost home," another "world," where we **really** belong. It is almost as if we are all aliens here on earth. And, from the soul's perspective, we are. We are all "JVTP"-- just visiting this planet.

However much we delude ourselves, no one lives in this place. We are all just visitors, just passing through. We are tourists, explorers, students, teachers. We all also know that if we spend an average lifetime on earth, that's only the blink of the cosmic eye-- no time at all. We long for some Somewhere more "real" and more satisfying. Deep in the soul, it is almost as if we can remember such a perfectly peaceful and balanced place, but it hovers just beyond our clear mental grasp. Still, we long for it. Even more importantly, many of us believe in it.

It is the archetypal Eden, the unspoiled, pristine, perfect Garden of Pleasure where our heart's desire is forever filled, where we want for nothing. There, we are filled, surrounded, and saturated with the ecstasy of perfect seamless Love.

\*\*\*

The second path is the next craving. It is that quest to link up, to merge minds and souls, with another. We long very deeply to understand and to be understood. We want to surrender our entire selves, in Love, so completely that we actually live "in" our beloved, and she "in" us. Of course, this perfect union is only very distantly approximated between and among human beings. But, again, we are haunted by its possibility, as if it really did happen to us at a time in the distant past, in a refreshing, comfortable, perfect lightfilled inner "space."

This is the quest of the Lover as archetype, and marks that mystic who emphasizes Love above all. Just in case you haven't noticed, this is the type of mystic that the writer of this book is. For them, perfect Love is the highest good conceivable.

\*\*\*

The third type of mystic is she who craves unstained perfection, and absolute inner purity. This person, too, has unformed half-memories, just barely unconscious, of what perfection "feels like." This is the one who longs to create perfect balance not only in the self but in the world. She longs for personal holiness, but knows that it will never come by selfimprovement, but only by selfabandonment.

\*\*\*

These three types of mystic, and accompanying symbolism, have naturally evolved into three paths or ways within the great Way of mysticism.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 56/ NEW VALUES, INTEGRATION OF OPPOSITES, AND MYSTICAL ELEVATION

\*\*\*

It's a great trip, the best you'll ever take. Mysticism is the path from the ordinary life to the sublime, beautifully transcendent. It is an inner journey of bewildering, dazzling imagery that burns away the old self with all its materialistic and sensual obsessions. It dramatically shifts the psychic Center, through an internal earthquake. The mystic becomes to universal Mind its "hands." As the *Theologia Germanica* states it, "It is by me and through me that God exists." The mystic's assignment is the "Mission: Improbable" of energetically igniting the fires of Love everywhere she goes.

The mystic priorities seem a bit odd, for we usually have things backwards and upside-down. Our crazy culture is so material-glutted that we have come to believe that things are more real than thoughts. Mystics oppose this dangerous nonsense. This illusion has created every form of horror and brutality, from greed. On the mystic's list, material things are way down towards the bottom.

Why is this? Because mystics believe that minds last forever. We all know that nothing material can last forever. Everything in the material universe is rushing to become dust. In Buddhist mysticism, this is the teaching called "impermanence." It applies to everything in the material world, but not to Mind. For Coremind is not made old by time, does not break down, or cease to be.

That is why the Absolute is Mind. Jesus commanded us not to "store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and rust consume..." Instead, he recommended, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." Mystics say that an investment in Mind is precisely this kind of "treasure." When you invest in Mind, you invest in eternity. When you invest in the material world, you invest in dust. At any rate, the

human body returns to dust as it biodegrades, and at that time, all one's material treasures are quite worthless. If a person has degenerated into egotism and greed, the soul then experiences a hellstate.

Mystics believe that Mindoperation survives death. The level of the unconscious called the "soul" has lived before this life and will live after this life is over. When you leave this world at death, you won't be able to take a single material thing-- not a grain of sand-- with you. But you will be taking your Mind. So, you will be taking your thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and other Mind-components. So, if you have allowed illusions to drive you into greed, your soul will begin to feel agonies of deep regret, as the "fires" of "hell." Since this is so, it is only reasonable to invest in your mind. This is best and most happily accomplished by learning the gentle arts of loving self and others.

So, although mystics are not big on getting "rich" materially, they are very interested in any factor that might enrich their minds. When the mystic leaves behind the visible world as the supreme value, she embraces as truly supreme the values of the intangible and invisible. She values such treasures of the Mind as intelligence, beauty, order, harmony, wisdom, goodness, kindness, and Love.

Remember that the mystical experience is not **just** a mindblowing experience of stunning joy and beauty, although it is certainly that. It is at its core a regenerative experience, which kills off the egoself (Mary Smith), and replaces it with a new Self of immense beauty, enormous wisdom and strength, and fathomless Love. After she increases her Love, her resonance with the Absolute, she is at last prepared to merge with it. When that finally happens, she is not only unified with, but possessed by, the indwelling Love. She then effortlessly and joyously allows Him/Her to take over.

Mystics have used the symbol of a blazing star to represent the inner Absolute, for it is a Source of light and warmth in the "darkness" of the unenlightened psyche. Also, the Ultimate is at first seen from a great psychic distance, as though unity with it were far away.

The mystic is inflamed with a Love that ignites her heart with a blazing passion to become "sacred." This is moral, ethical rebirth. For she is haunted by a powerful sense of inner disharmony in following the road of her lower, purely sensual, nature.

The more literal of the mystics describe this inner growth not as a "journey" at all, but as a series of inner alterations and subtle changes. What is changed by this inner "alchemy" is the soul, or the unconscious Mind at a fairly deep level. As this begins, it becomes ever clearer that "earthly" and "heavenly" are not two distinct and polarized adjectives, but two sides of the same coin. Both are "emanated" as the "Great Dream" by the one Mind. (Finite and infinite, and other pairs of apparent opposites, meld into sudden delightful fusion.)

They are reconciled into one Reality. The same ecstatic union fuses the Self and God. For it is all God. Everything is God projected, God dreaming. The entire



universe consists of nothing but the objects in the divine Mind or Dream. Thus, it follows that the Self is also "one" with this same Dreamer, i.e., projected from the Mind. This Self exists only "in" that Mind.

The great Quest is seen, by some mystics, as an "outer" or metaphoric search for an "outer" God. It begins, however, in every case, inwardly. For both paths exist equally in the Mind, and even the most exteriorized path is still really interior.

This remarkable experience initiates people into a new order of Reality and being. This is the state called "Love," and it is eternal (timeless) and everlasting. Human beings were created for precisely this end. Through utter and complete forgiveness, Love shatters the shackles of karma, and brings utter liberation. In this state, early Christians wrote, "All your sins are forgiven." (1 John 2:12)

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 57/ TYPES AND VARIETIES OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

\*\*\*

The long and winding road to the inner Absolute is described by two symbolic approaches: 1) "pilgrimage," as it is an extended inner trip, and 2) "purification," for this description is more literally what actually occurs.

This Quest blows all the circuitry of the nervous system with its unrelenting intensity. For it fulfills all desires. And it does this instantly. Here, human and Divine desire merge and become the same: Each powerfully, compellingly, longs for the same union. (It is a "one-pointed" concentration, to use the common Eastern term.) Mystics sublimate all other desires in this one gigantic sweeping tsunami of passion. This is the origin of the famous desire-free state of the mystic. This is nothing less than the utter satisfaction arising from Love. It is the supreme fact of the mystic's life. This union with Love is the hidden inner holy grail.

The Object of this life-quest is the most complex and intricate Being in the universe, since It is the inner Absolute. Mystics have strained at the uttermost boundary of language itself even vaguely to indicate anything about this Absolute. They have said repeatedly that it is "ineffable."

Still, mystics have marched courageously forward, attempting to delineate the Infinite in poor words. Each attempt, of course, is totally inadequate.

The first pattern common among mystics of many traditions is to present the Divine as a "person." This approach results in the famous "beatific vision." In this, God appears to be projected externally and far away. Technically, this kind of projecting of God into the "outer" world is called "exteriorization." Mystics who choose to express God as "Person" know fully well that they are using symbolic

language. They tend to favor the perspective called "emanation." (This teaches, as noted earlier, that the cosmos is projected "outside" of, and by, Mind.) These "personal" mystics symbolize their interior movement as an arduous journey from the "material" or sensory world to the "world" within, that of inner, spiritual perceptions. So, they usually are not interested in transmuting the life of the senses, but only in escaping it. Subjectively, the soul feels as if it were "outward bound."

The embrace of symbolic personalization (seeing God as exterior "person") allows for the creation of warm, intimate relationship with the inner "Other." This vision allows for the creation of an incomparably satisfying Love "between an humble soul and Thee," to use the words of the mystic Gertrude More (1606-1633). The language used is that of earthly lovers and their passions for each other. This is especially remarkable in the poetry of the Sufi mystics. For them their Love is an allconsuming heartfire.

Also, this personalization of what is essentially transpersonal or nonpersonal marks Christian mysticism. Also, orthodox Christianity insists on the "personal aspect of Godhead." Jesus himself used this kind of symbolic and friendly language when he called the Absolute "the Father." In this Way, Christ or God is not some incomprehensible, inconceivable, abstract Absolute, Ultimate, Reality, or Being. He/She is approached as if He/She were a "person," and that implies two components: intimacy with and desire for the inner Beloved. Many Christian mystics find this personalization of God to be their favorite mode of expression. These are the "person" mystics.

Second, there are the "place" mystics. They present God symbolically as an "inner country," or what we might in modern times call an "area of inner space."

Third, some mystics are "innertransformation" mystics. They present the Divine as a transcendent Life inherent in the Self and the world. They recognize that they have a "seed" or "embryo" of Light within them. Their goal is to cultivate this "seed" until it blossoms into the Love that will ultimately take over their lives. Their lives are marked by inner change, not "outward" search. Their set of favored symbols is often those which are organic representations of growth. They speak often of the "seed" of the inner Logos or Love-nature, and of the "blossom" or "flower" of active, awakened Love. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) is an "innertransformation" mystic. She writes, "My being is God, not by simple participation, but by a true transformation ..."

\*\*\*

Whatever its chosen mode of symbolic expression, mystical experience is presented in terms of a major theme. This appears in three modes: 1) the mystic quest or journey, 2) the "marriage" between God and the soul, and 3) the "great work" of inner "alchemy," in which the "lead" of the lower nature becomes the "gold" of the higher.

Now, let's look a little more closely at some of the symbolisms through which the infinite inner voyage is described or indicated. Perhaps the most common symbol of all is the "pilgrimage." A literal pilgrimage is a journey undertaken for sacred or spiritual purposes, often to some holy place. For example, the Pilgrims came to America in search of a viable and freer spiritual path.

A pilgrimage might also occur in search of a vital spiritual object, as, for example, the quest for the Holy Grail. In this case, it is most definitely a symbolic presentation of the ultimate inner Quest. Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Bunyon's *Pilgrim's Progress* are two allegorical tales of this variety. These stories are often sagas of the soul's journey to an inner state of peace, love, and joy which the mystics see as inner "heaven." For, to the mystic, even the traditional concept of heaven is allegorical. It represents to her, not a place in the sky, or in outer space, but deep within her heartmind. Heaven is not a literal place, but a condition. It is the condition of the soul when she is ensconced warmly and brightly in Divine Love. It also symbolizes her inner condition and feelings when she herself has perfected the nonjudgmental Love, universal, unconditional Love. The spiritual Quest "is itself a heaven," according to the mystic Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1142).

Like the literal pilgrim preparing for a literal voyage, the mystic must leave behind land, house, economic and financial affairs, material possessions, and indulgence in sensual avarice. This she does in order to intensify her concentration on the Quest. The inner pilgrim "maketh himself poor and bare." In old writings, this kind of Mindvoyager was called a "ghostly pilgrim," for the archaic meaning of "ghostly" was "spiritual:" "If thou wilt be a ghostly pilgrim, thou shalt make thyself naked of all that thou hast," said the mystic Walter Hilton (died 1396) He, in this way, expressed the common mystical teaching that all, everything, must be given up, released, dropped, in order to focus fullest attention on the Absolute alone. The mystic Jesus said, "You cannot serve two masters." Other mystics went further, noting that you cannot pursue two paths, and inner and an outer, without both suffering.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 58/ HIGH ETHICS AND THE MYSTICAL ENTRY INTO "INNER HEAVEN"

\*\*\*

In Love with the cosmos, at peace with the self. This is an accurate description of full mystical awareness. "Perfect love of God," said Hilton (died 1396), is the goal of mysticism. Every other mystic has wholeheartedly and singlemindedly agreed. Historically, pilgrimage became one of the most popular images in describing the mystic's inner journey from the outer to the inner world. It implied a shift away from "normal" life and its multiplicity of interests.

In many pilgrim-allegories, our hero is overtaken by a darknight, representing the soul's experience as described earlier. (This is a natural phase or period when one loses sight of God, and falls into despair.) Many allegories of the inner voyage constitute an important strain in mystical literature. The Sufi Assiz ibn Mohammed Nafashi wrote exactly this kind of archetypal classic, called *The Remotest Aim*. Here, as elsewhere, pilgrimage-symbolism appears in great detail, and evolves during the story. His goal, he says, not so allegorically, is "knowledge of God." The allimportant "mystic virtues" were presented as charity, humility, patience, and detachment.

The emphasis on these practical manifestations of compassion is a good illustration of how, in mysticism, spirituality is not just some academic abstract. Instead, its virtues are immediately expressed in high ethics. The exercise of these virtues is enough, say the Sufis, to make one "perfect in the knowledge of her goal," but she might still be deficient in the power of reaching it.

So, as already indicated, it is an invaluable and indispensable step, for the pilgrim-mystic, to drop all unnecessary baggage. This is, in fact, the very first step on her long and arduous journey inward. This baggage includes all superfluous memories, opinions, desires, expectations, demands, unnecessary intellect, and general emotional complexities. The goal of the mystic is inner emotional simplicity. So, she strips herself of all expectations and ornamental emotions, unnecessary emotional attachments, and responses dominated by her lower mind.

A great aspect of this occurs when the mystic ceases "judgment." Living the nonjudgmental Way of the mystic means that she stops judging the eternal value of people. But it also means much more: It implies that she no longer judges situations, events, feelings, or objects. Her revelation that **everything** is God externalized has led to the inevitable conclusion that, as the old song reminds us, everything is beautiful. Not only that, but she knows that everything is good-- even those things which seem the most horrible and hideous.

A practical definition of mystical "heaven" is being surrounded by things that you love. The mystic decides to make this happen, not by changing the "outer" world, but by changing her inner responses. As in the old rock-song, if she can't be with the things she loves, then she has decided to love the things she's with. She has made a decision to practice universal Love, which the Buddha called the "all-embracing Mind." Since she loves everything, nothing can make her miserable.

Take as an absurdly common example, the weather. Most people are brought down if the weather is "bad," and feel better if it is "good." So, they become the "marionettes" of the environment. By deciding that all weather is "good," she is never upset about it. Since she can't change it, resisting it is analogous to beating one's head against a brick wall. So, loving every kind of weather makes her happier every day. This principle applies to every area of life. In time, the mystic learns to love everything-- spiders and snakes included. Then, she essentially "lives in heaven."

The secret to living in heaven is simply to make a firm decision, and then, stick by it, to love everything. Conversely, every time you say, "I dislike" anything, or, worse, "I hate" anything, you move towards an inner state of increased hell. The mystic wants to get into, and stay in, heaven, because that's where Love lives. Therefore, the mystic does not evaluate her value, on the naive basis of material possessions. Only the most secure person in the world can afford to embrace the Way of simplicity, which is nongreed. The goal of the mystic is threefold: attraction, devotion, and elevation. The attraction is all about the Love that draws and binds her to the inner Beloved. Devotion is about her mental commitment to the Beloved over all else. And elevation means that she is lifted up, into the transcendental realm, by her Love. "The just man," says the mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), "goes toward God by inward love and perpetual activity..." This state of devoted Love creates a state of inner pacificity which the mystics call "inner rest." In the allegories of the pilgrimage, this state of consciousness is represented by the "tavern." It is Divine Love that is symbolized by the "wine."

Phase two follows: The journey to God gives way to the journey in God. Christian mystics call this the "unitive Way." Now that one has found the Fountain of inner Love, she begins to pour the sacred water of life outward, that others might drink. She begins, in other words, a life of active service, compassion, and Love "in" God. She takes no egocredit for this, but ascribes all goodness to God, guaranteeing the continuity of healthy humility.

Not that she is ever selfderogating. The mystic loves herself much too much for that. But seeing herself as a mirror of cosmic Lovemind allows her to tap into the Infinity at the core of her soulmind. When she is "in" God, she becomes a thousand times more productive.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Chapter 59/ PHASES OF THE MYSTICAL JOURNEY: THE SEVEN "VALLEYS" DESCRIBED BY ATTAR

\*\*\*

It's a rollercoaster between Love and fear, Love and illusion. The mystic must traverse many mountains, many valleys. The Sufi mystic Attar (died. c. 1229) wrote a very famous allegory of the spiritual voyage inward, called "The Parable of the Birds." He describes the inward trip as a journey through seven valleys.

His story begins with the "Valley of the Quest." This is the very beginning of the story of the mystic, when she first realizes that there even exists a quest, journey, or voyage to be undertaken. She is awakening to its necessity and desirability. Here, in extremist versions, one is stripped of all earthly things, becoming "poor, barren, and desolate." But this "poverty" need not be of the literal Franciscan type, even though

that can be very admirable. The mystic, as noted, rejects luxury and superabundance. She rejects wealth because it is the cruelest master, demanding far too much of her timenergy. But for the mystic, reasonable moderation, the "middle Way" of the centrist, is always her guide. So, it is not so much what she owns as what owns her. She turns away from wealth because it implies greed-- her worst nightmare. Greed is the demon with vicious claws that can grip her heart with a spiritually lethal darkness. Since greed is considered a virtue by society in general, a mark of "success," its peril is amplified. She avoids it like the proverbial plague, for it is worse. It is a disease of the soul, much more serious even than deadly bubonic plague.

A commitment to simplicity, not poverty, marks the modern mystic. This has always been an aspect of the Christian Way of Purgation (purification). This is also what Attar describes as an aspect of this "Valley of the Quest."

The second "valley" of the parable or allegory is the "limitless Valley of Love." Realization that there was a Way or path inward triggered the beginning of the mystic Quest, but the discovery of Love is what makes that mystic life productive. Now, the mystic comes awake to her own inner Love-potential, an inner pool of abundant Love that is not her personal property, but from which she may draw at any time. She finds this inner Fountain to be limitless and inexhaustible. This is the "earthly paradise" of Dante, for through learning to love everything, the mystic transforms her everyday life into a taste of heaven. As the old rocksong says, "Heaven is a place on earth." This realization of the presence and nature of Love is the very first step towards, the actual onset of illumination.

Next, third, comes the Valley of Knowledge. Here, the "knowledge" is not simply ordinary datagathering or datassimilation. Instead, this refers to the special mystical "knowledge" implied by the Greek *gnosis* and the Sanskrit *jnana*. This is the direct, magnificent, immediate inner knowing of God, the Absolute, the Ultrultimate, or Love. This can never be learned verbally, by lectures, books, and religions. For this is the very state of contemplation (a form of Western meditation) that opens the inner door, permitting the paradoxical exit/entry of the Christ-nature or Love-nature. This represents communion with Reality deep within the Mind. The great "Mystery" of Spirit and Being is revealed to the conscious mind. God is at last finally **seen** in all things, not just postulated to exist there. So, this state is the highest stage or zenith of illumination.

Fourth is the "Valley of Detachment." Here one begins to shift the elements of selfexpression, character, and personality. One is no longer controlled by the world, and has determined that the entire world is God projected, and so is all good. "All is God modified, and all is good" sums up this discovery. With it, one becomes detached from the world as dream. This results from a conjunction or synergy of "absorption" and Love. One's duty to Love becomes a supreme joy, and is allconsuming and

all-encompassing.

Fifth is the "Valley of the Unity." Here, the uneclipsed, naked Absolute is the single object of contemplation. That is the one healing and healthy obsession of which human beings are capable. This is the phase of the inner state when the beatific vision or ecstasy occurs. But these states, although transitory, lead to the next valley.

Six, the Valley of Amazement. This vision, or inner feeling, is far above the mystic's ability to receive it all. So, it "blows her circuits," overloading and overwhelming her.

It is eternity and infinity in one sudden gulp. The mystic's perception might even grow unresponsive in reaction to this Power, as the eyes go blind when exposed to a great light. She feels that much has been taken from her, and it is during this phase that the "darknight" occurs. This phase appears "in dazzling darkness," and is also the "cloud of unknowing."

Seventh, the final valley is the "Valley of the Annihilation of Self." Here, the mystic is, and feels, no longer separate from the luminous Love which she perceives at the Center of her soul-mind. Instead, she gloriously lets go of all her thought-boundaries, and slides deliciously into essential union with the Absolute. Ecstasy returns, but now, it is a more permanent state. Inner joy is created as a steady state in consciousness, not affected by environments and events. This is the supreme degree of union, the "theopathic" state, when the mystic feels God from the inside out. Here, as the old famous poem reminds us, "the dewdrop slips into the shining sea," but the "sea" is also, in essence, within that drop. The Absolute is not only the object desired, but is also the One who is desiring. "He is all, and He doeth all, that thou mightest see Him," said Hilton (died 1396). This is final invincibility.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 60/ THE MUTUAL MYSTIC LOVERS AND RICHARD'S FOUR PHASES OF ARDENT LOVE

\*\*\*

Power can grab you at midnight, pull you up out of bed, and drive you to do its bidding. It is no respecter of persons, and sees, and loves, all alike. But when you turn your life over to It, you sure as hell had better be willing to do Its will. For you have resigned forever from the control of your own life, and you really haven't any choice in the matter.

The mystic does not undertake her long, uncomfortable, and challenging journey to the Center of the Soul on a whim. She does not even begin the path inward because of a personal decision. Instead, the mystics insist, over and over, that it is God who desires or wills through her. God gives the first push, which means that Love brings her to the threshold of entry into deepest Mind.

Perhaps one of the most practical expressions of Love is morality/ethics, what the old mystics called "virtue." This is a powerful good in the life of the mystic. It is this which, in fact, leads her to the very threshold of the Absolute. Love can also provide the motivation for her to "enter" when she discovers the "gateway" to her deepest inner Self.

Still, a moral life, or thoughtpattern, is not enough. For her move towards the Absolute has not a possibility of success unless it is accompanied by a symmetric move (desire) within the Absolute Itself.

It is true that the mystic herself contains an intrinsic capacity for eternal life. As a soul or higher Self, she is birthless, deathless, timeless. She is also essentially a thoughtentity, or nonphysical being. She is not her body, or even her egomind. Instead, she is her soul. And her soul, at its deepest core, is the Spirit, Holy Spirit, or God. So Hindu mystics were famous for their realization that Atman (the soul) is Brahman (cosmic Mind).

Being herself an eternal entity, and one increasingly filled with Love, she has a close similarity in nature with the Absolute. She is "related" to It. A powerful, ultimately irresistible, attraction compels her to join psychic forces, to Mindmeld or merge with the Absolute. So, mystical desire is always two-way: When the mystic desires God, she can rest assured that God is also desiring mergence with her. The feeling is mutual, and reciprocal. In fact, in the final analysis, there is only one real feeling, from one Mind. That is why the mystic Eckhart (1260-1327) wrote, "God needs man." For without sentient life, Love would not be expressed in our world. God would still be, without the human species, but He/She would not be here now-- in your heart, at your Center, and mine.

So, mysticism is, in the beautiful phrase of Underhill, "Love calling to love." It is this Love that opens the inner door of the heartmind, so that Love can flood in and out. This Love fuses itself to the soul, until they become identical. In the words of the old masters, "They become one thing." What makes this fusion successful, in the end, is that Love wants to fuse, and so does the soul. It is a perfectly natural and universal desire among human beings to "have God," and it is His/Her desire to "have" all of us, that is, to blend with our psyches in order to find expression. This was one of the great discoveries of the mystic Julian of Norwich (died 1416).

"No lover ever seeks union with his beloved," writes one of the romantic Sufi mysticpoets, "but that his beloved is also seeking union with him." The Love which the mystic feels in her heart, for God, is exactly the same as God's Love for her.

As the ancient Greeks described the god Eros as a fundamental force that held the entire universe together, so the inner, or "spiritual" cosmos of the mystic is coordinated, held together, and operated by Love. This Love manifests in two ways in the mystic's longing for union: as heated, often passionate, desire, and as the ecstasy arising from a sense of complete and utter surrender. As this soul is chasing



the Absolute, the Absolute pursues it, as its "Divine Lover." "I chased thee... This was My pleasure," says the Absolute to Mechthilde of Magdeburg (1210-1290). This Love is not only a Fountain of illimitable joy, but it is impossible to escape, at any rate.

But mystical Love is a fact of everyday life. It influences everything, and changes everything, in the life of a mystic. So, it is more than a pretty poetic fantasy. This Love develops in two great phases: First, the mystic surrenders to the call of Love, its awakening within. Second, she surrenders to the embrace of Love, when it flows into her life and starts gently to take over.

One of the most compelling images of mystical Love in the writings of the mystics is the allegory of "marriage" between the soul and God. In a plethora of writings, God is likened to a "bridegroom," and the soul to a "chaste and pure bride." This, incidentally, is the same archetypal language used by the mystic Solomon (c. 1000 BC) in "The Song of Solomon" (also known as "The Song of Songs," and "Canticles"), in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is the story of a Love that was so deep and so intense that it implies a profound intercourse, not only of bodies, but of psyches. It is a description in poetry of the ecstasy of complete selfgiving.

Mystics, recognizing the essential purity of all real Love, used even semi-erotic imagery to represent the deepest Love-union possible. Some of the temples of Siva-Sakti in India portray in vivid, graphic sculpture various forms of intercourse. This is not pornography, but poetry. For it is the highest tribute to, as well as an allegory of, the Sacred.

Western mystics did not go this far. But some of their language did reach the heights of the lushly sensual. But since humility, intimacy, and, most of all, Love were emphasized among these writings and works of art, they were never pornographic or pathological. After all, human Love is about as close as the average person can come to Divine Love. And, in the final analysis, human Love is Divine Love. Still, in the genre of mystical literature, these images were kept very "chaste." That is, they were highly sensual, but virtually free of physical or bodily imagery.

Unlike their medieval Christian contemporaries, the mystics did not hate and fear sex. But largely out of compromise with, and regard for, the oversensitivities of sex-hating "Christians, neither did they overemphasize it.

In most cases, in fact, this treacherous slippery slope was avoided altogether. When describing this precious union of Love, the mystics can tend to sound clinical, even cold. Theresa (1515-1582) is typical: "The spirit of the soul is made one with God, who is Himself a Spirit." This interesting turn of phrase, "the spirit of the soul," implies that the "spirit" lives deeply within the soul, exactly as the soul lives deeply within the mind. (See "Chart of Mind.") "He has thus deigned," Theresa continues, "to unite Himself to His creature." And He will "never separate Himself from her."

The mystic Richard of St. Victor (1123-1175) used similar language. He saw Love as divided into four natural phases of development. He called these the four stages

of "ardent love." He spoke of these stages: the betrothal, the marriage, the wedlock, and the fruitfulness.

The betrothal was when the soul first started to "thirst" for her "beloved," longing to experience the delights of union. When the "Spirit" comes to the soul, it "seems sweeter than honey." This is the same phase that other mystics call "conversion," or "awakening."

In this degree of Love, the soul is "led and bridled by the Beloved." She transcends and ascends. She moves above her normal state of consciousness. At this point, she is a committed mystic.

In the second phase, irrevocable "marriage vows" link and bond the soul with God. This is the stage originally and ostensibly celebrated by the calling to be a formal "sister" or nun-- although not all nuns are mystics. In the beginning, in the earliest Christian history, convents, like monasteries, were established for the practice of contemplation. Anyone who joined an order of either "brothers" or "sisters" was assumed to have had a genuine inner mystical calling.

At this phase, "marriage," she can "see the Beloved." The Absolute has been recognized as the Love-nature deep within the Self or Mind. But she cannot yet "come in to Him," says Richard. That is, her union is incomplete. Although she truly loves God, she still loves as "another," and so, this Love has not the depth and power needed to be accurately called true "mystical" Love. It is this phase that other mystics have called the "illuminative Way."

The third phase of Richard's system is "wedlock" or union. This is the same phase that other mystics have called the "unitive Way." She has come through the experiences of ecstasy and bliss, and is now firmly committed to the hard work of the Way, as a lifedesign. Here, she is "deified," or realizes that, deep in her psyche, she is, in nature, one with the Absolute. Richard says that she "passes utterly into God, and is glorified in Him." She is permanently, irreversibly metamorphosed by having been touched by infinite Love, the "Divine substance." She has moved into a new order, an utterly different quality, of being. St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) describes this phase: "the soul, when it shall have driven away from itself all that is contrary to the Divine will, becomes transformed in God by love." Richard says, "The soul is utterly concentrated on the One." It is, Richard continues, "Caught up to the Divine Light."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 61/ ENLIGHTENMENT, MYSTICAL REALITY, AND THE MYSTERIES OF ALCHEMY

\*\*\*

Purest, most pristine ecstasy is the literal act of losing oneself in the larger Mind, in Love. This is mystical "selfforgetting." In the fourth and final stage of Love, Richard

says, the "bride," or soul, "sinks her own will" into the Beloved, and is "humiliated below herself," not in a harmful or shameful sense, but in the sense that she is no longer a completely separate or autonomous entity.

Now, the rapture, ecstasy, and bliss have given rise to a more sober and realistic Love, with its attendant obligations, and even pains. Human Love progresses similarly through phases: from passionate, through romantic, to comfortable and committed. Now, the mystic is in the "committed" phase, her life irreversibly having been given over entirely to the inner Beloved. Like Him, conjoined with Him, she is now herself also a Source of life and Love, even as He has always been.

It is when they reach this final phase that the great mystics returned to that world which they previously abandoned. For Love moves them to bring back the sparkling water of life to the "desert" world, to aid others. They return to that common world as Lightcenters, linked up in a universal network, the Communion of Love. Often, but not always, they are called to teach, to create "extended families" of good souls linked up by Love, in whose hearts the "seeds of Light" are planted, often for future generations. This mysticism is contagious, and, through a domino effect, others then become mystics

Richard's four stages of ardent Love correspond with, respectively and consecutively: conversion, the illuminative Way, the unitive Way, and final, utter metamorphosis.

The great realization of the mystic is that the cosmos is God playing with God. So, in the mystical experience, "we behold That Which we are," and, "Only the Real can know Reality." So, the Mind at the core of existence dreams into being the mystic so that she might, in turn, discover the Mind that is dreaming her up. In other words, the Mind dreams that it is the mystic looking for and finding the Mind.

So, a part of mystical teaching is the essential irreality of many aspects of the psyche. Like the material world, some components of Mind are also illusion. The mystic insists on discovering the Real, loving That, and shrugging off the baggage of the rest. Finally, she is left with only Love, since all nonlove factors are irrealties. And as the mystic moves closer to this Reality at the core of Mind, she herself becomes more real.

This is how the great Quest begins: One of the first steps is to deny the reality of the egoself, which everyone believes her to be. It is, in fact, what she has always thought herself to be. But the ego is too selfdefensive ever to give unconditional Love. It is too limited to yield in perfect surrender. So, it cannot be a citizen of the "kingdom of God," or "kingdom of Reality." Before transformation is complete, the mystic will have to shift identification of "self" from the ego to the soul. Moderate renunciation and detachment make the realization of this new identity possible. Purifications, tests, and trials refine it, making it stronger.

"For in what measure we put off the creature, in the same measure are we able to

put on the Creator," says the mystical classic *Theologia Germanica* (14th century).

It was precisely this kind of new identity that was symbolized by the "Hermetic" or alchemical philosophers. To use their symbolism, "gold" was already hidden or potential within the "lead of lower nature," awaiting only the *lapis philosophorum* (the "philosopher's stone"), the Christ or Spirit of Love. This would activate the dramatic change called "rebirth."

Alchemical allegory is complex and obscure. Its truths are further eclipsed or enfogged by the fact that different writers used the same symbols to mean different things. Complex and murky animal-symbolism was mixed with the language of astrology. This is why the Hermetic arts have been described as a "great labyrinth," and more than one researcher has become hopelessly lost in trying to disentangle them.

All agree, however, that the main goal of alchemy was the production of the "philosopher's stone." By its descriptions in alchemical literature, it becomes obvious that it symbolized the perfect enlightened Mind, "Christ," or Love-nature. It had the ability to "purge" all base-metals of "dross," leaving behind only gold. This is a competent symbolic description of the mystical life in search of the Absolute. Through purgation, the "dross" of the lower and illusory nature evaporates, leaving behind only the Real in Mind, the Holy Spirit or Christ.

Silver, or "luna," represented "natural man," or the human nature. Gold, or "sol," represented the higher nature of "spiritual man." Gold was seen as latent or dormant within silver. The "laboratory" was "man himself." Alchemy, like the mysticism which it symbolized, involved the utter transformation of human nature into a radically new and better form. It was not merely a "moral transformation." The natural became the supernatural through a new birth.

Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) was both a mystic and an alchemist. It was he who wrote of the "stone," or "inner Christ": "In this stone there lieth hidden whatsoever God and eternity ...contain, and are able to do. There never was, in eternity, anything better or more precious than this..... It ... hath the power of the whole Deity in it."

Further, this "stone" cannot be found, but must be made. This implies the hard work that must be done by the mystic to prepare her heartmind for the reception of, and final mergence with, the Spirit. This "stone" is "made" with a "furnace." This can imply the heat of discomfort inevitable to the mystic life, but it can also symbolize the heated state of passion with which the mystic must approach the Absolute. In alchemy, the colors black, white, and red represented respectively the states of purgation, illumination, and union. You will probably recognize these as the exact same three phases of the mystical Way. .

In the first stage, human nature was said to be "purified" by darkness and despair--possibly a reference to the darknight of the soul, discussed earlier. The lower nature,

or animal nature, was symbolized by the "black beast."

The whiteness or silver of the moon represented illumination breaking the hold of the darkness, as a full moon shines brightly in the dark night sky. This was symbolized by a "white stone."

The zenith of life was symbolized by the color red, which came to symbolize alchemical gold. This was said to result from the "marriage of luna and sol," the conjoining of the human nature with the Divine.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 62/ THE ALCHEMICAL TALE OF THE MYSTIC QUEST

\*\*\*

Agony precedes ecstasy. The inner Crucifixion must precede the inner resurrection. It is largely the death of the purely left-brained hypercerebral life that permits the rise of the spiritual or love-based existence. The common allegory used in alchemy for the inner Quest was the "hunting of the green lion." The green lion symbolized the natural human condition. (It was a lion because it was based in the animal nature, and green because the higher faculties were undeveloped. Also, they could be cultivated only through Love, often symbolized by green, the color of the fourth chakra or energy-center of the body, which rules Love. This is archetypal.)

The use of the lion symbol also implies the great if hidden strength and nobility of the being who undertakes the Quest. Mystics are often portrayed as weak and fragile, but this is a false stereotype. The mystic must be a person of enormously strong vitality and spiritual character if she is to conquer her inner "lion." Then, its strength must be tapped and used to attain the Great Work or the Quest.

The Way of union occurs through using the strength of the lower nature to reach the higher. For even the very highest mystics worked with and through physical bodies to complete their voyages.

In the alchemical allegory, when the hero catches the lion, its head is cut off. This symbolizes how the mystic must turn away from an exclusively intellectual interpretation of the universe. It is then replaced miraculously by the head of a crow, raven, or vulture.

The bird, because it can fly, is the prime archetype of transcendence. The bird is an animal, and so, it represents the transformation of animal consciousness as it reaches for the "sky" of divine Love. So this symbolizes the victory of heavenly over earthly thoughts. The lion's head was not destroyed, but changed into a bird's. Cerebral function is not destroyed in the mystic. It is simply transformed.

But this head, even while displaying the good symbol of the heavenly bird, is black.

So, it represents the mind still corrupted by the animal nature of ignorance and darkness.

Significantly, when the beast is tamed, it receives wings. Then, it flies to sol. This means that by transcendence, "rising above" the animal nature, illumination is discovered. The beast is at last transformed into a red dragon. This is the symbol of a transformed life. In Hermetic and alchemical symbolism, the dragon is the "angel" of the animal world. So, it represents the operation of higher and transformative wisdom. It internalized the strongest components of being both resplendent and fiercely fearsome. Mostly, it symbolized the free spiritual life. (By contrast, the tiger represented the material plane.) The dragon is human nature deified.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 63/ THE OCCULT, THE CULTS, MAGIC, AND MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

Bizarre and mad, it often presents itself as a false form, or flipside, of mysticism. It really, however, has absolutely nothing to do with true mysticism. This is occultism.

Occultists love "secrets." They love, in fact, the very word "occult." For them, it conjures great and awful mysteries, so tightly wrapped in secrecy that some of them are known only by the mind of God itself-- and those of His/Her specially chosen occultist. Occultism involves much spooky silliness and absurd egotism. Sometimes, it degenerates into the egogame, "I know more secrets than you."

For too many of these people, spirituality is itself only a game. For the mystic, by contrast, spirituality (Love) is the only pursuit on earth that is NOT a game. Occultists like to run around in long purple robes, wearing turbans, lighting candles, and mumbling mysteriously. One has the most convincing intuition that they are really playing it up for the audience. The mystic never has an audience to be impressed, and she doesn't want one. Mystics regularly go out of their way to avoid public display and the spotlight. This is not because they are ashamed, but because their spiritual work is not a play.

Although mystics, especially if called to be teachers, will talk and even teach about their work, **they will never display it** as an "accomplishment," an excuse for pride. They steadfastly refuse to abuse spirituality to polish an infirm and sick ego. They reject enthusiastically any one-upmanship, or any kind of contest to see who is "more spiritual." For them, any claim to be superspiritual is like a claim to be humble: Anyone who makes the claim doesn't have it. As the spiritual refuse to play the games of the selfrighteous and religious, they also turn away from crackpot occultists who, by their behavior, make a mockery of the inner path. This includes many from "new age" traditions. Shallow cults, gurus, and channelers almost never accurately represent the mystical Way. And real mystics are repelled by their fakery, antics, and gimmicks.

This does not mean that there is not, or cannot be, a genuine, sincere occultist. But it is a field in which quackery and fraud thrive. That is why the mystic is almost always NOT an occultist. The gullible and desperate people who swallow the lines and fraudulent exhibitions of "new-agers" claiming to "channel" dead people and extraterrestrials would not make good mystical disciples. Occultism is almost always perverted spirituality.

Often, the antics of occultism occur in the deep Mind. Usually, they are found in the strange inner psychic borderland between real mysticism and psychism. Those without discernment, and/or proper education, often cannot tell the difference.

For example, side-by-side with the true "small g" gnosticism of early Christianity, we find many "cap G" Gnostic sects teaching odd and bizarre cosmologies and doctrines. So, when was a Gnostic not a gnostic? When she is found to have belonged to one of the distorted cultlike groups of the first two centuries.

To be fair, even the "cap G" gnostics had some things worth hearing, and did possess some important truths. But into their recipe of true mysticism or gnosticism, they mixed in strange doctrines from Hebrew and other non-Christian traditions. Some of their teachings, then, were obscure. Some were meaningless. Others were foolish, outrageous, or simply unnecessary.

They often attempted, for example, to follow a convoluted and invalid spiritual path called "theurgy"-- an attempted fusion of mysticism with magic. The reason that these two cannot reasonably be fused is that they hold opposite views about the human will. Magic says that the human will is really God, and so, it is valid to try to take over the universe and impose your will on everything. From the mystical view, this is just extreme selfishness. It is also illusion and captivity to ignorance. It is indefensible from a merely moral/ethical perspective. But from a spiritual view, it is close to blasphemy. Or, at least, it misses the most important point of mysticism. Instead of mistaking the personal will for the will of God, the mystic seeks its disappearance into that divine will. Also, instead of trying to take over from God, the only valid Ruler of the cosmos, the mystic believes that her whole will should be subsumed. It then needs to be integrated into the Divine will. Unlike the arrogant magician, she believes in utter submission. This involves utter subjugation to the will of Love.

Is it not possible, however, that even a magician could be trying to help people with her art, in this way also serving Love? The mystic admits that this is certainly possible. But she cannot correlate the two opposite teachings about the personal will. To the mystic, "I want" is negligible. To the magician, it is everything.

But if a magician sincerely wanted only what Love wants, the desire of Love, the will of God, would she not be on the right path? Yes, clearly she would. But this kind of person would no longer, by definition, be a magician. For she would be on her way to the mystical path. For a magician is not marked or identified by her outer

accoutrements, but by her guiding philosophy. If she exchanges it for the superior teaching of mysticism, she becomes a mystic.

So, historically, when "magic" and mysticism have apparently blended, only the techniques of magic have joined with the philosophy of mysticism. When the mystic wanted to do a ritual for the sake of Love, for example, she let go of all personal demands, personal desires, and expectations. Ceremonies in the life of the mystic were carried out in a purely mechanical and perfunctory manner, since their most important component-- the human will of the magician-- was missing altogether. Since the ceremonies of high magic were empty and hollow without energizing personal will, they were usually soon dropped altogether by the "theurgist" or "magical mystic."

For a time, then, theurgic rituals (blending magical technique with mystical worldviews) might have continued, but there was never any genuine and enriching cross pollination between magic and mysticism. Most of the time, theurgists were simply magicians who aspired to, but could not reach, the higher philosophy of mysticism. Since they could not genuinely reach the inner heights of the mystics, they simply pretended to be mystics.

And they were not alone. It is much easier to claim to be a "mystic," than actually to be one. Since this label has great value and immense respect in some circles, mystic "wannabes" appeared in Western culture periodically. Groups such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit and the Quietists practiced a type of spurious "mysticism," but had little real effect on the larger, truly mystical, community. During the Renaissance, occult propaganda was everywhere, often posing as "mysticism." This marked, for example, the writings of Paracelsus, the "Christian Kabbalists," and the "Rosicrucians." These groups loved to speak in hushed and awed tones of great "secrets and mysteries."

They often resurrected symbols from ancient cultures. But they had nothing of true spirituality. Also, for a time, there was a virtual flood of pantheistic philosophies, and the resurrection of old Manichean ideas, neither of which was spiritual. Quietist groups seemed superficially to be related to mysticism, but, in their total inactivity and passivity, lacked the Love-component, and hence, true spirituality.

Today, many variants of the pseudomystical, occult traditions exist. Some are cults of personal gurus, who often shamelessly take material advantage of their followers to steal all their belongings. The selfstyled "leaders," who know nothing about spirituality, then use the money of the poor to buy Rolls-Royces or to air condition doghouses. These cults, although often touched by true mystical traditions, are intrinsically spiritually worthless and bankrupt. These groups often have fine teachings in the abstract, on paper, but betray those truly mystical teachings by insistence on exclusivity and spiritual pride. Some do not



hesitate to practice shameless idolatry in actual worship of human beings, their gurus or ministers. This includes groups as widely disparate as tm and the Bahai cult. It also includes the cults of Meher Baba, Sai Baba, Baba Wawa (just kidding), the Mahesh Yogi, Yogananda's Self-Realization Fellowship cult, the "Maharaj" Ji, Prabhupada's Hare Krishna cult, and the cult of Adi Da. These cults are not only unspiritual, but they are absurd. There are any number of ridiculous self-important gurus who so loathe themselves that their egos simply can't get enough polish. They never get enough attention, praise, or adoration. They are sick with egomania and ego obsession. They present fantastically absurd caricatures of real spiritual teachers, made more foolish by their rampant materialism and pathological egotism. Despite this unenlightened approach, these cults insist on arrogating to themselves the noble name of "mysticism," and lie, saying that their leaders are "mystics" or "enlightened beings."

Some have even misclassified forms of occult activity as "mysticism." Forms of "white" magic (that which claims to do only good) have been labelled "theurgic mysticism." Also, various occult schools and cults are eager to appropriate the historical mystics as "masters" of their particular traditions-- even if it requires the total distortion or fabrication of history. For the names of real mystics have always been recognized with honor and deep respect as fine examples of profound spirituality.

Mysticism and magic, although opposite poles on the spectrum of philosophy, do agree concerning some aspects of the world. Both agree that there exist other "planes" in the unconscious Mind, and that these are supersensory (above detection by the normal senses). Both share a drive to discover hidden understanding. (The word "occult" means "hidden.") Both are serious attempts to solve the great mysteries of existence. Both concern invisible powers and other factors. Both tap into the latent, dormant, deeply interior Self. Both seek, and offer, transcendence of the "physical, material" world of the senses. All this having been objectively recognized, the corefact cannot be denied: Magic and mysticism are essentially and spiritually incompatible.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 64/ THE TEACHINGS AND WORLDVIEW OF MAGIC

\*\*\*

Jet planes and buildings disappear on tv. A man seems to fly through the air. Another seems to have powers of telepathy. Like rabbits from hats, kerchiefs from sleeves, and the lady sawed asunder, magic promises much, but delivers little. Philosophically, it is an astonishingly poor tradition. Despite amazing claims, magic is not a real path to Reality. For merely attempting to rise above the sensory world

does not constitute a real apprehension of the Absolute. Besides, magic does not really remove one from the common world. It simply extends one's interactions with it. For magic is all about this world, while mysticism is about the inner world of unstained Reality.

Magic produces abnormal responses in the mind, but does not really go anywhere. Whereas mysticism has the Absolute as its goal, magic really has no inner goal. its focus is the relatively trivial world of matter.

There is an element of the tendentious, even the mercenary, in magic. **It grasps for knowledge, and is driven by the desire to know. Mysticism is driven, by contrast, by the need to be.**

Magic is nothing more than a system with which the egoself tries to comfort its restless curiosity. This it does by attempting to extend the power of the personal will. This amplifies its grasping or greedy nature. From that perspective, it is a mystical pathology.

Magic claims to represent a very ancient tradition. It was what presumably guided the *magoi* or "magi." These "wise men" were really Persian astrologerpriests. At the birth of Jesus, they were the only ones in the world who had the wisdom truly to know what was going on. But astrology is not the same as magic, although some systems have been related.

Magic, like astrology, is firmly rooted in human psychology, and that is why all ceremonial religion contains some components of magic. It claims to represent the "secret" teachings of the "mysteries" of ancient Egypt and Greece. Its occult and esoteric theories, like the mystical view, are often stated in terms of the "unconscious" Mind.

The personal human will is mistaken for the valid Ruler of the universe, the ego mistaken for God. It is claimed that, by means of magic, the forces of nature themselves can be influenced, even controlled.

Magic is an extradimensional worldview, and parts of it might be valid. But when it is called "mystical," it has been completely misunderstood.

In fact, this word, "mystical," is so often misused and abused, our first response to the word should be a healthy skepticism. Cheap, popular teachers and teachings of American "transcendentalism" and other quasispiritual or quasireligious schools and cults have been inaccurately labelled "mystical." To the true mystic, this is an outrageous obscenity.

Magic, like "transcendentalism," has some of the major marks of a religion. Its founder in Egypt was the renowned Hermes Tresmagestis. Hermetic texts of the second century are the sacred Scriptures of magicians. Many of these works are imaginatively traced back to an "emerald tablet" on which were inscribed the teachings. The body of ancient religious and philosophic teachings is called the "Hermetica."

Magic has two faces: 1 (an exoteric or public aspect, and 2 ( an esoteric, hidden aspect. The "uninitiated" are allowed to see only the exoteric. But of what do these texts consist? They are often designed to conceal more than they reveal. For they are couched in an obscuring text, made murkier by deliberate attempts to encode the underlying message in dark symbolism. There are unusual combinations of words and numbers, weird "laws," and outlines of ritual, formulas for evocation and invocation, and descriptions of, and recipes for, ceremonial acts. Some components of cosmic Mind are personified, as occurred with the ancient gods. The overall effect is one of deliberate obfuscation and mystification.

The worldview and practice of magic arise from three premises: 1) a subtle type of energy, "light," or substance exists quite outside the realm of the senses. But this is pervasive, saturating and interpenetrating the entire material world. It is called "astral light." to live aware of this , or in union with it, is to live upon the "astral plane." This is the goal of education in magic. This idea is of great antiquity, but indications of something like "astral light" can be deduced from the most sophisticated modern ultramicroparticle physics.

Forms in this area of the unconscious Mind called the "astral plane" are what is known as "archetypes." This area of the unconscious Mind, this "plane" or "dimension," is the area called "Yesod" in the Kabbalah, and the "Perfect Land" of ancient Egyptian religion. Here, as in Plato's plane of ideals, truer, spirit forms of all material things existed. The poet William Blake (1757-1827) was as much an "astral" occultist as a mystic. This "plane of being" is also a "state of consciousness." This astral tradition is international, being found in Greece, India, Egypt, Israel, and ancient Britain.

This plane also contains the "cosmic memory," as it is an area of the unconscious Mind. This level of Mind is called the "*akashic* record," and is a part of the collective unconscious. (See "Chart of Mind"). What we call the "future" is also potentially present here, in the "eternal now." The old-style spiritualists used to call this "astral light" the "odic force." Since it contains impressions, although faint, of the future, it is the source of precognition (seeing the future). It is seen only when the inner eye is opened. The Spiritualistic phenomenon called "contacting the dead" is thought by some to be a tapping of this universal memory.

This "light" is everywhere, since there is "nowhere" where Mind is not. It connects one soul with another. So, it is thought to be also the medium for telepathy. That this "plane" is really an area of inner space is indicated by the fact that telepathy and precognition (future-seeing) are both inner or mental functions.

The mystic, in her development, does not want to get trapped or paralyzed in this level of Mind, the collective unconscious. (See "Chart of Mind.") She wants to descend still deeper, into the Coremind or Spirit. So, she wants to remain in this realm as little as possible. She wants quickly to move to the deepest level, the Coremind or Spirit. This is the Mind of Love. The occultist, to the contrary, wants to

stay in this level to see what she can discover. Exactly as the mystic seeks union with the Absolute, so the student of magic seeks union with this level. Then, she seeks to superimpose her own will upon it.

2( The second premise of magic is that the power of the disciplined human will is limitless. The mystic says that it is powerless. Study of the supposed power of the human will marks the antique quasimagical study that used to be called "menticulture." This same factor also pervaded the old school called "new thought." This premise of magic is present in Christian Science and its spin-offs, and can be detected in both Unity and Science of Mind.

So, the very **first** lesson of the magician is selfcontrol, with a view towards disciplined selfmastery. The first and greatest "secret" of magic is to learn how to will. the first step in mysticism is to learn how **not** to will, to stop willing. Here, as in mysticism, though, the enemies are laziness and inactivity. This is why so many religious laws are so strict, deliberately challenging. For unless a path is a hassle, it is thought, one cannot really prove herself. True magical initiation is also a form of mental discipline, all designed specifically to strengthen and focus the will. In some ways, certain aspects of the training resemble that of the mystic, except her training is tougher, and more detached.

The will drags unconscious forces and data from the deeper Mind. These are often personified as "spirits," and are called forth by ceremonial evocation or conjuring. The ancients called these factors the "energy of the inner man." Archetypal images and implements are used to elicit these factors.

Magical symbols include instruments or implements that suggest things to the unconscious Mind. These are used to direct the will, and include spells, charms, perfumes, geometric figures, candles, magical implements (wand and knife), powerwords, and incenses. Especially powerful are four basic symbolic tools representing the four directions and the four "elements" (crystal or pentacle, knife, wand, and chalice). Material objects that focus the unconscious Mind are called "autosscopes" (literally, "selfseeing"). Tarot cards and crystal spheres are common examples. In time, when the communication with the Mind is mastered, these can be disposed of. Symbolic gestures are also an autoscope.

3) The third underlying premise of magic is the teaching of analogy. This implies essential correspondence between appearances and reality of the Mind. This is the famous "as above, so below" paradigm. The seen world is thought to be connected with the unseen world of thought. Specifically, the visible world is thought to mirror the inner Mind. This implies the entire body of knowledge called "correspondences," where everything is linked together in a long chain of related items. If you use a correspondent item, you elicit a particular unconscious energy. For example, the sign pisces, an astrological or metaphysical abstract, representing the energy of the unconscious Mind, can be elicited by the stone aquamarine. The idea of

"correspondences" links all the spectrum of astrological forces with certain solid, material realities, so that, by incorporating the stones into a ceremony, you elicit that particular unconscious force.

For some examples, Aries energy is elicited by diamond, Taurus by emerald, Gemini by agate, Cancer pearl, Leo ruby, Virgo sapphire, Libra opal, Scorpio topaz, Sagittarius Sturquoise, Capricorn garnet, and Aquarius amethyst. So, we have a solid and real connection between a literal material object and a force in the unconscious Mind.

If you don't have access to minerals, you can also use the correct day of the week, hour of the day, tree, flower, metal, or even creature. These and dozens of other literal, material things are linked up archetypally in the unconscious Mind. So, while you might not be able directly to call forth "fire" energy from the unconscious mind, you can elicit Aries energy, the most fiery sign, by the use of diamond or iron.

Forces in the unconscious Mind come in many varieties. But they can be connected, and in the same way elicited, through "correspondences" in the material world. So, returning to our example, the sign pisces, itself an unconscious force, brings forth or is connected with a related energy of the unconscious Mind. This force is called "Neptune." It is an energy that has to do with any deep work with the inner Mind--dreams, visions, psychic work, etc.

This idea of "correspondences" permeates much older literature, and has been widely accepted by thinkers from many schools, including even some mystics. Things in this world are seen as "counterfeits" of things in the "real," inner and mental, world. The things of this world are only holographic "portraits" or likenesses of thoughts created at a very deep level of the unconscious Mind. This world is created or dreamed up at the level called the "creator," or Dreamer.

In summary, the three essential teachings of magic are: the existence of the astral light, 2( the importance of will, and 3( the law of correspondences or analogy.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 65/ ARCHETYPES, MAGIC, POWER, HEALING, AND MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

"Do whatever you want." This is thought by many to be the "first law" of magic. In the profound and sophisticated worldview and philosophy of magic, this adolescent "law" has no place. But it is a common misperception that magic is amoral, that getting all you want is all that counts.

In mysticism, the same type of essential "law" might be rendered, "Love all, and do whatever Love wants." This issue of what you want is called, in mystical and general philosophy, the "problem of will." ("To will" is to want.)

Much modern research has indicated that will can have a measurable and

significant effect on the bodymind. So, will is an aspect of healing. That is, no healing takes place unless someone wants it. The mystic would see a higher healing that occurs, not because human beings want it, but because it is the will or desire of the cosmic Mind. Other healings arise from other levels of Mind. For example, a healing that is karmic will arise from the soul level.

The cosmic Mind pushes the entire universe towards states of greater wellness, wholeness, and balance. This is the origin of the mystical belief that every act of Love is healing at some level.

Anciently, mystics and magicians acted as the healers. They specialized in the activities of Mind, and so were at least analogous to psychologists.

The designers and originators of the techniques, rituals, and ceremonies of high magic knew fully well that these actions had no direct effect on the material world. Symbolic activities were not designed to change the "material or external" world.

**Instead, every ceremony was designed to precipitate changes in Mind. For Mind was the Source; it created the world. So, to change the Mind was to change the world.** But the ancient masters of the Hermetic arts knew that it was not nearly enough to change the conscious mind. They knew that the universe was dreamed up by a much deeper level of Mind, the unconscious, at the deepest level, the Superconscious.

But how, they asked, does one change the unconscious Mind? First, the unconscious Mind usually speaks not through words, but pictures. That is why our nightmares are in the form of vivid pictures. Historically, it is known that there are very powerful pictures that create predictable changes in the unconscious Mind. These pictures or symbols are called "archetypes." Archetypes are pictures or symbols (such as implements, instruments, or geometric forms) that have been around so long that they have a powerful effect on the Mind. An example is the symbols for the four cardinal directions. They represent the four elements, and, as they are invoked, bring that energy out of the unconscious Mind into the room, ceremony, or magician.

The geometric symbol of the yellow square became the accesscode or key to the unconscious elicitation of earth-energy, for example. So, when calling forth cohesiveness, groundedness, or stability, this symbol was held vividly within the conscious mind. When the unconscious saw this symbol, it provided strong earthenergy.

In Hermetics, the four basic elements that constituted the ancient cosmos are exactly such archetypes. They are, in turn, represented to the Hermetic by four archetypal implements. The four elements are earth, air, fire, and water. Each has a long list of correspondences, or related items linked unconsciously to the archetype. Anything from this list can trigger that particular energy from the unconscious Mind. So, as a kind of "key" to "unlock" that area of the unconscious Mind, the magician uses: a crystal or "pentacle" for earth, a knife for air, a wand for

fire, and a chalice for water. When held in the hands of the Hermetic, these are believed to awaken natural but powerful energies in the unconscious Mind.

Note, once again, that the purpose of magic is **not**, as is usually assumed, to change the material world. Instead, it is a mind-changing, a psychometamorphic, technology. Because the Mind was known to create or dream up the world, ancient masters designed rituals to alter the Mind.

It was to amplify this effect on the Mind that ceremonial magic was given an ambience of mystery and sacredness. Also, the "four elements," which represented the Power of the cosmos, were called into the Mind, and then elicited from Mind, through as many archetypal symbols as could reasonably be included in the ceremony. So, to enrich the ceremony with as many archetypal triggers as possible, all the senses were engaged. A complete ceremony would include music or sound, visual aids, such as geometric forms and candles, implements, incenses, essential oils, and perfumes, and perhaps even sacred wafers. The best ceremonies were done at night, if possible, during a storm.

Rules were, and had to be, very strict. It was very challenging to do everything right, but this itself was an exercise in attention or concentration, and so was deliberately engineered. This tested the sincerity of the magician, and her tenacity/focus.

Even as the aim of magical ceremonial design was to change the Mind, healing ceremonies had the same goal. All the efforts of the healer were invested in convincing the patient of the presence of healing Power. If the patient believed, a healing was likely; if she did not, no healing was probable. But again, note: The healing art was not designed to alter the body, as is the case with modern literal medicine. No, the system was much more symbolic in nature, and was carefully designed to be psychometamorphic or Mindchanging.

Both magic and healing, then, were psychotechnologies. The "mysterious forces" with which both magic and healing deal are precisely the energies of Mind. They both operate to change the dreamworld by concentrating on the Dreamer. Do these arts, then, change God?

It is not necessary to alter the core-Mind, the Absolute, in order to create changes in the dream. For the Dreamer or Creator, the core of Mind, must project the dream through many levels of mind. And, if you can change any of those more superficial, more accessible, levels, you can precipitate changes in the dream. Visualize the Creator as the white light in a movie-projector. To change the picture on the screen, you need not change this white light, but only the film through which it is shining. Now, this film represents the levels of Mind through which the world is dreamed up. They are like lenses over the light, or layers over the light-Mind. Changing the most superficial layer of Mind, the conscious mind, does nothing. It's the unconscious where the action is.

So, in both magic and healing, archetypes can be used to bypass the conscious mind altogether, and to communicate directly with the unconscious Mind. Changes at those deeper levels tend to be manifested quickly in the physical body, creating healing.

What is the greatest, most powerful archetypal activity? It is Love, for Love is nourishment for every part of the psyche. An act of genuine Love can be more powerful than any ceremony. For Love is the very nature and essence of the core-Mind, the Creator or Dreamer. Love bypasses everything else and lands us smack in the middle of the heart of God. Archetypal activity brings one closer to the greatest and most nuclear "symbol" of all: The act of Love.

That is why the very greatest and most powerful Hermetic magicians stood on the very threshold of mysticism. As they grew increasingly sophisticated, they moved from a world-centered magic to a Mind-centered one. They even actually came across some of the same crucial discoveries made by the mystics.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 66/ MIRACULOUS MYSTIC EMPTINESS, MAGIC, AND THE FORMAL CHURCH

\*\*\*

There is no external, material world. This was the mindblowing discovery that finally led the best and wisest of magicians to stop fooling around with "tricks" in the world. Then, they could get on with the study of Mind and, later, even Spirit. So, many of the true masters of the occult and arcane arts moved from the world of playthings to the sphere of spiritual wisdom and adulthood. They stopped splashing around in the dirty little puddle of the shadowworld, and set sail on the vast blue ocean.

Magic could evolve not only into the brightest of spirituality, but it also fused with religion historically. There is still today much magic in some religions. Many will deny that religion has anything to do with magic, but will readily embrace the miraculous. Indeed, miracle and magic do seem to have two separate sources: In magic, changes take place in the Mindworld according to the will of the magician. In miracle, changes take place in the Mindworld, but not according to the will of the mystic. Instead, she has become a clear channel for the transmission of a higher inner will, the will of Love. This manifest as incredible, illimitable Power, in which, as Jesus said, "Anything is possible."

For example, in the legend of Jesus, the first miracle associated with him was the transmutation of water into wine. Nothing in the account itself, in the Christian Greek Scriptures, indicates that he anticipated or willed this event. When it did happen, he was just as astonished as everyone else.

People don't like this view. The "inner child" needs to believe that some one, some



adult somewhere, is always in charge, and always knows exactly what's going on. This inner child becomes disturbed if its big hero, Jesus, is presented as a true man. This inner child needs some big daddy who knows everything and has all the answers. For she is terrified of mystery. She needs some "big daddy" to be allpowerful, and gets very upset if it is suggested that Jesus too was a man.

Mysterious, and even miraculous, events have been noted for centuries, in every culture, to occur around mystics, sages, and saints. Why is this? It is not because they are the sources of miraculous Power. Instead, they seem to act as its conduits into the world. The Power comes **through** them, not **from** them.

But why mystics? Because mystics spend all their time cultivating an inner connection with the Flow of the Absolute. It is their very lifegoal to become clear conduits, unblocked and unimpeded, for exactly this Flow from the unconscious Mind.

These two factors-- the strong inner tapping of the Fountain, and a conduit to the outer world-- work synergistically to make the mystic a perfect conductor for the transmission of Power between the two universes. The Power moves without resistance from the inner Mind to the "outer" world through the mystic.

Inner emptiness is a teaching that marks international mysticism. To be of maximum use to the Power, the mystic teaches, one must become "empty" inside. But empty of what? Thoughts, opinions, preferences, assumptions, greed, attachments, clinging, cravings, feelings, desires, and demands. For to be full of one's self, says the mystic, makes one as useless as a glass of dirt. The parable is: If you have a waterglass filled with dirt, and you want to fill it with clean water to drink, first, you must empty the dirt, pour it from the glass. Then, you must wash the glass until it is clean and empty. Then, it can be filled with clean water. The dirt represents the usual nonstop chatter of thought, arising from the ego. This self-talk or roofbrain chatter so fills the mind that there is room for nothing else in the average mind. The mystic seeks to pour out the soil of her own thoughts. The clear water to fill the glass represents Spirit. So, the glass of mind must be stainless, pure, and clean before it is ready to receive Spirit or Power.

Other parables apply: A window is useful only when it is clear. If you were to paint, in opaque paints, a picture of the sun on a window, the real sun outside would be more eclipsed or blocked the more you painted. Now, the painting of the sun on the window might be beautiful, but the point is, it is still blocking the real thing-- the sun outside. Religion is like painting a picture of the sun on the window, while mysticism is like allowing the real sun to shine through. Religion is opaque paint, which is why the mystic can't be **too** religious even if she has a religion.

The Chinese sage/mystic Lao Tzu points out that windows in a room are useful only because that part of the wall is missing. He says that windows are useful "for what is **not** there." A window, that is, is a kind of absence that is useful. So, he says, is a door. So is the hole at the center of a wheel that allows the axle to poke through at

its center. Lao Tzu and other Taoist mystics emphasized the importance of the mystic's inner lucidity. This, they represent as a kind of emptiness, a state of being thoughtfree, a state that they call "nonthought" (*wu wei*).

Another parable: God is like a very bright light. If you surround that light with a glass sphere, and then, cover that sphere with opaque paint, that is like the normal continuous thought-process. Now, if you add another coat of paint to that glass sphere, the inner light will be even less visible. Most human beings have many, many coats of paint (thoughts, desires, emotions) blocking that inner light. The purpose of classical meditation is to introduce the thought-free state so that the person will at least know what it feels like.

The state of the lucid mystic is similar to the creative frenzy of the artist/writer who must "fix" a creation as soon as possible. ("Fixing" a creation artistically means getting it into solid form asap-- writing a manuscript, actually painting on canvas, etc.) This she must do before the uniqueness or originality escapes her mind. She must catch the inspiration. While an artist or writer seeks inspiration during creative periods, the mystic seeks it twenty-four seven. So, it could be said that she is involved in continuous creative activity. Her entire life is her great canvas, her great literary creation, God's masterpiece.

The mystic is the interface between this world and the inner and miraculous world of Mind. Mysticism is linked with magic in this sphere of Mind, and magic is, in turn, linked with religion in the matter of ceremony. The grimoire (book of magic) and missal (book of religion) contain the following in common: names and titles of God, sacred numbers, ritual and ceremonial acts, rites of purification, incenses, and special words invested with power. Some prayers resemble charms. And baptism, with its uses of salt, ceremonial light, and chrism (solution of holy water) is closer in design to a ritual of white magic than to the simple baptism practiced by John the baptizer in the Jordan.

Historically, the church has sought to purge magic of its baser and "pagan" components. But the church never wanted to do away with magic. Perhaps church-leaders felt that there might be something to it. At any rate, the church adapted, rather than destroying, magic. This it did with many pre-Christian components, which is why we still have the pine-tree to celebrate the birth of Christ, and the rabbit to celebrate the Season of Resurrection.

The function of the church, selfdefined, is the education of the masses. So, its teachings have always been somewhat dilute, based on the theory that the chain is only as strong as its weakest link. So, the mission of the formal church ends just at that point where the knowing of God, mysticism, begins.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 67/ THE MYSTIC: A COMPOSITE PORTRAIT OF PNEUMOPSYCHOLOGY, AND THE PHASES OF THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

\*\*\*

A mystic is like a rose. Or a tulip. Or a lilac. Mystics are as varied as the flowers. Mystics represent a wide spectrum of different types of people, and this wide diversity means that no single mystic can ever be representative of everyone. But they all share many spiritual factors, states, and events in common, so that reporting the words or experiences of one can in effect be indicative of similarities in others.

Great broad patterns unite them in common. They are all deeply spiritual. This means simply that what's going on in the "inner world" of Mind they regard as more important than what's happening in the "outer" world. They also have an extraordinary fondness for Love. This does **not** mean that they are sexmaniacs or obsessives. It **does** mean that they treasure compassion, kindness, and friendliness as major priorities. They master these powerful agapic (Lovebased) forms to cultivate their relationship-styles.

Mystics are excellent communicators, as well. If the older mystics had not been, we today would be clueless about much in mysticism. We would be in much greater darkness and inner need. Words, as lousy as they might be in describing the Absolute, are all that they had. So they left us words-- thousands of them. They left so many words that the numerous volumes now form a separate genre of literature-- the mystical body. Still, mystics bemoan the ineffectiveness and limp futility of words in describing the "ineffable" beauty and bliss of the mystical experience. This event is intrinsic to human psychology, and so, is interior. Because it is interior, and positive, it is spiritual. But it is not always religious.

Some are religious, some are not. But they all follow the Way of Infinity-- translated as the Way of Jesus, Buddha, Brahman, or the Tao, among other names. Still, even when following one of the traditional religious paths, mystics manage never to fall into their traps. These are, among others, the practice of merely mechanical or legalistic obedience to laws. For it is always the sacred Core of religion, the Spirit, that the mystic seeks, and that is the only major priority for her.

Still, the mystics as a whole are probably better understood from a psychological, rather than a religious, perspective. Or perhaps we can more accurately coin a term, "pneumopsychological," to describe their unique orientation. (The prefix "pneumo," as in "pneumatic," arises from a Greek word meaning "spirit.") For mysticism involves an number of finely attuned "microstates." These are states of consciousness involving extreme and intricate inner finetuning. They also demand extremely delicate analysis, and microscopic examination.

Different mystics operate in different "outer" and inner worlds. Even though the inner world of the mystics shares much more in common than the "outer," even this is

dependent, to some extent, on the mystic's nervous system. Brilliant, blissful, filled with astonishing, stunning inner beauty, mystical events are impossible to generalize. They can be radically variant from one mystic to the next. So, the phases of events might be reversed, or sequences altered. What is supremely, shatteringly, blazingly crucial to one might be a minor "blip" to another. All this variety can be quite confusing to anyone seeking easy, quick classification. The complex experience simply does not lend itself to superficial analysis.

A composite portrait blends the highlights of many mindboggling experiences. This creates one profile, from which we can extrapolate a "mystical type." The psychology of the average mystic is then a little easier to understand.

First, the composite mystic moves determinedly towards her inner goal while oscillating between the poles of pleasure and pain. "The rose contains the crystal cross, stained with tears. Agony and ecstasy alternate on the mystical path, and the higher ecstasies lead to lower agonies.

Constants of every life, these oscillations are amplified in that of the mystic. She is so much more sensitive a being than average. It is the very gift of the intensely sensitive nature that opens her to the mystical event.

The mystical process occurs in five phases: 1) awakening, 2) selfawareness, 3) detachment, 4) "mystic death," and 5) union.

Each phase is complex, so we need to go into them briefly and explain a little:

1) The "awakening" implies awareness on the part of the ego that a divine inner Absolute exists. Until awakening, the ego hadn't a clue. It was probably swamped by the sensual, "material, external" world. Awakening can be gradual or abrupt, and gives rise to joy and exultation, a high that is the highest high of which human minds are capable.

2) With selfawareness, the self realizes its limitations, feeling pathetic and restricted. Often a longing is born for a liberation from this constrictive self. Imperfection becomes the target of selfscrutiny. The self begins to recognize illusion, with its plethora of masks, disguises, and props. A passionate thirst for the Absolute or reality begins. The Self greatly longs to experience this Reality, and begins to move towards that inner Absolute. The soul is ferociously determined, and begins, to clear away anything that might be an obstacle to this realization. It starts intuitively to turn away from distractions to the Way.

This is a beginning path that some mystics call "the Way of purgation." ("Purgation" means "purification.") The idea of purgatory was meant to symbolize, represent, or convey this. This state involves pain. It can also involve a deep sense of loss. For the ego is forced to give up its various "Linus blankets"-- things that used to provide it with an artificial sense of security. For this is the beginning of powerful independence from the world.

3) Joy finds its way back into the psyche, with a strong inner sense of knowing

deep, dark secrets about the mystery of the inner Absolute. Some of these exotic mysteries are so deep and astonishing that they can't be clearly defined. This phase is called "illumination," and the mystic receives revelations from, and within, the unconscious Mind.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 68/ THE DARKNIGHT, EGODEATH, AND JOY

\*\*\*

Ripped abruptly from the common, familiar world, the mystic must fend for herself, psychically bleeding in an alien inner Mindscape. The drama continues as she tries to survive as a stranger/intruder in her own psyche.

We now pick up the drama at the middle of the discussion of the third step of the five-step mystical experience known as "illumination."-- the peak of all contemplative states. So attractive, so blissful, so fulfilling is it that some mystics stop here. They believe that the journey is completed. Actually, "illumination" is only the midpoint between the other two great phases of the mystical Way. It stands halfway between the beginning purgative Way and the final unitive Way. Some see no need to go further.

But their feelings/intuitions of the Absolute are still lightyears from true union. So, most mystics move on to step four of five, the mystic death-- an agonizing soulpurification. This darknight of the soul is a nightmarish and ghastly phase of inner growth, in which the mystic falls into despair and depression, feeling that the bottom of her mind has dropped out. The egomind is forced to wrestle with its hopeless helplessness. It faces obstacles too massive to overcome or too complex to figure out. So, it is swamped and overwhelmed. God, formerly known with immediacy and clarity, seems to have disappeared. Even when the mystic looks within, in that inner space where formerly she found the Absolute, it is empty.

Her first reaction is panic. But later, her mind achieves greater balance. God cannot be gone. The only thing that God cannot do is to be nonexistent.

So, the mystic allows the projected Mindworld to drive her to a state of hopelessness. If she allows higher awareness, she will realize that this hopelessness is a good thing. Why? Because it shows her beyond the shadow of any doubt that the answers that she needs do not exist anywhere within her conscious mind, or anywhere in the "external, material" world. She is forced into a state of remarkable, redeeming consciousness, even though this is the last inner space she would ordinarily visit. For she gives up completely, not only on herself and the world, but on God. She looks for nothing, asks nothing, expects and demands nothing. Amazingly, when she has reached the state of total detachment where she says, "I can't influence anything, so I really don't give a damn about any outcome," she finds herself beginning to be

flooded with peace, radiance, and grace.

Why is she driven to such an "extreme"? Why does she respond so radically? Because her unconscious Mind knows that the last factor in her consciousness that **must die** is her natural instinct to find or create personal happiness. She must have the idea of personal control pried from her "dead" fingers. For ego, with its grasping, must die. Yes, she must come all the way to the point where even her personal happiness **does not matter**. This is perfect detachment. Only then can the relative state called "happiness," which relies on environments, be replaced with the inner steady state called "joy," which is independent of environments. Joy originates from within.

This constitutes a genuine threat to, and a real attack on, the ego. The purpose of this attack is to destroy the will of the ego, for without that "inner death," the resurrection of the soulspirit could never occur. So, the mystic does not become a fully developed, full-fledged mystic until/unless she undergoes "mystic death," the inner crucifixion, the "death of ego, or will."

Mystics call this period or phase the "great desolation," "the wilderness experience," "the inner desert," as well as various types of inner "death." At the end of this excruciating period, the Self rises from its cross, emerging into its new and eternal identity. After this, the mystic is no longer "merely human," but only "part human and part spirit." Her goal, of course, is to become, or try to become, as much spirit as possible. Although she will never reach it in a physical body, her goal is to become one hundred percent Spirit or Love in incarnation. Until then, as she walks the everyday path in her ordinary life, she might be only fifty percent Spirit, plus or minus forty.

Anyway, during this time of inner stripping bare, the soul is being driven to exactly that point where it needs to be in order to discover permanent enlightenment: This is the point where it has no personal desire. It can say, literally and truthfully, "I want nothing." For wanting nothing is a good step towards being nothing, or disappearance into the ultimate Mind of Love.

The fifth step is the ultimate goal of all mystical training. It is called "union with the inner Absolute." Here, the Absolute is not simply sensed. The mystic no longer basks in its presence. Instead, she experiences mindmeld with the great Mind or Spirit. She then awakens to the fact that she herself is, and has always been, the Dreamer of her world. For her, this is no longer a fascinating intellectual supposition. She actually **feels** the truth of the statement. It has become inner knowledge, even inner awareness. To her, it is now a selfevident truth. She knows it with the absolute certainty with which she knows that she has a head. There can now be no doubt about it.

But gradually, she begins to awaken to the fact that she is not just the Dreamer of **her** world, but somehow, in some mysterious way, she is also the Dreamer of **the**

world. She now enters a life of increased certainty. Her inner "powers" are increased a thousandfold. But let's be clear:

The experience of enlightenment does not turn her into some kind of magician. This Power is **not** personal. It is not **her** power, but just **the** Power.

And by "Power," we are discussing the only real and worthy Power-- that of absorption in Love, which produces ecstasy and bliss. This does not imply, then, that the mystic gains the power for bullets to bounce from her flesh, the power to fly, to see into minds, or sealed rooms, to move and arrange matter with her mind. These are all considered psychic gifts or talents, but the Power of the mystic is the more genuine and useful Power to identify herself as Goddess. So, she becomes a mirror of perfect Love. This gives a great Power of understanding everything in the world, in the spheres of psychology and spirituality. It grants the Power of knowing others deeply, in order to help them. It is the Power of wisdom, and brings deep tranquillity and joy. This is not ecstasy. It is a stable and steady state of bliss. Ecstasy is only a foretaste of this steady and permanent joy.

This stage is also called "deification," for the mystic becomes God.

But let us be very clear about what exactly this means: It does **not** mean that she becomes God in **totality**, but that she becomes God in **nature**. As a crucial aspect of her spiritual journey, you might remember, the mystic was forced to give up all personal control. This was complete surrender to the will of the Absolute or the inner Beloved.

The nature or essence of that Beloved is Love. So, in perfect mindmeld with her Beloved, in becoming "Him/Her," the mystic has also become the perfect, unclouded sun of Love in a dark world.

So, deification does not turn her into a supercomputer, for mere data is not the essence of God. It does not turn her into a magician or miracle-worker (although, as noted, if a miracle is going to happen, it is quite likely to happen through her or another mystic), for the essence of the Beloved is not Power. Nor does she become the Savioress of every person, removing all discomforts, for the essence of the Beloved is not intrusion, intervention, or interference.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 69/ BECOMING GOD: UTTER JOY OR FINAL DISAPPEARANCE?

\*\*\*

"I am God." The mystic is notorious for such apparently blasphemous or absurd comments. It was his saying, "I and the Father are one," that got Jesus into so much trouble. The murder of the great mystic Al Hallaj (died 922) is reported to have occurred after his stunning statement, "There is no one in these clothes but God himself."

Have these mystics totally lost it? Or are they referring to a deeper mystery?

They have not simply gone mad, although they have often been so accused, and that would be the easy explanation. But it is simply a cop-out. If one dismisses them as nuts, one simply does not have to explain them.

But historically, there can be no reasonable denial that mystics are too intelligent, too balanced, too lucid, and too wise to be dismissed as "insane." So, we must look for the deep mystery hidden in their claim to "be God."

We have stated that this claim does not mean that the mystic believes, in delusion of grandiosity, that she is God in totality, what has been called the "God of the physical universe," with unlimited knowledge about, and control of, everything. This godimage reflects more the common Western myth than Reality.

No, her claim is more reasonable and realistic than that.

Remember that the "God" of the mystic is not the hypercontrolling, insecure, nervous "Jehovah" of the ancients. No, her God is Love itself. She learns this about the nature of God before she even begins the mystical journey. Some embrace the true God of Love, as Love, long before they ever experience Him/Her directly. When they find the inner space occupied by the Absolute, they realize that it is that part of the psyche that creates Love. So, by the time that they actually have their electrifying experience of union, what they experience this union with is the inner Love-nature. So, when they say, "I am God," what they mean is, "I am Love," or, by extension, "I have become a mirror of perfect Love," or "... an instrument of perfect Love," or, "... an incarnation of perfect Love."

Therefore, mystics are the only "Christians" who sincerely try truly to imitate Christ. Not only do they imitate his behavior, which could be managed by any hypocrite. But they try to imitate his inner realization. Anyone who imitates Jesus to the ultimate completion must become God, for Jesus was God.

\*\*\*

The five stages of mysticism are complete relative to the average Western mystic. But some schools of Eastern mysticism insist on a final stage: 6) annihilation of the individual, the soul or Self. It is believed that the soul is reabsorbed into the Infinite. Some Sufis, for example, see this as the very highest stage of which humans are capable. This is the state that, in some schools of Buddhism, is called *nirvana*.

The Sufi mystic Al Ghazzali (died 1111) wrote, "The end of Sufism is total absorption in God."

But in a realistic way, the goal of Sufi mystical experience is closer to Christian "unitive life" than to the

Buddhist "annihilation." (The word *nirvana* in Buddhism literally means "extinction," but many commentators interpret this as the "extinction of ego," or, "... of desire.") At any rate, the teaching of final "annihilation" is not taught by European or general Christian mystics. Even the Buddhists teach that Mind, being absolute and



nonrelative Reality, is forever, indestructible, invincible.

So, the goal of the soul, in Christian mysticism, is not its final nonexistence, but a progressive intensification of life. Union with God is not dully passive, but electrically, exhilaratingly, breath-takingly exciting, vivid, dynamic, and dramatic. The mystic is not deadened by her commitment to the Way, but made more alive than ever. She is "enthusiastic" in the literal sense of that word. (The word comes from two Greek roots, *en*, meaning "within," and *theos*, meaning "God. So, "enthusiasm" is literally having God inside you.)

Personality is not erased, but perfected, by the actions of Love. Mystics are among the most fascinating, vivacious, productive, and creative people. They are wise and intelligent. They highly value such qualities as goodness, kindness, integrity, and compassion.

Mysticism does not deactivate, but regenerates, the mind. That is why mystics are among the most productive and creative of human beings. The Absolute writes, speaks, and acts through them. True, they do not take personal credit for the fantastic accomplishments of their inspirations. But this by no means implies a deactivation of personality or productivity.

But isn't the underlying philosophy of mysticism a kind of negation? In some areas and phases, there is negation. But overall, it is a very positive, happy worldview that imbues everyday life with numinous meaning. Even when apparently negative terms are used ("nothing," "emptiness," "dark," "loss") mystics are discussing only how the process appears from the outside, to normal or average consciousness. To the mystic, the momentary experience of pain and loss, considering her great gain, are analogous to trading dust for gold dust, "God dust," or for diamonds.

The ordinary mind usually does not accurately perceive matters mystical anyway. If it sees a person in pain, it has zero awareness of the redeeming value and educational potential of pain. The average person might even conclude that the suffering person is being "cursed" by a stupid, violent, vengeful god. The state of enlightenment is so far beyond its comprehension that, at least at first glance, it looks like nothingness.

The usual consciousness of people is so remarkably dull, so incredibly undiscerning, that people have never been able, historically, to discern the difference between the subnormal and the supernormal. Being rejection minded, they lump together their best citizens with the worst, labelling them all, quickly and ignorantly, as "abnormal." Then, they nail their best to crosses.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 70/ THE ABSOLUTE AND THE NATURE OF MYSTICAL METAMORPHOSIS

\*\*\*

It is so carefully and cleverly hidden that you might never find It, unless you have a map. The Absolute is almost never apprehended by the average person. The ordinary person does not even know that It exists at all. Why is this? Why is the most important fact in the life of any human being so widely unknown? Why are there so few mystics?

The answer is, In order to sense the existence of the sweet, blissful, radiant Mind, it is necessary completely to suspend all ordinary consciousness, to still it. This in itself can be a monumental, gargantuan task. This is especially so in a society in which we are continuously bombarded with incessant messages. Our mindchatter never takes a break. We have come to consider this situation so completely normal that the average person does not even know what inner stillness feels like.

Getting to an inner space of stillness is no easy task. But in order to know the Absolute, one must not only visit this still inner space, but must move in. She must cultivate the discipline to remain in stillmind for a time. For the Absolute is no Godzilla roaming the streets. It is quite subtle and very quiet. As the Taoists point out, although this "Tao" supports heaven and earth, it is humble. Although omnipotent or allpowerful, it is still tender and hard to see or hear. It takes some practice even to detect the presence of this "small, still voice."

This is, of course, only symbolic language. When the Absolute is detected, it does **not** manifest through voices. That which is called the "voice of conscience" is much more analogous to communication with the Absolute. For It impels, It compels, It urges. It moves through the creation and activation of Love. But the average mystic does not hear voices.

And, once having touched or seen this Absolute, the mystic desires union with It, because It is so lovely, so irresistibly attractive-- as one might suspect Love to be. But when she falls in love with Love, the mystic does not desire annihilation, but union. She longs passionately, not for nonbeing, but for transformed being.

The mystical experience catapults her towards an active life of Love, not a passive inactivity. This experience is like a bow, and she the arrow. Her target is the "heart of God," or "of Love." No state of consciousness in this or any other world is more desirable than fusion with Love. No other is sweeter; no other is even comparable.

This "high" is the reward that nature, or God, has built into the system. There is no doubt that the chemistry of the brain is altered by the mystical experience. The brain produces entire families of natural sedatives and euphorics. It is a kind of natural drug-factory. For example, the families of natural drugs called "endorphins" and "enkephalins" are two examples of drugs produced by the brain that can be more powerful than anything administered from outside. Also, for example, when a person takes lsd, commonly called "acid," the tiny amount of this drug leaves the system rather rapidly, but it has initiated a domino effect, in which brain-chemicals take over and begin activities of their own. So, the acid simply sets into effect a process

by which the person's own brain-chemistry makes, and keeps, her "high" for hours.

Not that this implies an absurd reductionism, in which the mystical experience can be dismissed as a chemical aberration. Clearly, it cannot. For any mystic will tell you that it is not simply an altered state, although it is that, but a vision of a Reality so overwhelmingly real that it is "more real" than her everyday life. Reality, in fact, is what the mystical experience and philosophy are all about. So, when mystics speak of "truth," they are not referring to church-dogma or doctrine, or lists of officially approved beliefs in religion. When mystics use the word "truth," they mean it in its most literal sense. They mean "reality."

Mystics say that there is a higher degree or level of Reality within the Mind than can be found in the "outer material" world. This fundamental and timeless Reality is not physical, but psychospiritual. That is what the mystical experience is all about.

In a word, this ultrultimate Reality is Love. Love is the essence of the Creatormind, the Coremind, the Dreamer of the world. So, Love can be said to be Reality itself, because the Creatormind that indwells all things is Love.

Love initiates activities and triggers responses. This is why the mystic is no zombie, no dead person. Love does not kill her mind, but awakens it to new and continued activity. Some of the greatest luminaries of history were mystics, and this includes people in the fields of art, literature, spirituality, religion, philosophy, science, and other social domains. The high activity-levels of the mystic guarantee that she can get more done in a day than the average person does in a week.

One reason for this is that, practicing meditation, she does not need as much sleep as the average person. Many experienced meditators can get by just fine on four hours or less per night. Also, meditation is known measurably to increase the efficiency of mental functions, so she can literally do more, and do it better, every hour that she is awake.

So, it would be a complete misunderstanding, a terrible error, to interpret mysticism as unconsciousness or a sleepy semiconscious state. This might represent the pseudomysticism of Quietism, but is lightyears from the real thing. Instead, the mystics define their mystical state as bright, alert, sharp, amplified consciousness, but free of the burden of an egoself. The egoself, they say, drains mental energy from the system. It is a black hole in the mind, which drains energy by the gigapsychon, but returns absolutely zero. It demands much, but gives back nothing. It does this by incessant expectations, judgments, and related mental activities. It does this, in fact, by its insistence on incessant, nonstop thinking. By giving reasonable rest to the mind, in periods of inactivity, the mystic actually increases mental efficiency. This tiny egoself ceases to be the center of all being, and of operations. The person then becomes a part, and reflection, of a larger Mind-- a Mind of astonishing complexity/simplicity and efficiency. She lives as an expression of the Infinite.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 70/ THE POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

Thousand-carat diamonds do not rival the inner beauty found by mystics. After their voyage to the inner world, where they discover beautiful and exotic specimens of large inner diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, and rubies, the mystics return to the "outer" world to give these treasures away. The response of that world is usually a major yawn-- or else, an angry mob. Mystics are quite used to both responses. To paraphrase the mystic St. Theresa (1515-1582), once the mystic has seen the inner Absolute, she returns to the world with "greater ardor." "For she comes back down to consensual reality with a great sense of mission. She is not out to save the world, to sermonize, or to make converts. But she is attempting to share a wonderful, delightful joy, and the Source of that joy. She is not very useful or desirable to the religion that is mad about making converts, but she tells of a Power that truly converts the heartmind forever. Theresa speaks of an almost wild enthusiasm for "all that belongs to the service of God."

Strangely, from the usual perspective, this has nothing to do with religion, and everything to do with inner transformation in Love. Stated differently, the mystical experience is always spiritual, but it is never merely religious. It serves to lift human nature above the petty and trivial categories of human religion, above the dogmas, squabbles, and confusion that usually mark religion, and that can even make it unspiritual.

The mystic is not, by either temperament or inclination, a lazy, slothful, or inactive person. While she might or might not be superactive physically, she is a mental wizard. For her psyche has been superactivated by its encounter with the Absolute. The abandonment of the ordinary ways of unproductive thoughtpatterns has introduced her to a new way of creating thought in the world. The dropping of wasteful habits of thought and indulgences in sensuality have released gigapsychons of energy for sheer productive and creative endeavors. This occurs so that mystics might, in the words of the mystic Plotinus (205-70 B.C.), "energize enthusiastically" in a different area, and through a different mode, of Mind. Mystics do much hard work, in many forms.

Much of their most important work, such as the interior discoveries and accomplishments, cannot be perceived by outsiders, who often mistake them for lazy. The truth is, despite the very common reductionism of "work" to "wage-earning," there are very crucial and necessary occupations that have nothing to do with earning money. A "professional" mystic is not paid for her indispensable efforts, but those accomplishments are as important as the work of any doctor, psychologist, lawyer,

teacher, or minister. Mystical history, then, is one of supreme activity. In matters spiritual, which are the only ones that really matter, mystics have been explorers, pioneers, and discoverers. They have also been impressive organizers and "missionaries to the planet," bringing the message of unity above religion, inner oneness, and Love. They have returned to the consensual world to become saints, healers, teachers, philanthropists, social workers, and writers, leading heroic and destinarian lives. Most have been great spiritual educators, who spent their timenergy in attempts to teach the world about the luminous inner path. This kind of fruition is described by the mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) as "the crowning stage of human evolution," and "the supreme summit of the inner life."

These mystics have realized the great truth that all work done for the aid, comfort, or improvement of human beings is work done for God, that one cannot serve God without serving human beings. Every act of Love is an act of worship

The work of mystics, then, brings God into the world as active Love, and aids to bring human beings into Godconsciousness, or Love. So, while the first step of the long road of mysticism might be to leave behind the distractions of the sensual world, mystics return with a burning Love for that same world. "Going into the wilderness," away from people, is a crucial first step for many mystics, but it is nothing more than that-- a first step. Solitude can be indispensable at certain phases of the mystic life.

But when her inner life has been reordered and restructured, the mystic is impelled back into the world of people. For loving God is impossible if one is not expressing active Love for people. When union with the inner Love-nature is discovered, then solitude is abandoned. The mystic then becomes the medium through which Life, Light, and Love flow into our world to other people, healing and educating them. They become "ambassadors" and "diplomats" of the inner country, to our planet.

They serve in a wide variety of ways. Like the earliest followers of Jesus, who were commanded to "make disciples of people of all the nations," some attract students, becoming teachers of the Way. Others serve the poor, the challenged, the sick. Every path of Love ignited by sincere heartlove is a good path, and none better than another. Each mystic responds to her set of natural gifts to design her own practical path. Some serve in medicine, some become counselors, some become involved in writing and/or teaching.

An example of this kind of active life is Catherine of Siena (died 1380). She became a vehicle for "Power not herself." Her life, as a mystic, was wholly, unreservedly surrendered to the will of the Absolute. She dramatically changed the history of the world, by her high level of political activity, counseling with divine wisdom popes and kings.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 72/ TOTAL SELF-METAMORPHOSIS: THE CORE OF THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Dead to the world and alive to the inner God. This is how the mystic often begins her journey. For her first step is the awakening of "transcendental consciousness." This means the ability to go into the mind and "see" anything at all. Most people, when they go into the mind, find only darkness or emptiness. Why is this? Because learning to develop the inner senses is a kind of art. Like other kinds of art, it must be studied. The best way to study is to practice.

So the mystic wannabe might spend hours every day simply looking at the inside of her eyelids. That is, she might spend much time in exploring her mind. To do this, she needs to get away from all the noise of the world, still her body, and work patiently on developing concentration. It's easy to understand why, simply looking at her from outside, people mistake her deep stillness for inactivity, or even laziness. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The discovery and cultivation of this natural function (transcendental consciousness) is the awakening of something that has long lay dormant within her. Mystical "conversion" is not at all the same as religious conversion. It represents an inner tsunami of spiritual change. For, as noted, the mystic might not even embrace standard organized religion. And she certainly has no interest in jumping from religion to religion.

The real awakening to this inner world begins with "unselfing." The often subliminal assumption, "I am the center of Reality" begins to evaporate. For the true Center has been discovered, and it is this Absolute of pure Love. Stated slightly differently, the universe becomes its own center. The personal life is seen as a part of a larger Whole. Unconscious material starts to float up from deeper levels of the Mind, and to become conscious (aware). From the depths of the unconscious, the area called the Superconscious, the experience of unitive Love bubbles up and then explodes into the radiant light of awareness.

Then, one begins to be aware that she is actually part of this larger Supermind. She is not just her social self, the "looking glass self," recognized by others. She is not limited to her ego, which is her name, and all that signifies.

The transformation that she undergoes is the most momentous metamorphosis in the history of the worlds. It brings into awareness a passion, a hunger and thirst, to discover union with this attractive, lovely Absolute. It is a longing for one's true but secret identity. Somehow, somewhere, this Self was lost, but now is regained. Even people who were, before the experience, completely committed to a religion are astonished at the scope of character-transformation initiated by contact with the spiritual. Selfimage explodes, dissolves, and is radically reborn. The soul slides quite gently, subtly, almost imperceptibly, from the old self to the new. This reidentification is an infinitely glorious state, often accompanied by periods or

phases of bliss. But it is also not without pain, and so, it is likened to birth. In fact, mystics often call it rebirth.

In some cases, with some mystics, this rebirth occurs very gradually and incrementally. This was the case with George Fox (1624-1691), the founder of Quakerism. When this reidentification of Self begins, the universal Mind usually creates a test, so that the quality of the changes can be evaluated. Trials and tribulations might soon follow, in order to test strength and validity.

This phase is what the mystical literature refers to as the Way of purgation (purification). But of what is one being purified? Of the old patterns of "me first," of selfinvolvement, selfcenteredness, and general egotism. For egocentricity is a major obstacle to spiritual renewal and illumination. The mystic Shankara (788-820) writes, "Liberation is impossible as long as a trace of the ego remains."

The mystic is then exposed to oscillations between pleasure and pain. This is to educate her to draw strength from every experience, and also to teach her how much the sensation of "pain" is affected by definitions and mental interpretations of events.

Each step in growth brings a reaction from the psyche, and the mystical life arises cumulatively from all those reactions.

Many components of the life of Love occur gradually. But the first mystical knowing blasts into awareness with the subtlety of an elephant falling into your lap. "Mystical conversion" consists of a single, explosive event. It is sharply delineated from any preparatory struggles or confusions. But they, too, are necessary. You have to go through hell, and purgatory, to get to heaven.

You do not have to ask, "Did I really have a mystical experience?" For it is like being in love: If you have to ask, the answer is no. The main event leaves you with no questions, no doubts. It is sudden and luminous. A tsunami of peace and Love erupts from the deepest Mind, and impacts volcanically on the mind. It is a sharp, immediate awakening to the glory and agapogenic (Love-creating) reality of the world." For the world is known as the projection/reflection, of the adorable Absolute at the core of Mind. This sudden uprush of volcanic force is so supernovic that it feels as if it were imposed from some outside Source, but it is not. It all flows from the inner Splendor, a gift of the inner Beloved. Also, it is so extraordinary that it seems supernatural. It is, for this intensity of Love far supersedes natural phenomena. Paul (died 65) on the road to Damascus was swamped by the Power in exactly this type of event.

But this abrupt conversion is the flowering of a long unconscious incubation of ideas within the depths of the unconscious Mind. The actual luminescent blossom is often preceded by restlessness, confusion, internal struggle, even conflict. This stress forces unconscious intuitions into the conscious mind, accompanied by a soft internal ignition of luminosity.

All things are made new. This dazzling rebirth is known by: 1) a sense of

enormous, immense relief and freedom, 2( a sense of the immediacy of the Absolute, as close as your breath, and

3) an overwhelming tsunami of Love for the Absolute, the self, and all beings.

This intense, joyfilled touch of the Absolute knows It as immanent in self and cosmos, for cosmos is in the Self or soul, as the dream of the deeper Spirit. Instantly revealed is a new lifepattern demanded by Love. The mystic Lucie-Christine (1858-1916) says, "I saw before my inward eyes these words: 'GOD ONLY.'" They were accompanied, she says, by an inner awareness of how she could "belong completely to God alone in this world."

Francis (1181-1226) shows how tensions and conflicts are submerged in the unconscious Mind only to be revealed as soulshaking experience. His life began with serious inner conflict between sensuality and spirituality, amplified by literal warfare. Beauty and ugliness (as disease) also conflicted in this sensitive soul. One day, he suddenly "found himself another man."

An impulse forces itself up from the seething depths of the unconscious Mind. It becomes a strong directive to perform some decisive act. Often, it seems irrational, even mad. When it is obeyed, however, transcendental consciousness is more fully awakened. Underhill calls this an "unwanted visitation." It forces a radical change in Mind, so that you feel as if you have literally become another person. So, we have the metaphors of rebirth.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 73/ VARIETIES OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: BRIEF NOTES ON VARIOUS MYSTICAL TYPES

\*\*\*

Illumination is like waking from the dead, or from a sleep of nightmares. Francis felt that, before his mystical conversion, he had been "asleep." In a single moment, his entire life, his entire universe, had been radically restructured. Christ gave him an entirely new mission in life-- one that was to change the world for the better.

Disobedience to this inner revelation did not even occur to him. He saw here an opportunity to find an outlet for his outrageous and extreme idealism. It was an ideal that, practically applied, changed millions of lives.

A similar revelation came to Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510). She suffered through years of intense loneliness and depression, the result of an unhappy marriage. All this was preparing her mind to be capable of responding to the call of the Absolute, although she was not conscious of that fact. Right before her mystical conversion to the Way of Love, she sank deeply into hatred-- for both herself and life in general. Religion was powerless against this terrible bitterness and depression. In 1474, she was blown away by a powerful sensation of "the unmeasured Love of God." She had a



crystalclear revelation of the contrast between her deep misery and the Love of a joyfilled Lover. Then, she was drawn by "purifying affection" away from the distractions of the sensual world. This led her to the inward cry, "No more world! No more sin!" When she went home that day, her heart had been ignited with a great Love. Isolating herself, in a single moment, she was taught the entirety of the "orison." (This was the method of silent, interior prayer.) She found herself able to say nothing at all but the following: "O Love, can it be that Thou has called me with so great a Love, and made me to know in one instant that which worlds cannot express." Her powerful intuitive sensation of the Absolute was followed by a vision of the crucified Christ, which exponentially increased her feelings of Love. So, in her perception, the Absolute became the sacrificing Christ. This became the new Center of her being and life. It was the Love which immerses all of life, this universal Love, which became her transformative agent of personality renewal.

Mystical experiences often arise, as did hers, due to uncomfortable environments, from which one seeks, however unconsciously, escape. Madam Guyon (1648-1717) relates a similar environment, although it is a bit weaker. She appears unconsciously to have taken much from Catherine of Genoa.

Madam Guyon was a particularly fascinating study for the psychologist, for her conscious mind was fragile. Since her intelligence was naturally quite weak, it interfered very little with her inner experiences. Her great guiding principle was passivity. A horrible marriage made her turn her sentimentally oriented Love-energy towards God. She was attracted to, and began to practice, the "orison of quiet." (An "orison" is a technique of inner prayer.) She said that her orison was "emptied" of all images. Nothing passed through her mind.

Merswin (1307-1382), was a disciple of a mystic named Tauler (1300-1361). Merswin was not a true mystic, but he is mentioned here because he is often mistaken for one. It is fairly clear that he was mentally or emotionally disturbed. A dynamic inner vision of the cross unleashed unconscious forces in Merswin. He swung towards an unhealthy state of hatred for his own free will. (It is probable that he was a dissociative personality.) He felt subjectively that he had been physically levitated during his counterepressive experience, when unconscious energy exploded into his conscious mind. He then entered a path of unhealthy extremism, becoming a "selfmortifier." ("Mortifier" means killer.) He turned towards asceticism-- not a practice of the balanced mystic, attracted by selfabuse, expressing selfhatred.

The encounter of a German mystic, Suso (1295-1366) was more subtle. He was an extremely dissatisfied and restless man. But he had always been gifted with a passionate appreciation of all sensual beauty. But he too became an extremist, driving himself to unusual acts of purgation, haunted by a magnified sense of his own impurity. So, he became imbalanced. For the rest of his life, he was granted visions of unusually vivid richness. He "saw" or sensed something "formless." Like the guy in

the old song, "Love Potion Number Nine," he did not know whether it was day or night during his altered states. His states came upon him in the form of deep sweetness, silence, and profound rest. He identified the inner space of his voyages as the "kingdom of heaven," as so many mystics have done. In a very high pleasure-state, he felt subjectively as if he were walking on air. A famous student/teacher of Zen said that the altered state created by Zen was "just like ordinary life, except that you are about six inches off the floor." Suso was a student of another famous mystic, Meister Eckhart (1260-1327).

The mystics of history span a broad spectrum of types, ranging from the highly educated and intellectual Pascal (1623-1662) to the humble and simple country man, Brother Lawrence (1605-1691). In Pascal, "the fire of Love answered the flame of humility." He described the Absolute as "not the God of philosophers and scholars." A master of style and expression, Pascal was so overwhelmed by the sensation of God, he wrote with clumsiness and simplicity, like a child. His experience of Light and Love was, as they all are, ecstatic and incommunicable.

His simple contemporary, Brother Lawrence, perceived the Absolute in a moment, in a flash of inner brilliance. The sensation and intuition were unecstatic, but enduring in their effect. A peasant who served as a soldier, Brother Lawrence entered the Carmelite order after age fifty. His mystical experience was triggered by a view of a winter tree, stripped of leaves.

It is not unusual to have this fabulous and indescribable experience triggered by the unusually ordinary, plain, or even unattractive stimulus. In this way is nature used as a step towards ontological perception. (The word "ontological" has to do with basic questions of existence.)

Walt Whitman (19th century) regularly perceived the Divine within the natural. In fact, the awakening to the Divine is often preceded by an awakening to the beauties of nature.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 74/ COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS, RICHARD ROLLE, AND THE TWO TYPES OF MYSTIC

\*\*\*

A step towards nature is a move towards God. This is because immersion in natural beauty is a step away from the cold, conventional, everyday "external, material" world. This is described as the discovery of what Jefferies characterizes as an "inner and esoteric meaning." This, he says, is found in the visible world of nature.

A feeling of being "lost" in the e"universe" is indistinguishable, at times, from a mystical experience. For it contains the larger mystical component of the dissolution

of egoboundaries. Often, when perceiving extraordinary beauty, one will feel drawn into it to the point where she literally forgets herself. For a moment, she **becomes** that perception. She loses a sense of separation. She is not a person experiencing the beautiful. She is simply the beautiful. Her sense of separate identity has been swallowed by an overriding sense of massive, intense beauty. She falls into total identification. She becomes the act of looking. She becomes the beauty perceived.

This experience has been called "cosmic consciousness."

It is **not** the same as the mystical experience. But it does describe an important phase of that experience. Although this simple loss of egoboundaries is not the full goal of the mystic, it is an aspect of her journey to the Center. In cosmic consciousness, the inner door to heaven is opened a crack, but not pushed open all the way.

Richard Rolle (1300-1349), a wellknown mystic, resembled Francis in his experience. Like the saint of Assisi, he found himself in a state midway between the material and spiritual worlds. Like Francis, he described his younger years as "unclean." Like those of Francis, his conflicts had been going on for many years, and had incubated long in his unconscious mind. He described his time of change as one of "heat." His "heart," he said, had turned to "fire," and then, to "burning love."

This can, in some mystics, be a literal sensation. Mystics are familiar with it as the "fire of love." Rolle likens himself to a "little bird," who "for love of her lover longs." As she sings all night out of joy and love for her mate, so he sings for his "Lord."

The perceived truth had two aspects, either of which could be emphasized in a particular mystical experience, but both of which were valid. It could be seen as either eternal or temporal, transcendent (above the world and creatures) or immanent (living from within the world and creatures), absolute (changeless) or dynamic (moving and changing). This God is at the same time being and becoming. The average mystical experience reveals a revelation of one side or the other, since to reveal both simultaneously would be confusing.

this gives rise, in turn, to two distinctive types of mysticism. It can manifest as an "outer" splendor, projected from the deep unconscious, ineffable. This emphasizes the transpersonal glory of a Mind that is, in sum, more than the universe, and hence, above it, or "transcendental." This, however, is only a relative description. It describes only one "face" of Reality, one way of seeing the Absolute. Here, the reaction of the self to this great and dignified Splendor is not intimate or affectionate. It is only bowled over, overcome with awe and a need to worship. This was the kind of experience described by Suso, Brother Lawrence, Richard Jefferies, and so many others. This involves the emergence of the Self from the illusionprison of "Ihood," or egoself. In the mind, it crystallizes into a definitely boundaried relationship between the self and the "inner Other."

But this should not be misunderstood. As magnificent as this vision is, it is never

enough simply to be a spectator. The transcendental life demands participation, as a response to the Absolute, and this is a lifelong calling.

The other type of mystic hears the calling from within, and knows that the Absolute is, although much greater than herself, within her. This kind of mystic revels in an intense sense of persona Love that binds her to this more profound, gigantic aspect of an immeasurably larger Self. One mystic heard these words from the Absolute" "Come, My love, and receive all that the Beloved can give to His beloved." This was heard by St. Mechtild of Hackborn (died 1310). This Absolute is seen as profoundly intimate and personal. It is that Supermind of which the mystic is a part. The mystics who look symbolically outward see perfect beauty, but they who look directly inward are bathed in perfect Love. Those who have extremist experiences of this kind are called "emotional" mystics. They include, for example, Richard Rolle, Madam Guyon, and Catherine of Genoa. For these, Love is all. It is passionate, heated, and allconsuming. It is alldominant. Love actually takes the place of the awe which usually occurs in mystics of the transcendental type. Quickly, Love passes from the emotional to the volitional. In other words, the mystics of the emotional type start to cooperate voluntarily with the presence of Love. They not only **feel** Love, but **want** Love. Their response, in other words, is not mere spontaneous sentiment, but includes an act of will.

When they come under the Power of the tornado of Love, they are lifted by the experience beyond their old selfboundaries. When they escape their old limits and borders, they no longer even belong to themselves, but to the Beloved. They willingly give themselves wholly to their Beloved. This results in interior bliss.

The mystical experience is a rapid event, but mystical "conversion"-- the inner changes that result from contact with the Absolute-- can take a lifetime or longer completely to manifest.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 75/ RIDDING THE LIFE OF EVIL AND CULTIVATING HUMILITY: THE FIRST STEPS OF MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

It is "addition by subtraction." For the mystic actually becomes richer by dropping something every day, as Lao Tzu said. When a mystic first Mindmelds with the Absolute, she is impelled, asap, to rid her life of all things that are not in harmony with that magnificent life of Love to which she has been called. "This can result in an energetic attempt to rid her life of all evil and "imperfection."

The mystic is not environmentally dependent as others are. So, one way that she "rids her life" of evil and imperfection is by redefining everything already found in her life. For example, whenever she decides to label anything as evil, she is literally

**creating** evil in her mind or life. This kind of label is a selffulfilling prophecy. So, to rid her life of evil does not necessarily mean running around trying to burn things, to get rid of things. Instead, it can mean looking at that which she has with new eyes. Seen through the eyes of goodness, all things can be good. The mystic Paul (died 65) wrote, "To those who are pure, all things are pure." REF

She also attempts to move beyond or above illusion. By centuries of false words, human beings have built up a "false universe." She seeks to replace this with the gnostic direct vision or revelation of "truth," Reality, or lucidity. Then the fogs and obscurities of words tend to be burned off by the sunlight of clear and direct vision or understanding.

She finds that her old self or lower nature is incompatible with the bright new vision of Love as the core-Reality of the cosmos. For the egoself feels bound by, for it is obsessed with, materialism. The soul longs for liberation. It seeks to shatter the "bubble" of isolation and solitude created by words, and to join in bubble-free oneness with all. Unity with the inner higher Mind will bring unity with others, because It is also one with them. She is challenged to Mindmeld with the Mind already melded with others. Since this Mind is the only Reality, we become "real" only as we are "in Him/Her," and "He/She" is "in us."

Goodness flows into and through the mind of the mystic as she firms up her unity with that inner Being, the Absolute. It begins, through Love, to alter everything in her life. For the Absolute is nothing but absolute goodness, absolute Love.

She then begins to see even her own soul through the eyes of the Absolute. That is, she sees with the eyes of grace. She sees her soul as stainless, completely "washed clean," forgiven, given a new start at this very moment. She is made pure and holy by Love. In the vivid words of the allegory of Revelation, the final book of the Bible, the mystical author writes, "They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb." This means that enlightenment brings purity ("white") in selfpresentation ("robes") through the lifenergy ("blood") of sacrifice ("lamb").

Since the Mind of Love takes no account of injury, she stands before this Mind in a pure and holy state, made so not by her actions, but by grace. ("Grace" is how the Absolute views us-- as totally "forgiven," flawless, stainless, perfect.)

A first step is challenging: For she has been uniquely gifted with an exquisite vision of the allpowerful Love. Yet her first step is rejection of any kind of pride, and the embracing of humility. Humility is the "elementary school" of mysticism. Yet still, it is astonishing how many have been unwilling to master it. It seems to be one of the tougher lessons of earthlife, and people usually pass this test rather slowly. It is so difficult because of ego insecurity.

But also, how can the mystic be truly humble, when she has been vouchsafed visions of eternity? By realizing that she herself is nothing special. The visions and experiences show only that the Absolute is special. Just as a person is not made wet

by looking at water, or burned up by looking at fire, so one who sees the Absolute is not made better by the vision only.

Whatever goodness or Love is worth having, she knows, she can only welcome into her life from that deep inner Source that is not her self. Knowing that she is not the Source of the goodness and Love in her life keeps her realistically humble. Anyone who feels personal pride is no real **mystic**, for she has misunderstood the very basis, the foundation, of mysticism. Lao Tzu says that the mystic becomes like the Tao itself, seeking no credit, practicing no self-display. That is why, he says, when the mastersage does anything, all the people say, "Look what we did."

Besides, the vision of the Absolute is so gloriously splendid, a reaction of humility on the part of an observer who is merely human is almost automatic. She is then challenged to keep this humility when with other people. This she can best do by reminding herself that the inner

Absolute, worthy of greatest honor, lives in and through those very people as Love. It lives not only within her, but within all. It has no exclusive lease with her. While she does not, then, honor egopersonalities, she does honor the God within each. The Hindu *namaste* means, "the Divine in Me honors the Divine in you." It is the perfect greeting of the mystic.

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) was told, by the Divine Mind, "By humbling thyself in the Valley of Humility, thou shalt know Me.... In self-knowledge, then, thou wilt humble thyself, seeing that, in thyself, thou doest not even exist."

A most striking and stunning awareness of the mystic, when she sees the Absolute is the utter "poverty" of the self. This is made more vivid when compared to those inner riches belonging to that Spirit. The sense of awe, rapture, or Love then begins to merge with a strong sense of "repentance," not necessarily for "sins," but for the simply obvious lack of spiritual riches and beauty belonging to the naked soul. This is followed by a humble but passionate longing to be free of this lower self. In some souls, this actually swings to the unhealthy state of selfloathing. When exposed to the utterly Perfect, the only response possible to the awakened soul is humility.

Longing with deep and terrible hunger to be perfect, as the Absolute is perfect, is actually only the soul's desire to be more real. The entirety of the mystic's being-- body, mind, and soul-- is shaken to the core, and often caused even to faint, unable to tolerate exposure to stainless perfection, or to her own imperfection. It is, says Petersen, "marvelously moved and shaken." In mysticism, this is called the "vehement experience." In the vehement state, there arises an intense and sharpened awareness of one's own imperfections that is painful. The mystic is exposed to her own distorted and selfcentered life. Often, the vehement event is the beginning of the purgative Way. This Way might constitute months, or even years, of purifying suffering. It is anything but easy, and is a sample of what it means that the inner soul cares nothing for comfort, but is obsessed by its own spiritual growth. So the

soul will put the egomind through sickness, difficult relationships, challenging selfimages, poverty, and losses of all sorts if it feels that it needs these experiences to grow spiritually. These events are not imposed from any outside Source, but are inputted by the soul, so that the Spirit dreams them up. This is why the mystic moves in the sometimes odd, but always supporting and sublime, faith that everything is "good." "It is good," say the Hindu mystics, "because it is."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 76/ CULTIVATING INVINCIBILITY: THE ALLEMBRACING MIND AND THE WAY OF PURGATION

\*\*\*

Agony, torment, hopeless despair, irretrievable loss-- these are only a few of the conditions through which the mystic, like all people on earth, must pass. For her, this is an especially darknight. But she goes through this phase voluntarily, even willing these baleful conditions, in the fullest awareness that all these states are tools and methods for catapulting her soul forward, accelerating its spirituality.

In the very midst of a world that can be far from comfortable, she makes herself even more uncomfortable, by fasting, solitude, and self-denial. This she does so that she can assimilate the valuable lesson of learning to embrace suffering and loss as the gifts of the inner soul, or of God. /A few mystics on the outer fringes of extremism became masochists, exhibiting signs of real mental illness. But in moderation, this Way of purgation makes the mystic stronger.

Having learned the priceless lesson of true humility, the mystic will often choose to amplify her pains and purgations by exposing herself to, or embracing, duties and jobs which she finds naturally repellant. Mystics are quite serious about this "allembracing Mind," and its necessity to enter the inner kingdom of light. In this way, Francis, who by nature was fastidious, embraced a leper and kissed him on the mouth. He was trying to see this leper, and even his condition, as "good," because it was created by the one Mind. If this Mind is perfect, the mystic knows, then **everything** in the dreamed world must be equally perfect. If the mystic sees anything as imperfect, she knows that it is she herself that needs adjusting. Some mystics, as usual, went to sickening and repulsive extremes to prove that they had cultivated allembracing Mind. The behaviors which they practiced to prove this to themselves are too disgusting even to discuss here. For my reading audience has not yet cultivated allembracing Mind, and I hesitate to describe the almost superhuman limits to which these enlightened sages drove themselves. Suffice it to say that if you knew what these spiritual giants did, you might never want to eat again!

This irrational behavior all served the reasonable goal of selfconquest. For if the mystic cannot conquer or vanquish her lower self, she will not long stay on the

difficult mystic trail. These repellent activities she did with the holy purpose of conforming to "pure Love," and in obedience to her own interpretations of the commands of Love. Being a moderate mystic, I do not believe that Love commands us to do anything that is immoderate, but it can be easily seen how certain repugnant activities demonstrate, or help cultivate, the allembracing Mind of Spirit.

But, even if such grotesque exaggerations are not involved, every mystic must go through the time of purgation-- usually lasting for years. What happens in her life? There might be economic or financial collapse, in which she will be forced to put all faith in the One. There might arrive biomedical crisis, in which the same end will be the goal: faith in Love. There might occur the death of precious relationships, the end of beautiful and promising friendships. There might occur an abrupt and agonizing religious shift. Or the purgative period could include combinations of these and other challenges.

Why do these "terrible" things happen? These are usually the kinds of events that drive the average person away from God, into the desert of atheism. Yet oddly, they are designed by the soul to drive the mystic more directly and closely into the arms of Love. How do they perform this paradoxical task? Before the mystic can develop "faith" in the Absolute-- an absolutely vital and indispensable component of her spiritual life-- she must lose all faith in her egoself. She must taste utter helplessness. In the words of the mystic-based Twelve Step programs, she must "hit bottom." Speaking of Twelve Step programs, in AA they will tell you that alcoholism, the most hideous demon imaginable, has as its purpose this same goal: to drive you to utter helplessness, so that you would finally discover the inner commonsense to give up and turn your life over to the higher Power. They do not clearly, as the mystic does, say that this Power is Love, but that is something that you must discover on your own.

Instead of playing the foolish old egocentric game "Why me?" the mystic knows that she is being driven from the world of senses. The purpose of the world is to demonstrate clearly that the world has no answers. It will serve the mystical purpose, that is, will drive the person inward towards the inner Mind, especially if the person cooperates. But if she does not cooperate by going inward for answers, she can, and probably will, spend centuries, or even millennia, in the inner hell of selfimposed bitterness, screaming obscenities at the universe, and playing the role of victim. This is a childish response, a game which psychologists have given the name, "Poor little me." It is spiritually decelerating, as is all bitterness, and goes nowhere fast. In summary, the purpose of the world is not to drive one into bitterness, but to drive one away from the world, into the Self.

So, mystics call purgation a "dreadful joy." It is seen, with its disasters, catastrophies, calamities, and crises as a gift, when properly interpreted. It represents a breakdown of the old self and the old familiar universe. Purgation, and



even its contemplation, can terrify the inner child, but it must be faced with a strong attitude of trust that even this is "good." The worst thing that ever happened will, in time, become one of the best things that ever happened to you. Only retrospection can create this paradox.

This is all part of an attempt by the soul to "grow up," to taste spiritual and psychological adulthood. For a childish person is severely tested by crisis, and does not do at all well. The spiritual adult, by contrast, behaves in a detached manner, at least enough to create a little introspective wisdom. This does not mean that even the fully enlightened mystic is not at all affected by the world. She can be, especially if loved ones are harmed, or the principle of Love is otherwise involved. Still, she is not dominated or controlled by the world.

The wise have as their goal, at least unconsciously, a mystical state. It is a very high, elevated, noble, and advanced state. It is called "invincibility." In this altered but continuous state, the mystic realizes that she cannot, in her higher Self, be touched by the changes, especially the crises, of the world. The world, she knows, can alter her body. It can affect even her mind. But it cannot touch her soul. So when her Self becomes one, identified, with the soul, she cannot be touched by the world. When she has become completely free in her mind, and refuses the illusion that she is formed by environment (she comes to see herself as the former, not the formed), she has reached inner "invincibility." This is one of the most desirable endstates of the mystic.

Crisis is supremely character-building. If taken as part of the course, it will make the mystic stronger, wiser, more detached, and more compassionate. When it is all finally over, all her pain and loss will seem less significant. The real importance will be seen in the gifts that these conditions brought and left behind, deposited in the soulmind.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 77/ PURGATION, PURGATORY, PAIN, PEACE, PASSION, AND POVERTY

\*\*\*

Purgation seems terrible and frightening to the undeveloped consciousness. And it is. But it brings with it gifts that can be obtained in no other way. So, as noted, the mystic welcomes the pains of purgation.

Sometimes, she even voluntarily adds to her suffering-- just to make sure that she gets the point, or learns the lesson. And, even scarier, the mystic realizes that the Way of purgation is not just a neatly limited sector of her life. It might, and probably will, continue during her whole life, with some times more, and some times less, intensity.

One of the selfimposed pains of the mystic can be a terribly burdensome and

wretched sense of contrition. This is sorrow or painful regret created and amplified by an acute sense of unworthiness. Not all mystics experience this to the same degree. Some mystics seem able to accept the fact that their human selves are of limited value, and simply, to move on from there. Others, however, perhaps more perfectionistically oriented, get hung up on their imperfections. These might be the center of their lives for a while, or might be, in the longterm, a haunting presence.

Contrition can also exist as a counterweight to transcendental pleasure, with which it can be in perfect symmetry. That is, it serves as the "negative" pole. But why would one create a negative pole at all? Probably the purpose of contrition is to act against pride, to create the sense of humility discussed earlier. For a "proudful mystic" is an oxymoron-- a complete contradiction in terms

Contrition, then, while uncomfortable, supports and sustains the allimportant humility that is the very indispensable basis of the mystic's life, and her only hope for healthy integration with the One. The only reasonable perspective of the Godsoul relationship is a study in humility. The mystic Julian of Norwich (died 1416) said that the only way to know the soul was to be led deeply into God. God interfaces with the human soul, but the only valid response of that soul is humility.

So, we have studied a little three major goals of the mystical life--union, invincibility, and humility. To that, we now add another crucial one-- selfknowledge. For knowledge of the self or ego was to lead, in time, to knowledge of the Self or soul. And knowledge of the soul was to lead to knowledge of God, the Source of "the all."

Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) said that this Way of knowledge, a subsystem within the great Way of mysticism, could not occur without the other subsystem just discussed-- the Way of purgation. When she described a state of mind called "purgatory," this is precisely what she meant. Purgatory was never meant to refer to a place, an actual spatial coordinate. Instead, like heaven and hell, it was an allegorical description of a state of consciousness. The states of hell and purgatory look and feel the same. But in hell, you suffer from karma, and cannot understand anything about it. In purgatory, you might have the same suffering, but you know that it is having a purifying effect, and will, in time, lead you to heaven.

When Catherine talked about purgatory, she even called it a "projection," implying that it was a state of consciousness originating with the inner Mind. Souls are said to be covered with a "rust" of sin, which is gradually consumed by the fires of purgatory.

As this "rust" decreases, their happiness increases, opening them to the "Divine Ray" of God's Love. Paradoxically, this "burning" in the fires of purgatory is increased by the "fire of Love." This proves that purgatory's purpose is not punishment, but peaceful progress towards perfection.

The soul's visit to purgatory during the Way of purgation is not merely detached or intellectual, but is a heroic path, full of passion for the Absolute, for Love. In turn,

this passion strives for dominion over the passions for things of the "material" and sensual world.

In this mystical path of transcendence, or rising above the passions of the world, union with the Absolute within becomes both pleasure and duty. It is, after all, not the hobby or pastime of the mystic, but her career. It is the very reason that she was born, that she was created as an individual soul. Mysticism cannot take a back seat to anything in life. A "part time mystic" is as selfcontradictory as a "proudful mystic." Neither can exist.

But please don't misunderstand: Mysticism is not viewed as a dreary obligation. It is a joy. It is what the mystic most wants to cultivate, most wants in her life. It is a pleasure. But that having been said, it is also an allconsuming, alldemanding lifedesign. It must never degenerate into a mere interesting pursuit or study. It must remain a real passion.

Mysticism is a purgation of the domination by the senses, and a turning of life over to Love. This Way of spiritual growth is a Way of becoming, and is endless. Mysticism, then, is a "polybiographic" career-- one that spans many lifetimes. Purification is also continuous, perpetual, and endless.

But when mystics use the word "purgation," they mean the final step of what they call "conversion." What is conversion? It is the movement or elevation of consciousness and Mind from a state of being ordinary or average to a state in which one can literally and truthfully call herself a mystic. Conversion is the discovery that the inner Absolute exists, followed by its relentless pursuit as a career. It blends naturally, after commitment is complete, into purgation.

Purgation cleanses the mind from foolish, selfish egointerests. Richard of St. Victor (1123-1175) says that the essence of purgation is "selfsimplification." Another writes of the need to be "cleansed, purified, and stripped" before she can be "enlightened." (This is from the *Theologia Germanica (14th century)*.) Purgation involves the remaking of character and the restructuring of mind in the light of Love.

It consists of two aspects: 1) stripping away all that is undesirable, harmful, or unnecessary. This is "selfstripping," or the "selfsimplification" of Richard. 2) All factors permitted to remain in the mind are cleansed.

The mystic might be seen, tongue-in-cheek, as the professional "stripper" of the universe. But instead of losing her clothes, she loses even her body, and then, quite literally, loses her mind! More seriously, as Lao Tzu writes, the average person gets richer by getting new things every day, but the sage (wise person) gets richer by letting go of something new every day. This could be a good practical guideline for the aspiring mystic, especially in the United States: Give away something every day, until you are living at a level of simplicity which you consider ideal. The mystic, living the moderate and centrist Way of simplicity, another subsystem of the Way of mysticism, enjoys things of beauty and comfort, but she rejects all luxury,

overindulgence, and greed.

The stripping of the self of all things unreal, superfluous, and potentially harmful arises from a state of mind called "detachment." Most simply, this is a state in which one does not allow oneself to be controlled or overly influenced by the material or sensual world, or the things in that world. Mystics often call this "poverty."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 78/ MORTIFICATION, ULTRACONTENTMENT, AND THE WAYS OF RENUNCIATION AND SIMPLICITY

\*\*\*

Fulllest life begins with death. Loss can be the mystic's greatest gain. Mysticism is most mysterious and ultracomplex, with infinite Mind, containing numberless subsystems.

Purgation is a subsystem of mysticism. Two subsystems of purgation are contrition and "mortification," which arises from a rootword in Latin meaning death (the deliberate "killing" of egocomponents).

The stage called "mortification" occurs in preparation for the ultimate "death" of the entire egopersonality, it is replaced by, or resurrected as, Love.

Mortification involves deliberate self-exposure to pain and discomfort, and to difficult or challenging tasks. For what must be killed in "mortification" is the dominance of egodesires. These proliferate by the thousands, and, if not carefully regulated, and, in time, killed, will rule the whole life. Since a mystic has already turned her life over fully to the service of Love, and believes totally that you can't serve two masters, she must make a tough choice: Am I going to serve my personal desires? Or am I going to serve the principle of pure Love, the Love-nature, the Absolute within?

She knows, as few do in our desire-driven society, that you can't have it both ways. She doesn't try slick justification to defend her desires. She is an honest realist, who has recognized with utter clarity the impossibility of having her cake and eating it too.

So, she chooses. She chooses the inner Absolute, the Love-nature, as her guide and master. So, she turns her back on all her personal or selfish desires, renouncing them. This is another subsystem of mysticism, called renunciation. Of it, simplicity is the most necessary component.

But this does not turn the moderate mystic into a selfabusing ascetic, nor does it make her a "dead woman walking." She is not made by mysticism into a zombie, a bump on a log, a couch-potato, an inactive, dull, passive, unresponsive "thing."

Instead, the centrist mystic comes more alive than ever. For she has not abandoned **ALL** desire. We must be clear about this, for the enemies of mysticism

love to portray caricatures of mystics who have no feelings, no desires, no inner life. 'Does the Way of desire-abandonment really demand all this?

As we have seen, the opposite is true: The mystic is a person of passion, passionately alive and actively, highly engaged with other people. Without other people, there is no human Love, and without human Love, no mysticism. The mystic, then, does not literally "kill" desire, but exchanges it. But for what does she exchange her desires? She trades them in for the desires (will) of Love. Love has a wide spectrum of desires, and anything desired by Love is permissible to, even incumbent upon, the mystic. So, not only does the mystic **not** kill all desire. She is commanded to have a set of desires. They are simply not personal or selfish in nature.

Mysticism is not something that just happens to a person. It does not come as a bolt from the clear blue sky, nor does it jump out of a nightmare and grab a person. Instead, it must be carefully cultivated. Time must be set aside for its pursuit. This means simply that time must be set aside for contemplation, silence, stillness, and inner exploration. Time must be scheduled, and certain mental exercises used to clear the mind of its ordinary content. So, mysticism is facilitated by another important subsystem-- selfdiscipline, related to "mortification."

What, however, is "mortified" in "mortification"? It is all the mystic's personal desires. Take a moment, sit back, close your eyes, and try to feel, for just a moment, the enormous peace that you have when **you do not want anything**. This, if you can get into this state for only a few seconds, will give you a tiny taste of the profound tranquillity of mysticism. For the mystic seeks to live at all times in this state that is free of all the hassles and frustrations created by personal desires. It is a kind of "ultracontentment." Historically, desire-abandonment has led not to a sense of loss, as our programming might lead us to expect, but only to profound satisfaction of soul.

To be so "stripped" of personal desire is not to be deprived. One mystic said that, although she had renounced the world, she literally and honestly felt that it was others, who had not renounced, who were the truly deprived. For mystics have an inner gift of immeasurable value: deep tranquillity, fulfillment, satisfaction, and contentment with life. No amount of money can purchase or replace the deep sense of security that comes from having very simple needs. This comes from within the mystic, and can never, in fact, come from outside, from the dreamworld. But it is just wonderful, more beautiful and sublime than can ever be imagined.

In our society, where business, commerce, and natural greed make a dark trinity of obstacles to peace, nothing is more needed by the average person than a practical Way of peace. It promises to lead to that most evasive state-- satisfaction. We know, for it has been proved many times, that possession, accumulation, purchases, and ownership do not deliver any real satisfaction. Their promises of "someday" getting enough, or getting the newest, biggest, or baddest latest purchase, and

finding with it contentment, evaporate. For wanting is much more exciting than actually possessing. Also, no one has ever found any happiness through the mere accumulation of money or material things.

This is hard for us to believe. Since most of us learned to talk, we have been surrounded, and in this way educated and programmed, by people who believed the shallow lie that money can buy happiness. Tragically, the wealthy and ultrawealthy of the history of the world found out, to their agonized disappointment, that it was not so. Amazingly, a careful analysis of history shows that there is **no correlation between material abundance and happiness. Zero correlation.** Contentment is found only in the Way of peace, another subsystem of mystical endeavor.

This fact flies directly in the face of the lie to the contrary-- the lie that dominates our society and culture.

Even religious groups are caught in the material ratrace, to see who can build the biggest, newest, "most impressive" churches. Ministers, to their shame, and to the betrayal of their humble calling, drive luxury cars and live in mansions. Would Jesus wear a Rollex? The clear answer is a resounding and unforgettable NO!

Jesus did not often lose it, but when he did get angry, and violently so, he was driven to expressive rage by people who sold things in the name of religion. For that is what the moneychangers in the temple were all about. If modern ministers had a millipsychon of decency and honor, they would live as examples, and would embrace the Way of simplicity. They would unambiguously renounce greed, loudly and clearly, with all its attendant evils. As it is, religious people are as greedy as, or more greedy than, anyone else. Large church-buildings are no cause for pride, but are in fact a shame to those who build them in the name of the simple poor teacher from Nazareth. They should actually elicit pity.

Mystics have seen the shame of greed, and have, like Francis, relentlessly exposed and denounced it as futility and folly. Mystics hold "poverty" to be a virtue. But by "poverty" they do not always mean literal poverty. There is no real virtue, or advantage, in simply being poor. In fact, there are major and enormous disadvantages to becoming a streetperson or a homeless person.

What the moderate mystic pursues is simplicity, a subsystem of renunciation. In this lifedesign, she has enough, but not too much. Some practical implementations of the Way of simplicity follow:

The mystic "simplist" lives in a moderate home. Perhaps the house would have seven or eight rooms, but never ten. The mystic realizes, quite reasonably, that the average person does not need a tremendously large home in which to eat, sleep, keep clean, entertain guests and oneself, and do her work. For a childless couple, for example, a home of a thousand square feet, or even less, would be adequate. (The house in which my wife and I live, the "Buttercup Bungalow" at Shalimar 3, is less than eight hundred.)

The mystic also takes a utilitarian view of a car, which is a vehicle to move you from point A to point B. It is absurd to see a car as somehow reflecting your value as a person. **Only insecure people buy flashy cars.** A car should never be seen as a social statement, a status symbol, or a way of silent bragging. Like the man who fears that he's losing his youth, and goes out and purchases a red convertible or sports car, people who try to project an image through owning a certain model of car are shallow and pathetic. **You are never made one micropsychion better, or worse, by the car that you drive.**

Also, through the ages, mystics have always been known for the simplicity of their clothing. Certain Sufis were famous for wearing patches, until, in time, this evolved into a kind of "uniform" of distinction and, tragically, even pride. But the mystic dresses in reasonable clothing. She is not always playing to an audience, or dancing in the spotlight. She might choose that which is wellmade, but will avoid clothes that are flashy. Her inner self-image is like diamond. Nothing can scratch it, and it is so granitic that her clothing does not cause her to question her immensely positive self-esteem in Love.

This is not to say that the moderate mystic cannot have a special suit, or even a few, or special dresses for special occasions. But she avoids greed. The mystic refuses to have twenty suits or special dresses. The mystic will probably own only one to five special suits or dresses, for special occasions. She will probably, in harmony with this tasteful simplicity, not own more than five or six pairs of shoes. Otherwise, most of the time, mystics will dress for practicality and comfort, not to impress anyone. For this means nothing to us. So, the mystic will be clean and neat, but will avoid purchasing and/or accumulating an entire closet full of useless and unused clothes. She will go out of her way to avoid the superfluous.

There are two reasons for this: 1) As with the car, she knows that her value as a priceless human being has nothing to do with her clothes, and 2) Whenever one takes from the common pool of human resources, one might actually be "stealing" from the less fortunate. Every dress or suit purchased by the mystic is an article of clothing that cannot be used by any other person. So, out of compassion, the mystic does not buy more than he/she can actually use.

Of course, this also goes for jewelry. While mystics might have particularly special pieces of jewelry that have sentimental or other important meaning, again, the mystic is guided by moderation. She would probably not object to having a few pieces of fine jewelry, valued at a hundred dollars or so. But the mystic would not own a single piece of jewelry valued at, say, over a thousand dollars, unless it had special or sentimental value. Why not? Again, it is a matter of the kind of world in which we all must live. If there were no poverty in the world, a mystic could own and enjoy as much fine jewelry as possible. No limits would even be necessary, for jewelry is not "evil" or "bad." But, again, if a piece costs too much, it begins to take

away from the common pool of economic resources shared by all people. What would a mystic do if she did own a piece of jewelry valued at more than a thousand dollars? If it did not have special or sentimental value, she would do the compassionate thing: Sell the piece, and give the funds resulting to someone in need, or to a worthy cause.

What is true of home, car, clothing, and jewelry is true also of everything in the mystic's life: works of art, and any other things of value. It would actually reflect inner weakness for a mystic to collect too many books, cd's, or other culturally enriching items. The key to a balanced life, from the mystical perspective, is an unbending, unrelenting commitment to moderation or centrism. This translates to simplicity or nongreed.

Does this mean that it would be "wrong" or selfish for a mystic to try to set aside a little nest egg for the future, or for a rainy day? No, it does not imply this, for the mystic Solomon used the archetypal example of the ant, to show just how important it is to prepare for an uncertain future. He showed how industrious this little creature was, and how it set aside provisions for future contingencies.

So, the mystic might well decide that it is the course of wisdom to set aside some funds for the time that she retires or can no longer work. This path of independence is surely preferable to relying on government assistance. But the mystic's needs, because they are very simple, do not demand as much money as more complex and expensive lifestyles. So, the mystic can set aside survivalfunds, but will not try to let greed dictate her living arrangements after retirement, just as she did not permit greed to rule her before retirement.

For if she has lived well and wisely, and simply, by the time that her retirement comes, she will owe no mortgage. Her car will have been paid for. Her clothing needs will be simple, as will her foodneeds. (This latter is due to her commitment to moderation, another subsystem of mysticism. She never overeats, never overindulges.

Speaking of food, it is also necessary for the compassionate being to eat the simplest and most human responsive diet. This implies that no red meat would be consumed. For it is the direct cause of worldstarvation. Fully nine-tenths of all the grain in our country goes to feed meatproducing animals. So, to be a carnivore, you are literally taking the food from the mouths of babes.)

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 79/ THE CLASSICAL VIRTUES OF THE MYSTIC: USING THEM TO OVERCOME THE LOWER NATURE

\*\*\*

Mysticism is Love, and Love is everything. The mystical Way consists of a number



of subsystems: the Ways of purgation contrition, mortification, simplicity, desire-abandonment, renunciation, selfdiscipline, peace, and moderation (centrism). Each has its place.

"Poverty," as used by mystics, does not refer only to material absences. Instead, it can mean the absence of certain thoughts, or sense-inputs, such as those involved with illusion, sensual overindulgence, and hurtful components. It was in this sense that Jesus blessed the "poor in Spirit," in the Sermon on the Mount. (The literal phrase was "beggars for the Spirit.") This paucity of input is called by mystics, "poverty of the senses."

A second kind of poverty is selfexplanatory: It is called "poverty of the will," and indicates the death of the personal will, or set of personal desires. In fact, the usual conventional mystical use of "poverty" refers to this selfstripping. This is the stunning and active **casting away** of both material and immaterial forms of abundance and wealth. First to go are the silly statusymbols by which people foolishly evaluate their own worth. A mystic would not be caught dead owning a mansion, such as is often represented by the "average" suburban home, or owning a stretch limousine.

This attitude represents an inner state of utter detachment from all finite things. It also manifests the diamondbrilliant and diamondurable selfimage of the relaxed mystic, who has nothing to prove to anyone. Compared to the great wealth that she has discovered within her mind, the baubles and trinkets of the material world have zero appeal. They all seem like so much junk-- old and broken, rusty and dusty, junk at that.

The ancient mystical values have remained the same down through the ages. They are "poverty, chastity and obedience."

By "chastity," some of the older mystics meant celibacy. A moderate mystic today might replace this virtue with monogamy, or loyalty/faithfulness to one's selected Lovepartner.

Or, on the other hand, "chastity" might be interpreted allegorically, to mean an extremely pure and lucid, pristine soulmind. This great state of purity is reached only when the soulmind has been completely cleansed of all personal desire.

Secondarily, "chastity" might also imply the soul's fidelity to Love. For the enlightened soul refuses to worship any other "gods." She turns away from the temptations to worship the false gods of materialism, sensualism, fame, intellect, popularity, admiration, etc. To seek union with any of these false gods, by desiring them, would be a kind of "spiritual adultery," violating "chastity."

By the same token, "obedience," the third mystical value, is an abdication of the rulership of the self by the ego. It is a vow to obey always the inner Light of Love. This applies, as a vow, to cover all circumstances. It is **never** right to harm any living creature deliberately and unnecessarily. "Obedience" is abnegation or denial of selfhood, and mortification. This selfabandonment leads, in time, to a state of

complete indifference to the mystic's personal pains and losses of life.

These three aspects of mystical "perfection" or completion replace the value of the personal self with the value of one who is "part and particle" of the Whole, the Absolute. All three, of course, can be said to represent "inward poverty."

Mystics say that this kind of inner purity leads away from "creatureliness," or the vision of oneself as only an animal. Biologically, the mind of the mystic does have an animal component, a limbic system and a neurological brain, but the mystic refuses to let the animal nature, a subsystem of the "lower nature," control her.

It cannot be repeated too often that it is Love that lifts her above the animal/lower nature. It also can't be overemphasized that the vaunted "Love of God" is precisely the Love of any and all living creatures, especially human beings. Eckhart (1260-1327) writes of the pure soul: "To it, all creatures are pure... For it enjoyeth all creatures in God, and God in all creatures."

Does the mystic, then, dread or fear her natural responses, the activities of nature in her own body? No, this is an aberration of extremism, usually asceticism. The idea that nature is "vulgar" is only a type of spiritual snobbery. The moderate, balanced mystic embraces and enjoys nature as the unfolding beauty of God. She does **not** let it control her, as her master. But neither does she see it as undesirable or ugly. She celebrates the diversity, wonder, and beauty of nature.

For a major example, she sees sex as the gift of Love. It is also a celebration of life. Its major purpose is **not** simply reproduction-- and certainly not in a world brimming over with a starving and exploding population of more than six thousand million. Its main purpose is to serve and express Love.

But neither does she ever degrade the high nobility of sex into a mere game. For her, there is no such thing as "recreational" or "casual" sex. Sex is not a toy, to be derogated to entertainment-status. Instead, it is the most holy and sacred gift that one person can ever give another. Making it common simply trivializes, or trashes, it.

Sex should be the best, most enjoyable, and fullest expression of a committed Lovebond. It contains implicit promises, including that of a special, exclusive, and monogamous commitment. It also makes the implicit promise of a very special and unique heartlove. If it is not a promise of this kind of commitment, bonding, and Love, sex is made cheap, and becomes no more enticing or exciting than any other mere biofunction.

When mystics say that they are not controlled by the "senses," this word is usually a euphemism for sex, although it can include overeating and other forms of indulgence. But they are very **big** on honorable and meaningful sex. They say that it can be most enjoyable and celebratory when it manifests the special, exclusive, eternal (timeless) bond between two people. But as a trivial pursuit, it stinks, and brings only misery.

What do mystics say, however, about gay Love? The general response would be

analogous to the line from the old song, "Any loving is good loving." If a person is born with uncontrollable gay-tendencies, he/she should not be cursed and isolated, punished, by society. This form of genetic bigotry is exactly comparable to racism and other despicable gene-based prejudices. When the mystic recommends love of the universe, love of all, she means all, excluding no one. **There is no place in the mystic life for any kind of bigotry.**

Mystics, as already noted, represent the widest spectrum imaginable of human types. They are by no means homogeneous, in either their current or historical demographics. Were/Are some mystics gay? The probability is, considering their gentle, artistic, sensitive, Love-based temperament, that they were/are. And if the Love of God is to mean anything, it must be literally unconditional and literally universal.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 80/ OWNING AND BEING OWNED: THE PARADOX OF MYSTICAL FREEDOM

\*\*\*

The mystic delights in plunging, childlike, into the intense and exhilarating joys of nature. She does not curse, but blesses and welcomes, Sister Dandelion as a harbinger of spring and summer. She has no fears of Brother Snake or Sister Spider. Why not? Because she knows that all life originates with the one Mind, and it is a Mind of sweetness, light, joy, and Love.

The mystic is not invulnerable to bee stings or snakebites. To believe otherwise is simply to fall victim to a desperate superstition. But in loving all creatures, the mystic is less likely to be attacked. In being nonthreatening, she is less likely to stimulate the defensive stingers of bees and the bites of dogs. She can, therefore, usually walk through the world with a much greater sense of safety than can the average person.

God said to the mystic Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210-1290), discussing the mystic, "He must love also Me in the creatures." So, after she has gone through the apparent losses and agonies of the purgative Way, the mystic begins her active, conscious cultivation of universal Love. This is perfected all during the illuminative Way. The fact that she has been taught to hate, and that even all of society hates, a certain creature does **not** give her license to violate this incredibly core-mandate of universal Love. It-- not the biases of society-- is to be her reliable and sole guide. She must give her allegiance of heart, mind, and soul to this Love. For it is her God, and her faith Knowledge and experience of the intensity of this universal Love originate with the Way of illumination. She discovers that her freedom to choose Love is unlimited, and so she soars into the inner skies of liberation. Nothing can hold her back, nothing control her.

Her secret is that she does not seek always to please the people, the crowd, or even the egoself. Not seeking personal good feelings, she is not disappointed. **For disappointment cannot exist without expectations.** This realization, this abandonment of expectations, is an intrinsic part of her ultimate freedom. St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) wrote, "That thou mayest have pleasure in everything, seek pleasure in nothing." This has two meanings: It means that when good feelings are not allowed to become a goal, they are more likely to appear. In actively "seeking" pleasure, we move further from it. For pleasure is a side-effect of doing what you love, rather than an actual goal. The second meaning of these words, the more mystical, is that when we can find pleasure in the "nothingness" of inner Mind, then we are liberated to find it in all other things.

St. John here is using a typical teaching tool of the mystic, that of paradox. As Christ used this same instrument in saying, "He among you who would be greatest must be least," so John says that to enjoy everything, to find pleasure in all things, we must first find it in nothing. We must enter, in other words, the great "emptiness" or "void" in the Mind, which at first contains nothing, but where, later, we find God. Finding God brings pleasure to all other things and pursuits.

John expanded this symbolic paradox: "That thou mayest know everything, seek to know nothing." This means that, as long as we are looking for "knowledge" in the mere sense of dataaccumulation or dataprocessing, we will never know God by means of those crude intellectual processes. God can be known only by passion, leading to Mindmeld. In being completely clear of our own assumptions, preconceptions, ideas, and thoughts, we can know God. But this can occur only after we have found inner intellectual "poverty."

The paradox continues: That thou mayest possess all things, seek to possess nothing." It is in her poverty that the mystic finds her greatest wealth. For when she lets go of all greed, clinging, attachment, and craving-- all desire-- she unlocks the riches of the inner treasure. Here she finds freedom from the dominance of the material/sensual world. She knows it to be a cruel and driving taskmaster. This freedom is worth more than all the literal diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires in the world. In embracing poverty, she has found riches-- the true, everlasting inner abundance that the world cannot touch, that rust cannot consume, that thieves cannot steal.

The spirit, says Eckhart, "finds quiet and repose. For, coveting nothing, nothing worries it ..." It is in this supreme detachment from greed that the inner soul soars to its most magnificent states of bottomless tranquillity and illimitable bliss. This is peace. Having let go of all coveting, or personal desire, the soul drops into a serenity that is infinitely deep and sweet. By contrast, Eckhard writes of the soul, "As soon as it covets anything, it is immediately fatigued thereby." So, only when stripped of egodesire does the soul find inner peace and rest.

The desire to grasp, hold, control, or own the "external" world, or anything in it, keeps the soul wrestling and writhing in a storm of psychic passions. Then, when the world is divided between "mine," and "not mine," and this division is taken seriously, standards based on irreality spring up and dominate the mind, enslaving it. In time claims to "ownership" clog and control the mind, and it is no longer soaring in the inner blue skies of freedom. It is, instead, weighed down with cares and anxieties, like heavy anchors around the neck.

The mystic perspective is more balanced and liberating. She knows that, in the overall cosmic picture or Reality, she owns nothing in this world. All she "owns" is her time, which she may "spend" in any way that she chooses. As far as material things are concerned, she only "borrows" them as she passes through. She knows that the most important things in life are not things. They are inner realities. No one owns anything here, as a soul, as a timeless Self. In this game, we pretend to own things, but that is valid only as long as we are on stage, and the play is still going on. When the play is over, it won't matter how many "props" that we "pretended" to own. If, in the performance of a play, someone gave you a million dollars, in playmoney, it would matter not at all as soon as the play ended. And after you left the theater, you would have a hard time even remembering it.

Still, the average person becomes the slave of her own property. **It's not what she owns that gets her into trouble, so much as what she allows to own her.** This "stuff" we carry around inside us, wherever we go, and it bogs down the mind with fear, worry, and hassles. It's a real ball and chain.

A Zen parable talks about how we can carry things as burdens within our minds. Buddhist monks are not allowed, according to their regulations, to touch women. But in special circumstances, compassion can override regulations. A Zen master and his young student were walking back home from a trip. In the middle of the jungle, on the bank of a river, they encountered an attractive girl crying.

"Why are you crying?" inquired the master.

"I must get home to my sick mother," replied the girl. "But I can't get over this river. I'm terrified to swim!"

The master stooped down on the sand. "Here, climb onto my back, and I'll take you over the river," he said. His voice was filled with such tender kindness that the girl did what he suggested. The young monk looked on, horrified. He could not believe his eyes.

They crossed the river together, and the young girl, filled with gratitude, thanked the master profusely. All the way back to the monastery, the young monk remained silent, bulminating and seething because the master had broken the rules.

When they got back, the student exploded: "How could you do that? How could you bring such shame to our brotherhood, breaking the rules" he shouted.

"Love," replied the master quietly, "never brings shame. I set the girl down on the

bank. Why did you bring her here with you?"

\*\*\*

We must refrain from claiming anything for our own," says the mystical classic *Theologia Germanica* (14th century). Does this mean that the mystic cannot own anything? No, for in today's society, it is often necessary and even desirable for ownership to occur, for matters of privacy and even protection. But the mystic's heartmind is not fully engaged with ownership. To change her things cannot change her.

Considering the mystics' warnings against ownership, however, this is something that one would want very carefully to consider. Ownership of material things should be kept to a reasonable minimum. Why? Because ownership implies responsibility, and responsibility implies the use of timenergy. It also means inner turmoil. To own many things will inevitably drain from interior energy. This energy is sacred. It is all, already, dedicated to Love. So, any energy taken from the system is "stealing" from Love. When we take energy and give it to objects, then, we are illegitimately robbing ourselves.

Even this interior mental "energy" is not really ours. We simply borrow it, as we do all things, from the universe or cosmic Mind. When a person lets go of the illusion of all personal ownership, she is absolutely free. Then, she becomes capable of clear-sighted reasoning, for she no longer has any external or material "master." For the moment that you say "I own..." anything, at that moment, it owns a part of you.

The mystic Jacopone da Todi (died 1306), a disciple of Francis, said that this state of freedom was to be subject to nothing." In other words, this was the sweet gift of ultimate freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 81/ LIVING IN A "VERY GOOD" WORLD: POVERTY OF THE PSYCHE AND RESIGNATION

\*\*\*

"God will not lodge in a narrow heart," wrote Jacopone da Todi. "Poverty is... nothing to desire." So, poverty is complete satisfaction. It is contentment and fulfillment. Mystically understood, it is no deprivation, but a gift. It is a gift of inner liberty, a relief that one has so simplified one's material life that the crushing burdens of "stuff" no longer threaten sanity and balance. It is a return to serene inner stillness, untouched by the hurricanic forces of greed.

A dying Hindu mystic similarly says, "O Mother earth, Father Sky, Brother Wind, Friend Light, Sweetheart Water,... today I am melting away into the Supreme." Death is, of course, the ultimate "poverty" for all human beings. It is the great and final equalizer.

The mystic Eckhart (1260-1327) spoke of four ascending degrees of "poverty": 1) contempt for all things that are not God, 2) contempt of the soul for herself and her own works, 3) utter selfabandonment, and 4) selfloss. This is the discovery of final, ultimate, unlimited freedom.

Those who enjoy this [powerful illuminated detachment become "citizens of the world," for they no longer defend the interests of materialism. They abandon the antique and destructive nationalism that has divided brothers and sisters from the dawn of civilization. The mystic is the "citizen of the galaxy," opening her heart to any lifeforms which have the wisdom to Love. Utter detachment saves one from everything but "divine Reality," says Eckhart (1260-1327). This kind or power of detachment embraces all conditions. It does not judge. One mystic said, "I never had a bad day." This was due to a special component of inner poverty in which, giving up his own will, he gave up judgment. For, he said, if he was hungry, or if the weather was "foul," still he "praised God." Since, for him, every day was equal, since he did not pass any judgment at all of the quality of a given day, every day was a good day. For he had so chosen to interpret and label it. He also said, "I never had ill luck, for I know how to live with God." And this latter is his secret: His luck was no intrinsically better than that of anyone else. In fact, an outsider might have called him "unlucky." But he had stopped judging, in an attempt to see the cosmos as God sees it, i. e., "very good." This is an aspect of inner poverty. This mystic wanted to "undo" the damage done in Eden, to **stop** partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Of God, this mystic said, "I know that what He does is best." So, if God, nature, or the universe ordained that the mystic suffer, he was willing to respond elastically, lovingly, and **with resignation**.

"Resignation" is a primary mystical value. In fact, the very Way of mysticism is often called the "Way of resignation." Resignation is the acceptance of an event, any event, without allowing it to destroy you. It is the complete embracing of pain, loss, and suffering without its controlling you, or making you irreversibly bitter or sad. It is based upon the premise that Love controls and guides the universe, and that **everything** that happens to you is a product of the soul's great Love for you. That is a Love that is unwavering, steady, true, and reliable. The most "horrible" and "hideous" events are permitted-- even mentally engineered-- by the Spirit which dreams them up. This is in order to express its deep Love, for it could give or grant you no greater everlasting gift than that of spiritual illumination. And we are, after all, made brightest, wisest, strongest, and most compassionate by our moments of greatest pain. So, a period of pain or loss is one of spiritual acceleration.

Our human egoself, of course, would rather be bitter and angry. Of course, it is much easier and more natural for us to go kicking and screaming into that darknight, with its terror of the unknown. An average response would be that of becoming bitter and angry. Even the advanced mystic might have these "normal" responses, and

has a psychological need, just like everyone else, to face, acknowledge, and catharcize her feelings of grief. But the mystic differs from the average because she will not allow this bitterness and anger to change the course of her entire life. She will, sooner or later, be able to explain the horrific losses to herself, and accept them with at least a modicum of peace.

Does this make the mystic hard and unfeeling? No, for she is by nature the tenderest of creatures. So, she does not cover her psyche with shells of impenetrable armor in preparation for the worst. To the contrary, it is precisely because she is open emotionally that she is such a giving, loving, compassionate person. But inside all the fluff and cotton of this soft, yielding, sensitive being is a rod of solid iron which is her faith in Love. It sustains her during her darkest crises, and does not let her down in disaster, when she finds the great gift called "resignation." Discovery of this gift occurs only because of her mental "poverty." For, in her ego level, she has no resignation, but only fiercest resistance. So, this is only another way of yielding or surrender to God.

Resignation is the key. But where does one possibly find the inner Power to practice so alien and difficult a state? It arises naturally from one who is immersed in God or Love. For she comes to know, to see, every act in her world as a good creation of the homogeneously good Creatormind. If It is Love, then every component of the world must reflect the unconditional Love of the Dreamer. And, as we have seen, it does. Even the catastrophes of life are given as the terrible gifts of an agonizing Love. These gifts might be horrible, but, in the longterm, eternal life without the gifts they bring would be even worse. The reception of these gifts, in a nonjudgmental and even grateful way, is archetypally symbolized to us all by our unforgettable mindvision of Jesus on the cross.

Mystics are part human. So, they are not goofy. A mystic does not laugh at the funeral of a friend, nor does she dance in the street when diagnosed with a painful disease. But, deep down, a mystic has a resiliency that carries her intact through the trials of life. After a terrible crisis, the spring might never return to her step, or springtime to her heart. But she lives in the unalterable awareness that what has happened to her, however sad, is for the longterm good. Later, the light of inner Love will once again dawn in her heart and shine in her eyes. Bitterness and anger will **not** become her new inner masters.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 82/ THE DISCOVERY OF INNER SANITY: A QUICK REVIEW OF BASIC MYSTICAL PRINCIPLES

\*\*\*

Love is God. The Way to God is the Way to inner Love. The Way to Love, in turn,



is a Way to joy, contentment, profound tranquillity, satisfaction, and utter peace. It is in an attempt to find some peace in the mad, mad world that mystics have outlined the mystic Way. To paraphrase the entertaining renegade Hawkeye Pierce in the old tv series M\*A\*S\*H\*, teaching mysticism in a world like ours is the only way that mystics can open their mouths without screaming.

For mystics are the very tenderest, most sensitive and responsive, of all human types. They have discovered mysticism as an indispensable Way of survival. For without it, the world could drive them quite mad. It is almost impossible to live realistically in a world such as ours and to still believe that Love controls the universe. But the operative word is "almost." By holding unbendingly to their inner discovery that Love does control, they have emerged, after centuries of fine-tuning and polishing, with a philosophy that integrates pure Love with the everyday horrors of life.

They have found a major key in selfabandonment. That is, they have left behind their own will (wants), and, in positive resignation, worked to cultivate the "all-embracing Mind." "This means that they have stopped judging anything, anyone, or any event as "absolutely evil." So, they have managed to live in a world filled with nothing but the good, nothing but Love. While this has required some deep and ingenious thinking, it is not, as it first appears, a denial of reality. In fact, Reality, and its acceptance, is the great obsession of mystics.

After nonjudgment and resignation, another major tool has been humility. The arrogant person assumes that she knows everything, and so the universe itself must be hopelessly screwed up. But the humble person accepts the fact that, if something appears to be wrong with the universe, it is much more probable that something is wrong with her perceptions or interpretations.

Another major mystical tool that we have studied is the abandonment of personal desires-- a subset of selfabandonment, "unselfing," or "deselfing." So few find God, in even the pure heart, because it never occurs to them to abandon the will and its desires. Finding God, in fact, seems to have nothing to do with abandoning desire, at least not from a cursory perusal of the mind.

The mystic is a kind of "queen," and her area of rulership is her soul, where she rules with a firm but not fanatical hand. Her goal is to rule her senses. For ruling the senses is the way to rule the desires. After gaining rulership and mastery, she then turns herself over to Love. It then masters her as mistress of an inner kingdom.

The methods that bring the mystic to inner wholeness) are silence, Love-thoughts, and, finally, union of identities with inner Love Itself. This is "union with the Absolute."

Her healthy inner poverty is simply the breaking of old habits of trying to find peace in, or taking seriously, anything but Love. The "outer material" world is a mere distraction from the meaning of life. She will never find that meaning there, for that

world conspires to deflect her attention from the inner Mind. There alone the real answers exist. In fact, anything which is not, or is less than, luminous Love becomes a mere distraction. Too much distraction leads to destruction of the inner luminous jewel, the awareness of the Love-nature.

Getting lost in the periphery of Mind, that is, in the dream of the "material, external" cosmos, is the major cause of worldweariness, stress, anxieties, tensions, and utter disillusionment. The mystic turns away from the world and its "commonsense" answers, and seeks deeper truth.

Because her philosophy is so utterly paradoxical, it is often the reverse of "commonsense." For example, poverty and death are both seen as among life's greatest goods and most wonderful gifts. Literal and symbolic poverty are both often seen as prudence and priority-- not as disasters. Does this mean that she neglects or simply dismisses poverty as a social disease? No, it does not. While she might choose a personal path of simplicity that falls under the heading of "poverty" in a fabulously wealthy country such as the United States, she believes in social justice and equality. She believes that situations, events, and environments that contribute to unwilling poverty should be destroyed and restructured. Love compels her to take the strongest stand on racial, political, and economic equality.

But even in mysticism, poverty was never an endgoal in itself. It was conveniently embraced as a Way of eliminating too many distractions. Since mysticism is by nature an antimaterialistic philosophy, poverty was seen as an alternative to getting lost in the worlds of sense and stuff. In this way, it came to represent a higher inner calling.

In some schools of mysticism it came to be regarded as a natural, and even necessary, subsystem of renunciation, which is a major mystical virtue in all traditions. Al Ghazzali (died 1111), the Sufi mystic, practiced, like Francis, a complete renunciation of worldly goods. The simple truth is, too many possessions interrupt the Flow of inner Love and wisdom. Claims, desires, and attachments create centers of passion and conflict in the mind. They dilute, when they do not act directly against, the flowering of inner Love. So, possessions, when they become too numerous, can no longer be seen as simply mystically neutral. They become antimystical. They impede active enlightenment, and even real progress. They complicate both life and Mind. They are antiagapic (against Love). So, they are cleared away, like clutter in *feng shui*, in the Way of selfsimplification. Ghazzali writes, "Having entirely surrendered my own free will, my heart no longer felt any distress in renouncing fame, wealth, or society." Other mystics take a more moderate path. They do not give up everything, but only divest themselves of all excesses and superfluities. But they are starkly honest in this selfstripping, and careful not to justify or rationalize clinging to excesses. The truest rule of poverty is to give up all things that impede the Flow of Spirit. These include many things that are not even "material." The Way of simplicity includes the dropping of extremist

political or social attitudes, rigid religious beliefs, any kind of bigotry, all hatreds, all fears, old friends, old tastes, old interests, and all personal desires.

The material states of mystics, then, are reflections of a much more fundamental inner poverty of Mind. But the human, or lower, tendency here will be completely to internalize the principle of poverty, in order to justify the continued accumulation of wealth, even by the mystic. So strong is the egomind with its desires.

But the uncomfortable fact is that a rich person cannot be a mystic, and a mystic cannot be materially wealthy. Why is this? Because the accumulation and maintenance of wealth takes so much timenergy, and mysticism is an alldemanding, allconsuming career. But what if one simply inherits money? Could she not be a mystic? No, for the maintenance and use of wealth is itself a fulltime occupation. Just as striving to be a fulltime lawyer would compromise the skills and dedication of a fulltime physician, so a mystic's career must also be fulltime.

But does this not imply that a physician, lawyer, or other fulltime worker cannot be a mystic? No, for the practice of both medicine and law can be a practical practice of compassion. So, the wise person can arrange to practice her practical Love-mysticism in full integration with her law-practice or medical practice. For mysticism has two parts: 1) the inner introspective, psychospiritual aspect, and 2) the practical aspect in which the mystic actively loves, aids, and serves other human beings.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Chapter 83/ BOURIGNAN, FRANCIS, AND THERESA VERSUS "GURUS" OF IGNORANCE: OPPOSITE FANATICISMS TO BE AVOIDED

\*\*\*

Demons and dragons populate the natural mind. Sensuality, materialism, desire, and manipulation are the demons which the committed mystic must overcome. They take over the Mind, filling the field of consciousness. Not only that. Even more seriously, they cause a mystic to regress to the instinctual life, which is so counter to her somewhat tenuous hold on the newly dawning, hence, fragile spiritual life. So, the clutter and chatter of the surface or conscious mind simply cannot be ignored. It must, in time, be abolished.

That is not to say that these factors are intrinsically evil. But they draw one into lower states of consciousness, and so, are antimystical. Love is not necessarily destroyed, for it is indestructible. But it is eclipsed by too many concerns. The mind, confused, tends to become shackled to its material and outer interests, and so, is lost to the highest Way. The liberty of divine union is impossible as long as the soul has this anchor around its neck and this straightjacket on its arms. In this condition, it cannot soar on the wings of love into the inner blue skies of freedom, or explore the

ocean of inner Love. Desires and attachments proliferate and multiply, strangling whatever freedom beckons. Spiritual progress is decelerated, grinds to a halt, then reverses.

For the key to lasting mystical transformation is to extricate oneself from, and completely extirpate, all factors that lead to a false belief in a separate self. In business, the retarding factor is competition. Even if attitudes or material objects seem harmless, or even useful, everything that stands in the way of true and deep spiritual progress must ruthlessly be cut out of life. For if the self is the cancer, then desire, arrogance, greed, and materialism are among its most malefic, malevolent, and malignant metastases. The "materialectomy" must be complete, if a cure is to be effected.

As a startling symbol of this inner activity, Francis (1181-1226) stripped off his literal clothing, at the beginning of his inner journey. He was determined to literalize the mystical principle of poverty. Some, but not all, mystics have followed. Antoinette Bourignon(1616-1680), when receiving the mystical calling, at the age of eighteen, renounced all material possessions. Having fled from home, she had taken a penny to buy bread that day. But a deep inner voice seemed to ask her, "Is your faith in that penny?" Hearing this, she tossed even that away.

The home from which she fled was miserable, and she felt locked into an upcoming marriage that promised to be equally so. Because of this, renunciation might not have been as difficult for her as it would be for others. Responding to inner direction, she dressed as a hermit, and left home forever.

In the life of another mystic, St. Theresa (1515-1582), the conflicts between her ego and her soul lasted for many years, until finally she gave in to her destinarian calling. She spent many years struggling valiantly and frustratingly in the Convent of the Incarnation. Her only "indulgence" was speaking to friends from Avila through a grille. Most mystics, blessedly, are not quite this severe.

"No person who has put his hand to the plow looks back," said Jesus, in one of his quaint agrarian metaphors. No genius of any sort can afford to dissipate her energies, scattering them over many interests, pursuits, or subjects. The mystical genius least of all can afford such indulgences. For, in the beginning of the great inner trek, the mystical calling and state of mind tend to be tenuous and fragile. Much, within her and within the world, resist this subtle call to the mystic life, and the world, given half a chance, will swamp that calling into nonexistence.

Francis was an example of a mystic who, with all good intentions, took the valid mystical principle of inner poverty to an extreme. First, he literalized it, interpreting it to mean material poverty. Then, he insisted that it be taken to the extreme where he thought that it was wrong to own material property. When I was growing up, I was an avid fan of books-- books on all subjects, from astronomy to zoology. These books did greatly enrich my life. For I grew up in the crazy

atmosphere of an ultrarightwing fundamentalist cult. The books reminded me that there was an entirely different, and much more beautiful, world out there. They were my haven, and my salvation. But it was the case of wanting too much of a good thing. By the time that I was fifteen, I was hopelessly addicted. I bought books, not because they could be useful to me, but because it was a charge to own them. The book's subject material was very secondary, and hardly mattered. The thing was, I wanted to own the book. This characterizes, I now know, unhealthy compulsive behavior. I had a greed for books. But it was under the direct influence of Francis that one day, I gave away the entire collection-- nearly four thousand books-- to a complete stranger. Was I glad that I did it? Yes, for a tremendous sense of freedom washed over me that very day, a new sense of wellness and wholeness. I was no longer book-addicted. And I owed my freedom to the extremist Francis.

If that gentle saint were to return in the twenty-first century, I can't help but feel that his message would be considerably softened, more mellow, more balanced. I don't believe that he would teach stark and uncompromising poverty as the only Way to God. I think that now, he would teach simplicity instead. Instead of sexual "chastity," he would likely teach faithful monogamy. And instead of "obedience" to the Church, he would teach obedience to the inner Light of Love. Another "saint," Theresa, was another extremist. She saw even communication with her friends as a distraction. The moderate mystic would see communication with friends as an expression of God's Love in her heart, and because of this, as no distraction to, but application of, her mysticism. Theresa was so fanatically convinced of the opposite, however, that one of her biographers credits the "devil" with sending her "sympathetic persons." The smallest pleasures she defined as a "lure."

This extremism is close to asceticism, and has no place in the life of the wise, moderate mystic. Mentally unbalanced, Theresa developed a fairly serious case of paranoia about the "evil world." The balanced mystic never sees the world as evil, but does recognize that it can be a diversion of her energies away from her ultimate inner work. So, while she does not hate or fear the world, she does avoid total involvement in it. But such mystics as Theresa missed the coessence of mysticism: The Love of God is the Love of other people, and creatures. Missing this crucial realization led her to mental disequilibrium and extremism. For to divide these two Loves is spiritually fatal.

When Love for friend or family is divided from Love for God, a nonexistent "duality" is created, which splits the heart and its devotion. Excruciating choices between God and the "other" must then be made. This is the creation of a completely unnecessary and artificial hellstate. Only a unified Love can liberate from this hell.

It is impossible to justify the fanaticism of the older mystics who demanded a literal ownership of nothing. But it is equally impossible to defend the greedy, grasping, materialistic obsessions of Eastern *gurus* who claim to "know God," and who,

lying through their teeth to gullible followers, claim to be "enlightened." These people, infected with utter greed and hyperegotism, are spiritually diseased, and their condition is contagious. So, they are universally avoided by all genuine and honest mystics. Even the fools and hypocrites who travel in Rolls-Royces, playing on the natural desperation of childish people, often say some true things. The real mysticism at the very root of Hinduism cannot be hidden even by their colossal blunders and mindless greed. But they say and do not do. They refuse to walk their talk.

So the mystic, seeking moderation, balance, and centrism in all things, avoids both extremes. She desires neither wealth nor poverty, for both can be equally distracting and destructive to her inner spiritual health.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 84/ NOTES ON MYSTICAL LIFESTYLES, ECOLOGY, UNBALANCED MYSTICS, AND INNER DEATH

\*\*\*

The fanatical monk refused to smell the rose. It would be a "forbidden pleasure of sensuality" in his system of false, extremist mysticism. For fanaticism and mysticism are always mutually exclusive. Francis, who celebrated the flowers and their "sweetness," fell victim to yet another form of fanaticism in his insistence of utter, naked poverty.

The human mind, under the influence of the lower nature, finds extremism compelling. Although it is always damaging and harmful, in culture after culture, it has arisen, time and again, often in religion. It is not at all surprising that it has touched also the mystical community. For example, some self-styled "mystics" have tried to prove their devotion or submission to "God" by harming their own physical bodies. But this kind of activity leaves out the all-important principle of self-love. A mystic who indulges in such self-harmful activities is only gratifying the ego, and is, in fact, traversing a sacred principle. So, mystics always avoid any kind of fanaticism, particularly if it brings deliberate harm to the body or mind.

Healthy mystics have always enjoyed, and celebrated, nature. In the twenty-first century, many would become ecoactivists, or at least, deeply concerned for the natural environment. St. Douceline (died 1274) is typical. She was sent soaring into a transcendental state by the song of an ordinary bird. Even the overly stern St. Theresa was helped, at the beginning of her inner journey, by studying and enjoying "trees, water, and flowers." The beauties of nature are the beauties of God, as

nature herself is the "second Book of Revelation." (In its tender beauty, it is infinitely preferable to the garish but vivid allegory that ends the traditional Bible, the literal Book of Revelation.)

The ancient Greek writer Plato recommended, as did mystics, that earthly or natural beauty be used as "steps" to supernatural beauty within the psyche. For the best of Mind is reflected back to Mind by nature.

The tender, kind, compassionate, and moderate use of natural resources is also an aspect of the poverty preached by the mystics. For it is greed, above any other single factor, that has raped and pillaged our planet almost beyond the brink of recovery. Mystics believe that natural resources can be used, but only in moderation. That is why the mystic will always prefer a small and simple house to a more impressive but resource-consuming larger house. This is where spirituality converges and synergizes with ecology, forming "ecospirituality." Unless a person is ecospiritual, she is not truly spiritual at all. For mystics do not live in complacent indifference to the sacred Mother Earth, but respect "her" as a real living entity, who has the holy rights of any living creature.

Do mystics believe that the earth itself is literally alive? Some do, and some don't. But all believe that the earth is a sacred temple, not to be harmed, ruined, or prostituted to the almighty dollar. Mystics believe that nature is sacred, that every tree and bird is holy, and that all sentient (self-aware) beings have inalienable rights. They do recognize a commonsense order in which certain lifeforms are more sacred than others, but this gives no person the right to abuse or misuse any species. The mystic approaches and embraces all creatures with only Love in her heart.

Again, warning: A true mystic avoids all asceticism, or all extremes. Even in the pursuit of ecological living, she will not insist that others live the "perfect" ecological life-- nor, by some idealistic standards, will she. The mystic carefully practices recycling, for example, and composting. In these ways, she has much, very much, less garbage to throw onto the earth.

But a mystic might use plastics, for example, from time to time, and does not regard this as a "sin" against Mother Earth. She might use a little extra electricity or hot water moderately to enrich her life. She might eat foods that are not totally organic, no matter what her real preferences. (She will **not** eat red meat, for this is literally taking food out of the mouths of children.) She will heat her home in the winter, and cool it in the summer. But, because she does not have a mansion, bills will be minimal.

The modern mystic, or even "saint," can make moderate use of an automobile, although she will try to combine safety with efficient gas-mileage. (She will **not** break the law by trying to bypass environmental legislation that might be inconvenient to her. She will observe even the speedlimit laws, because they **are** the law.)

She will plant trees and flowers whenever and wherever possible. She will avoid

overindulgence in alcohol, tobacco, or pot. She will avoid altogether the highly dangerous and addictive "hard" drugs, with possible exceptions under medical necessity.

The mystic is a laid-back human being who takes an attitude of kindness, of "live and let live," when it comes to the behaviors and guiding philosophies of others. This is **not** because she does not care, which might be inferred from the casual glance. Instead, it is because she is absolutely positive that, given enough time, every soul will come into fullest enlightenment. But she knows that this will take time. Like God, she has forever and is in no rush. That is why the mystic does not seek to convert others to the beautiful Way. She is completely certain that, someday, everyone will be a mystic. She knows two facts that prevent her from being fanatical in conversion-efforts: 1) The entire universe, and everyone in it, is in the infallible hands of Love, and 2) Everyone has precisely the exact same inner connection with the divine Love that she has found.

Mysticism, she knows, usually represents change that is so fundamental as to be irreversible. But even this is no dogma. People are regulated and controlled by their free will. It has occurred so very rarely that it is negligible, but human beings are capable of turning away from, or even reversing the effects of, a mystical experience. "Backsliding" mystics have often been pressured by the dominant culture to abandon the God of Love, and embrace what they knew to be a false god. They have also tended to revert to the control of their lower nature. (The higher nature, to retain Power, must be regularly established in the Mind, the Object of regular contemplation.

As beautifully pristine and transcendental as the mystic mind tends to be, it is still, as noted, human in some aspects. Mystics can be as off-balanced, in their own special ways, as anyone else. Grounding in mysticism does give them some added protection against mental dysfunctions, but they are still vulnerable. This is demonstrated clearly by the extremism of Francis, the paranoia of Theresa, and the sick glee of Angela of Foligno (1248-1309). When some relatives of Angela's, whom she saw as "impediments," died, she was filled with an inappropriate, even immoral, joy. She received, she writes, "great consolation" when they left the world. These included, stunningly, her mother, her husband, and her children. Like others who were subject to a kind of religious insanity, she failed to see the great and central truth that loving God is loving other human beings. This has been said, but cannot be repeated too often: God cannot be loved apart from loving others. So, despite real insights, this woman had somehow missed the central core of the healthy and healing mystical experience, and fell into psychosis. For she left entirely out of consideration the premise of the sacredness of human life.

As a rule, however, mystics are much healthier than this poor deluded woman.



She was still caught in the tines of the relentless ego. Mystics as a whole tend to be the healthiest, most mentally balanced, supremely well and healthy interiorly, of all people who have ever lived. This is because Love has always been their guide. And she who loves most and best is most healthy.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 85/ THE CRUCIFIXION OF EGO AND RESURRECTION OF SPIRIT: HYPERINTROSPECTION AND ILLUSION

\*\*\*

The more tornadic the death, the calmer and brighter is the new life. This inner mystical death occurs, not all at once, but in small stages. Each phase within the inner mortification process makes the next step a little easier. While egodeath is never easy, it does become less frightening and difficult as the inner Power takes over and does most of the work.

This death is not an endgoal in itself. Instead, it is a process designed to introduce the old human nature to the new divine nature. To outsiders, who do not have a track on what is going on inside the mystic, it might appear meaningless, or even harsh. Its essential function is to create a matrix of inner discipline or structure of thought/feeling that gradually weans the person from full dependence on the "external, material" world. This makes the mystic more selfsufficient as she depends more and more on the inner Self alone to sustain and carry her, bringing her into new inner levels of unimagined freedom, bliss, Power, and Love.

In the end, mortification has subjected the body to the soul, and the soul to the Spirit (God or Love). This it does by raising an inner Power to act against the domination by the senses, which act contrary to the impulses of Spirit, says the Benedictine contemplative Augustine Baker (1575-1641). He defines selfwill as "poison of our spirits," by which he means, our souls.

The long process of psychodetox known as "mortification" often ends, when its work is done, with startling abruptness. When this happens, even the most ascetic mystic abandons the path of selftorture. She sees that it is a rude and damaging extreme, and does not go back. This happened with the mystic Suso (1295-1366). When this moment comes, austerities have no part in the mystic life.

A classic in mystical literature called *The Mirror of Simple Souls* was written by a french-Flemish mystic and translated by an English mystic. It describes the emergence of the soul from its critical purgative period, the "Way of purgation." It describes the continual battles between vices and virtues, which end when the mystic is liberated by the Love of God.

The mystic Jacopone da Todi (died 1306) speaks of the same phenomenon. When

the Power of the Spirit moves into the heart, to take up residence there, one no longer creates "virtue" by a constant struggle. Instead, it flows naturally out of the inner and transformed nature. It is spontaneous, created by Love, not artificially engineered by conformity to religious laws. "The war is at an end," da Todi writes. "There is no more striving." Instead, after much long effort, one can at last afford to sit back and watch the show, as one becomes carried by the Flow. This leads to supreme spontaneous goodness as the Power saturates the heart, and acts naturally through the mystic as Love.

St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) was troubled and haunted for four years by an intense, relentless awareness of her sinfulness, but this was all "taken" from her in an instant, and she found peace. Even if she had wished to continue her perfectionistic inner selfflagellation, she would have been unable to do so. God (Love) had rescued her, taking away her sense of terrible sin, and replacing it with the mystical awareness that she was an incarnation of perfect Love.

When this new and higher Center of consciousness establishes and reveals Itself, It asserts Itself actively, neutralizing the old self or ego-identity. It then begins gradually to erase that old and false identity. With the complete and utter victory of this higher nature over the lower, the inner war is over. At the very moment of this victory, mortification ceases. It has served its whole purpose.

The self is "regenerated" or "reborn" as the higher Self, a completely new identity. The "self" is no longer the ego, but the "Self" is the soul. Still later, the soul will identify with the inner Spirit, with Love. So, mind i.d.'s with soul, and then, soul with Spirit.

Many deeply ingrained egoreinforcing instincts are then seen by the mystic as conflicting with the supreme Law of Love. She then withdraws every particle of her heartmind from "external, material" temptations, and turns her entire being away from them. Ultimately, in the end, this implies that she must escape her very self, the ego, the "Mary Smith" recognized as the only self by others.

For a time, a kind of dualism that is only apparent, not real, seems to appear between spiritual (inner) and earthly (outer). The process of mortification" is not necessary simply because the senses appear to be in conflict with the spiritual, but because the senses have become much too powerful or dominant in the psyche, in a kind of coup against spiritual mastery.

The senses have taken over in the area of the psyche rightfully ruled by the spirit, and have set up a rival "kingdom" to that of Love or God. They have begun to drain too much energy from the psyche. Acting as false masters, they become, in time, stronger than even the self. They dominate in spite of real spiritual goals, and keep the psyche locked into the illusion of the "external and material" world. It is due to this factor that mystics must begin their path by withdrawing from everything-- even themselves. But while this hyperintrospection and accompanying solitude are

necessary for the mystic to take her first few steps on the Way, they are not her final goal. St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) says of this phase, "The soul is... in utter ignorance when she supposes that she can attain to the Highest state of union ...before she casts away the desire of all things..." It was also he, John, who said that the desires must be "lulled to sleep." This was done, he said, by the inner mortification of "sensuality." Until that happened, "union with the Beloved" would be impossible. This "mortification" was nothing less, then, than the death of selfhood. Anything that supported the existence of this complex but unreal illusion called the self would have to die. For this reason, the perennial archetypal statement of the mystic could be: "I live, yet not I, but Love in Me."

For the mystic is always sensitive to the fact that a much more perfect state of consciousness exists potentially within her mind-- more complete by far than that of the ego. Its purpose is to shine with luminous Love. When she outgrows her "childhood," she abandons the ego, 'gracefully surrendering the things of youth,' as the poem *Desiderata* recommends. Leaving childhood behind, she naturally also abandons the old "toys."

Wisdom says to the mystic Suso (1295-1366), "Suffering is the ancient law of Love." In the inner adult phases of the mystic, she learns to embrace both joy and suffering, **without labelling them**. So, in the clear psyche of the developed mystic, suffering is not "bad." But does this mean that joy is not "good"? No, for the mystic sees the cosmic Mind as "monopolar." That is, it is absolute good, which has no opposite. This is the foundation belief that makes the mystic a monist, not a dualist. Since this good has no opposite, both suffering and joy are good. If it is God's will, it is perfect. And the fact that anything actually happens implies that it is truly God's will-- not necessarily God's **active** will, but at least, God's **permissive** will.

Permanent, irreversible selfloss is how the average mind would interpret mystical metamorphosis. The mystic agrees that her old self (ego) has been utterly lost, but she sees this as a great positive good, because that ego was replaced by a luminous resplendent consciousness of Love that made everything good, pure, and exciting.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 86/ LIFE, DEATH, AND LOVE, MYSTIC STYLE

\*\*\*

To love well is to be whole, holy, and healed. For these three words share a common root. The most exalted and blissful states are also the most whole or "well." The highest wellness, in fact, is found in the full Love for God, which must translate as the fullest and most unconditional Love for all creatures, especially **all human**

beings.

This Love embraces, supports, and aids all, abandoning none. By its very definition as "universal Love," it excludes none.) This Love is so extraordinary that it cannot even be generated by the ego or socially-defined self. It is , instead, generated by the inner Absolute alone.

Only after the inner death or crucifixion of the ego can this new Center or Self, this Love, become manifest. Speaking to the lower nature self, Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) writes, "Who hinders thee more than the unmortified affections of thine own heart?" The "affections" of the ego include all those temptations of the sensual and material world which blind it to the great beauty of the inner Light of Love. He also writes, "If we were perfectly dead unto ourselves, ... Then should we be able to taste divine things..."

Because "divine things" of the mystical life must include real actions, the mystic does not fall into an unproductive state of mere dreams. No, the mystical life always has practical results. The mystic always becomes a Love-activist, sharing active Love for all, with all. Mystics are always to be found active in programs of charity, aid, and support for others. In her, natural biopsychoenenergy must find new paths of expression. She must develop and cultivate new habits, must learn to love others habitually, spontaneously, automatically. In time, Love must become her natural response to living creatures, not a carefully planned aspect of her lifedesign. Her old habitpathways must fade and die.

This is the formation of the new Self or new Self-awareness within the mystic. This kind of transformation represents the goal of mortification, and involves several periods of psychophysical storms. The entire inner being is reconfigured and restructured along brand-new lines and pathways. The mystic is reborn. This is the tail-end of the period called the Way of mortification. It is a subsystem of the Way of purgation, the first leg of the inner journey. (The Way of purgation is followed by the illuminative Way and then, the unitive Way.) This phase can be a phase of hard toil, bitter suffering, and fatigue, even exhaustion. It is that old "darknight of the soul," discussed earlier. Disappointments and disillusionments multiply.

But the mystic must keep in mind always that the end of mortification is not death, but a fuller, brighter life, just as the end of crucifixion is resurrection into a brilliant new being of pure Spirit. Finally, it creates great inner Power, and a newly crystallized consciousness, in which love, peace, and bliss abound. The mystic Tauler (1300-1361) wrote about this phase, "In the truest death of all created things, the sweetest and most natural life is hidden."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 87/ MYSTICISM AND MASOCHISM: SEPARATING THE MYSTICAL WHEAT FROM THE ABERRANT CHAFF

Illness and imbalance affect all groups. Any chain is only as strong as its weakest link. There has never been a perfect group on earth. Some mystics have been "sick puppies, and unhappy campers." As noted, mysticism must be studied with discrimination. For the history of the spiritual art and heart is littered and replete with fake mystics and people who are mentally ill. These aberrations tend to cloud a crystalclear picture of mysticism. Fortunately, the sane, moderate, sound, balanced mystics outnumber the borderlines by a ratio of a hundred to one.

How can all these confusing psychospiritual types be sorted out? This task might not be amenable to [purely scholarly or academic presentation. The only hope of gaining clarity is if a mystic compares notes with tradition. That is, in fact, the very reason for this book. So, if you are a fledgling mystic, or student of mysticism, you can use the maps and records to create a lifedesign for yourself that will almost guarantee success.

To pursue the path of union, humility, selfknowledge, and final invincibility, you can safely incorporate into your lifeplan these mystical subsystems: mortification, renunciation, simplicity, selfdiscipline, selfgrowth, selfabandonment, unselfing, moderation (centrism), resignation (surrender), and ecospirituality.

We have already dismissed as aberrant and unhealthy the world-hating and world-fearing extremists. We have also seen that those who hate the senses are similar extremists-- even though there is a valid place for "overcoming" sensual domination or mastery.

We have also seen how asceticism betrays the very principle of Love for the self, and so, abandons the very heart of true mysticism. The same can be said about masochists-- people who are attracted by pain. A healthy, balanced view indicates that, although we all must bear pain while on earth, no one need create pain deliberately. Pain is never in itself a virtue. In fact, if it is used to support the ego ("Look at me, how tough I am," or, "I can stand more pain than you," or, "I'm so holy because I have endured with saintly silence so much pain."), then it can be downright antimystical, antispiritual, or antiagapic. So, those who call themselves "mystics," but who glorify pain as an end in itself, must also be relegated to the Lalaland of false mysticism.

Please don't misunderstand. Mystics, like all people, have to learn to live with pain. In the overall view of the cosmos, they can come even to see it as "good," for it is educational in nature, and brings many spiritual gifts. But the true mystic is no seeker of pain for its own sake. She knows that the world already contains enough pain, and that there is no reason to add to it. She would never dream of deliberately inflicting pain upon any living creature. And she is a living creature-- just as sacred as any other. So, to inflict deliberate pain upon herself would be as cruel as

inflicting it upon any other. Either way, it is abuse. The mystic does not own her own body; that belongs to Love. So, she has no more right to abuse it than to abuse any other creature.

Mystics do realistically realize that this world contains much pain-- often much too much. They find ways to explain it, and to live with it. They even find ways to squeeze from the lemons of pain the lemonade of wisdom. When it does come to them, they can even see it as an expression of Love. But they do not actively court it, or seek it out. It is a form of serious dysfunction to regard pain as something actually desirable.

As Mary duBorg says, "The desire for suffering is itself an agony." So, actually desiring greater pain simply creates greater, and unnecessary, suffering.

The mystic surely does not fear pain or suffering. When it occurs naturally, she tries to welcome it. But this is the limit of her healthy response. "The actual desire to suffer is the unhealthy aspect.

But there is yet another very real factor in mystical psychology which yet again complexifies the picture further: The fully enlightened mystic does not distinguish sharply between the poles of pain and pleasure. Because of her decision that all is good, that all is Love, she might not respond exactly as the average person would to a pain stimulus. This is true of mental, emotional, and physical pain. This does **not** imply that the healthy, balanced mystic would seek out pain, but only that, when it did come her way, she might choose to interpret it differently. That is, it would be interpreted in as positive a way as possible. She would give it the most positive spin.

Even this radical reinterpretation of the meaning and positive value of pain, however, does not, in the healthy mind, turn that pain to pleasure.

So, the mystic loves what good she can find in pain, but does not love the pain itself. This is a subprinciple within the larger guiding aphorism: The mystic does not love the bad, but seeks the good within the bad, in order to love that.

The mystical overview, called "resignation," is, as we have seen, a state of mind in which **everything** that happens is embraced as an aspect of the will of God. This means that even pain, if it is permitted, or dreamed up, by the universal Mind, must have a nonpain, or even a Love, component. Striving to see the Love behind pain, the mystic tries to remain as joyful as possible even when in pain.

Let us not forget, in the midst of these abstract considerations, however, that the mystic is part human. And her human self will respond naturally to pain as a biomedical or psychological condition (depending on whether it is physical or mental pain). So, "If you cut us, do we not bleed?" applies to the mystic. No matter how great her inner detachment and understanding, she often responds to the presence of pain according to her lower, or bionature. This is neither "evil" nor failure. It is not regression or spiritual immaturity. It is simply another learning phase for the mystic on her journey.

The mystic Tauler (1300-1361) said of pain, "It is sent out of great Love." This is the mystical view-- that pain can actually be a gift. It can teach us sympathy for the suffering. It teaches compassion both for the sufferer and those who respond to her. In this way, it increases the sum of Love in the cosmos, while teaching individuals to respond with tender comfort in Love. In the absolute **perspective**, pain or suffering can be said to be "good," because it creates great spiritual treasures in the heartmind.

That same mystic, Tauler, also writes, "The deeper and more supernaturally a man crushes himself beneath all things, the more supernaturally will he be drawn far above all things." These and similar words could be taken as the mystic's inviting pain into her life. But they might equally be interpreted to mean that, upon encountering a pain not sought, the mystic will transcend it, rise above it, and gain from it.

In the typical mystical temperament exists a sensitive love for the beautiful, and an equal aversion to the "ugly." Yet the mystic is challenged to interpret **everything** as beautiful. So, the soul uses this propensity as a teaching tool, to force the mystic to grow.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 88/ THE PERFECT WORLD, ABANDONMENT OF PREFERENCE, AND SOME MYSTIC VIGNETTES OF MORTIFICATION

\*\*\*

There often comes a point in life where the pain is so great that something inside just snaps. The pain has become so nightmarish that it has passed into the incredible and the absurd. When one has arrived at this point, when pain has driven her this far, she is about to awaken from the sleep/coma/amenia of her soul.

"Nothing is too low for Love," is the famous mystical axiom of humility. By extension, however, this simple statement has been elaborated to imply that, "Nothing is too disgusting for Love." If the mystic truly believes that **everything** in the cosmos originates with perfect Mind, that of the one and only Creator, then all things must be not only good, but perfect. Everything must be beautiful and good. If there is anything that the mystic finds repellant, it is she who must change.

Dolphins give lessons in precisely this kind of state of consciousness. They often play with sea-materials that the average human being would find totally repellant, but to them, it seems ordinary and neutral. It's just another toy, another chance to play. They lack any negative responses. Could it be that human beings are really too sensitive, or too judgmental? At any rate, the mystic would say yes.

It is her goal to live in a beautiful world. To that end, she has decided that everything in the world is already beautiful. It's just up to her to find out how, to grow into the sophisticated perception. This is an intrinsic and necessary aspect of

the mystical calling, as "crazy" as the idea might seem to the average person.

Some who call themselves "mystics," but who are not, take this entire procedure bass-ackwards: Instead of seeing everything as beautiful, they have something more like a universal, nondiscriminating contempt for everything. In this way, these so-called "mystics" have come to exactly the wrong conclusion, that everything is ugly.

These people come close to the idea that all matter is "bad," and some even say that it is. These extremists have missed the point entirely, and have slipped into a dualism that is dangerous and delusive. Their only goal is to find freedom from all the shackles of the senses. This is not, as in true mystics, the desire simply to transcend domination by the senses, but actually to escape from them because they are seen as evil.

True mystics do teach that the earth is illusion, and so is everything that fills it. But this does not make earth, or nature, or the senses, intrinsically evil. True, real mystics do not want to be controlled by the senses, but this still does not imply that the senses are evil. Nothing can be evil if everything is created by God. Only extremists-- nonmystics-- have taught that the earth is inherently evil. Real mystics see it as the dream of the allgood God, and hence, it is all good. For example, St. Francis insisted that the worms and grubs were as much his "brothers" as the birds. Tibetan mystics are famous for a similar regard for living creatures, including worms.

But, of course, "Sister sparrow" rolls much more easily off the tongue than does "Brother Bacterium."

To mystics, the entire world and all within it are aspects of the dream of the perfect Mind, the Dreamer. So, mystics do not permit greater reality to be attributed to "ugly" than to "beautiful" things, or vice-versa. All originate equally with the perfect, good, and beautiful Mind of the Creator.

The real mystic does not simply "ape" those around her. The word "ape" is an acronym for the following mystical guidelines: 1) assume nothing, 2) prefer nothing, and 3) engage your heart with nothing but Love. So, it is fundamental to the mystical worldview that she have no preferences. Why should she prefer one dreamimage of the great Mind over another? Intrinsically, there is really no rational basis for the preference of the butterfly over the spider, the puppy over the lizard. These are culturally conditioned preferences. To find fullest liberation, the mystic will have to work on undoing the damage created by exactly this kind of preference. (Actually, the favoring of the puppy over the lizard might have a biobasis, since it is, like humans, a mammal. But the mystic's stated purpose is to overcome the bionature or lower, animal nature.)

Another reason why the mystic will often rush to clean the toilets rather than to tend the flowers, if both jobs need to be done, is that she must learn that all service is service to the Absolute. Here, again, she is challenged to overcome human preferences. This workneutrality is taught by a mystical path called "karmayoga." In



this path, one never looks for results, and does not ever work for results. While this sounds very strange, in karmayoga, it is taught that the work itself is what counts. It is all that counts. So, the best way practically to serve God is to work from a heart full of Love. Just lay all your work on the altar of Love, and forget about results. The work is the Love. Workpreferences are usually not natural, but culturally and socially programmed. But even where there is a basis in nature, the mystic is committed to growing beyond them. So, she often chooses the least attractive, or most difficult, of tasks, just to remind herself that **all is God**.

"It is good," says the guru.

"Why?" asks the student.

"Because it is," says the guru. The very fact that a thing exists implies its inner, essential, intrinsic goodness. For the perfect Mind makes nothing "bad" or "ugly." The popular phrase is, "God doesn't make junk." Why would He/She do so?

So, everything is God. Everything is Love. When the world is seen through these lenses, everything is known with charity, generosity, beauty, tolerance, and compassion. Nothing is judged. Everything is accepted just as it is, even embraced. This ultrarelated trust does not imply that the mystic does not work for the improvement of the world. For she will, but only when Love moves her to do so. But the world is perfect, just as it is. If it were perfect, however, why would she work to change it? Because her working, called forth by Love, is also part of the world, just as it is. So, her work is part and parcel of the overall perfection of all things.

Francis was an example of the fastidious type who seems to represent the mystic. He was very picky about cleanness, and was terribly upset when Love told him to work with lepers, whose sight and smell he found disgusting in the extreme. But he overcame this powerful bionature, serving, and even kissing, the repugnant lepers. The very goal of all selfdiscipline is precisely this kind of freedom-- freedom from domination by the senses. When his heartmind, filled with Love, was set, his sensory inputs became irrelevant. He wrestled them to the ground, and conquered them.

This all begins with finding freedom from personal desire-- from its pride, prejudices, and preferences. The mystic Margery Kempe (1373-1433) felt great sorrow if she did not kiss a leper, because it was a sacrifice to the "Lord," being completely against her natural disposition. Living in the sixteenth century, it was in her youth, when she was wealthy, that she abhorred the lepers most. Like Kempe, Catherine of Genoa and Madam Guyon also had to cure themselves of "squeamishness." They "mortified the senses" by exposing themselves directly to hideous, repulsive persons and substances. Catherine fell for a time into extremism, depriving herself of many things, especially foods, simply because she enjoyed them. If she wanted anything, she thought, that was reason enough to deny it to herself.

St. Ignatius Loyola (1495-1556) was a "highborn" Spanish man of elegant, refined tastes, and personal habits. He was extremely concerned with, and proud of, the

styling of his hair. In time, as part of his mortification, he allowed it to grow naturally, and neither combed nor trimmed it.

Madam Guyon (1648-1717), as in other ways, showed signs of mental imbalance when it came to mortification. For she walked with stones in her shoes, and wore a girdle which pushed sharp iron spikes into her body. It seems that some people simply mistake severe discomfort for spirituality, while the two actually have nothing in common.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 89/ BORDERLAND BETWEEN THE PURGATIVE AND ILLUMINATIVE WAYS: ALTERNATIONS BETWEEN RAPTURE AND ITS ABSENCE

\*\*\*

The fires of purgatory burn bright and hot. They represent the purgative Way of the mystic. This Way was recognized by Christian, neoplatonic, and Sufi mystics. The latter stages of this Way are peppered with irregular states of ecstasy, although the early stages are, as we have seen, quite arduous. Gradually, control of the lower centers of Mind is increased, and even of the conscious mind, in a healthy way. In time, transcendental perception arises. This is sensitivity to subtle inner cues, changes, and spaces.

The temperaments of artists have much in common with those of the mystic. Both are highly creative, and exhibit high elasticity, even fluidity, in response to environmental triggers. Both are gentle, and impressionable. Both see the cosmos in unique, friendly, and pleasant patterns. Both seek to tap into the unconscious Mind to find guidance. Both move rather quickly from pleasure to pain, and back. The Mind, in both, is often exalted to interior heights of exquisite delight. Both tend to oscillate from rapture to its absence.

Mystics have long recognized their inner tendency to oscillate between ecstatic states and their absence. They call this the *ludis amoris*, the "game of Love." This "game" comes before the inner Self is fully unified, with all its ducks in a row, all its internal components merged in harmony. This oscillation is due to the imperfection of inner perception, and tends to heal as that perception grows brighter and sharper.

For it is when this perception grows tired and fails that the mystic is thrown into inner darkness. If this is a major event, it can be the dreaded darknight. This oscillation between states has, in fact, given some mystics the strong appearance of bipolar disorder.

But the struggle to disentangle from illusion is quite real and healthy, although it is a lifelong one. It does not always follow the laws or expectations of psychology or science. Instead, it moves with the whim of the artist, the mystic, the dreamer, the unpredictable human nature.

The inner struggle between rapture and its absence has three relevant factors: 1)the inner Light which is the Source of rapture, 2)illusion, and 3)the self that relates to both. Here, during this major transition, the purgative and illuminative states alternate. There are many "falls" from the path, and many triumphs.

Attention shifts from the ego's need to be purified to the Center, which becomes the consuming passion of life. It is during these stages that the mystic falls in love with Love. The self is automatically and instantly cleansed whenever it comes into mental contact with the indwelling Spirit of Love. Work to detach oneself from the world of illusion increases, as does inner satisfaction.

In time, this state of oscillation marks the very boundary between the purgative and the illuminative states or Ways. When the mystic starts to notice these wide swings or oscillations, that means that she is in the inner borderland between the purgative Way, which is now ending, and the illuminative Way, which is just beginning.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 90/ THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY: ECSTATIC MIDPOINT OF THE JOURNEY

\*\*\*

Illumination is an alien state. It is filled with sweetness, light, ecstasies, and inner wisdom. It is completely unknown to average people, even artists. The mystic, after having finished her terrible, stressful, unforgiving purgative Way, now enters this new, illuminative Way. It's a state known only, to mystics. It is a state of inner splendor, glory, luminosity, and intensity.

Perhaps the closest analog to illumination among recognizable human states is that of falling in love. When one falls in love, certain aspects of personality die off, and certain others grow, depending on the influences of the beloved.

This is similar to what happens to the mystic in illumination. Here, too, "mortification" has its place. It is not, however, ascetic (as in the purgative Way), but mystical. And mystical mortification can be considerably healthier and more positive than ascetic mortification.

The mystic uses mortification and purgative techniques to "prepare the Way of the Lord." That is, she clears a mental path for the inner activity of Love. Still, even with all her extra effort, she recognizes that the mystical component of consciousness is by no means her exclusive property. It exists in every human mind, if only as potential.

Mystics, artists, poets, and dreamers seem to be blessed with a natural instinct for inner cultivation of the universal mystical potential. While most of these groups might be seen as the "initiates" of the inner qualities of beauty and wisdom, the mystic is the "initiate" of Love.

In moving into, and exploring, this great inner sea of Love, the mystic moves into another, an inner, order of reality. She discovers an inner "world" that had always been there, invisible to all but the proper senses. Moving into this world, she knows, is the goal of human existence.

Here, the soul beholds what the mystic Plotinus (205-70 B.C.) called "the Root of soul," the Spirit, the Origin of all souls. Plotinus speaks, in parable, of souls "dancing" around the One. Christ, through Jesus, says, in the "Hymn of Jesus,": "I did dance all things." This brings to mind the Hindu symbol of Shiva, that aspect of God that dances into being all the universes.

The mystic has caught a glimpse, or perhaps even had a vision, of this beautiful inner Reality because she has disentangled herself from exclusive focus on the world of illusion. She has stopped the obsessive pursuit of material things. Immersing herself in Love, she has also ceased to allow all attention to be dominated by the senses. In stillness, she has turned all attention, and her senses, to the inner Reality glowing in her heart. The result is a solid, reliable certainty that this inner Reality exists that it is more real than that world of illusion over which she used to obsess.

In fact, the real key to everything important in her life is her soul's relationship to this inner Light of friendly Love. It is at this illuminative stage that she gets just a whiff of the fragrance of Love that will bond her, in time, to a full union with this inner Beloved. But just the simple act of having touched this inner Light has already resulted in the elevation of thought and behavior to meet new and noble standards. She begins the Way of impeccable honor. In the old language of the ascetics, she has become "proficient," but not yet "perfect." She has a feeling-intuition of the dawning of an inner harmony with this Light. But selfloss is not yet.

This is the illuminative phase, but full Communion has not yet occurred. She simply beholds the inner Beloved, and this "otherness" marks the illuminative Way. There still exists a subject and object. In higher states, those of union, this dichotomy will disappear.

But the "inner God vision" is the highest form of illumination. Divine Reality seen in nature is also illumination, called "nature mysticism." One life underlying all of nature is known, repeatedly. The poetic is blasted heavenward, into the mystical.

At its highest octave, the Light of oneness erases all distinctions. This is the "saving madness" of Plato (5th century B.C.). Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) says, "This is not God, yet it is the Light in which many see Him." The mystic poet Blake (1757-1827) saw it as his mission to cleanse the doors of perception so that all could see this unitive life in nature. He wrote, "Pour upon me thy spirit of meekness and love. Annihilate the selfhood in me."

This selfloss into nature was what the mysteries of Dionysus (c. 500 A.D.) were about-- expressions of vivid illuminations.

But the mystery of this inner Creator, and His/Her great beauty, was not limited to

religion. All real artists share with mystics something of the illuminative Way. Contact of the purged Mind with the Beloved has produced beauty. Contact of that same Mind with the world produces art and poetry.

More people have, historically, experienced this illuminative Way than the previous purgative Way, or the unitive Way still to come. At this stage, the mystic herself is still ignorant of the soft luminous glory still to come in the unitive Way. The "darknight" of the soul still remains in her future. But for now, she immerses herself, rapt and wrapped in the celestial Light of eternal Love.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 91/ THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY AND THE UNITIVE WAY

\*\*\*

Some of the greatest, most joy-filled, jewels of mystical literature arose from the experience of the illuminative Way. Three main types of experience occur in conjunction with illumination: 1) joyful awareness of the inner Absolute, 2) lucidity of vision re the world, and 3) multiplication of intuitive, transcendental energies.

Here's a little elaboration: First, as noted, the "unitive Way" has not yet begun. The soul has emerged from the purgative into the illuminative Way. While the soul might actually be immersed in its Origin, it still contemplates It as a separate Being or Mind. Older mystics call this stage the "betrothal," not the "marriage," of the soul with God.

Secondly, the flipside of mortification occurs. While its goal was to deaden the senses, to cut out temptation and distraction, in the illuminative phase, the senses are greatly enhanced and magnified. The phenomenal world is perceived with great clarity, and is often seen to be infused or saturated with the Beloved as Creator. The great "secret" of creation is revealed. What is that? That the whole world exists only within the Mind, that this Mind is absolutely real, but the world only secondarily so. So, the ideas "external" and "material" can be interpreted only as dreamsymbols of conditions that never really existed.

Third, such a great increase in mental energies might create a storm. Sometimes, audio phenomena unrelated to a real stimulus are reported. Here, dialogs between the conscious and unconscious Mind are common. The unconscious might be symbolically projected as a spiritguide, or some other "Other." The unconscious often speaks disguised as angels, extradimensionals, extraterrestrials, or dead people. Visions are also possible, although the mystic generally does not regard them as necessarily desirable. Also, automatic writing can occur during this phase.

In fact, it is even possible that, during the illuminative phase, tastes or glimpses of true union might be sensed. But there is a real difference between these momentary experiences and the full fusion or Mindmeld of the unitive Way, still in

the mystic's future. The mystic Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1142) speaks of the Absolute's tendency "not to give Himself wholly, but to be tasted by thee." Reality would "touch thee, not to be seen of thee." It would "arouse thee, not to be comprehended by thee." Hugh called this illuminative Way a "foretaste of His delights."

So, in the illuminative Way or phase, the life of the mystic is ignited by Love, but not lost in it. It is illuminated but not obliterated. In Zen, this would be analogous to little mystical states, called *ken sho*, not the great unitive state called *satori*.

The mind is, still, changed by this experience. It is undistracted by judgments, such as, "I like this," but, "I hate that." In fact, it grows steadily towards the state in which it will like everything. This "touching" of the inner Absolute tends to make for real psychospiritual success. But life is not yet absorbed into God or the inner sea of Love.

The dark side of illumination is a selfish, egobased monomania. It is directed only to the states of rapture and ecstasy, seen as personal possessions. This is the state that St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) called "spiritual gluttony." This is egodriven, hence, artificial mysticism.

Also, this phase of the mystical experience should not be confused with "quietism." Quietism is the belief that one should literally do nothing but sink into a kind of dull lethargy. Real mysticism energizes, and prevents this dangerous quietism from swallowing the mystic into mind-numbing complacency, or allowing simple interior drift into inactivity and laziness.

Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) was an example of a mystic who had many momentary experiences, tastes, or glimpses of the unitive state during her illuminative phase. This has caused some incorrectly to assume that she moved directly from the purgative Way to the unitive Way, skipping entirely the illuminative Way in between. Such statements as the following are typical: "Sometimes, I do not see or feel myself to have either soul, body, heart, will, or taste, or any other thing except pure Love." While she reached these high states with some regularity, she had not yet truly reached the unitive state, which Julian of Norwich (died 1416) called "oned with bliss." Catherine strove for union with a Reality distinct from herself. And, we will remember, that is the one identifying mark of the illuminative Way. She herself was fully aware of the transient and flawed nature of these momentary states. Although joyful, they were the promises of a fuller experience still to come--in the unitive Way.

When the illuminative Way evolves into the unitive Way, one no longer longs for the joys, ecstasies, and raptures. One is, instead, driven to higher Love by Love. The Sufi mystic Rabiah (died 802) expressed the passion of the unitive Way, "that I should remember Thee above all the things of this world..."

Repeatedly the Way of illumination is described in terms of radiance, luminosity,

glowing, shining, and related lightimages. This explains its name. Saul of Tarsus (died 65 ), on the road to Damascus, was surrounded by exactly such a radiant light. Theresa calls this "an infused brightness."

Mystics saw this as the Light of Love. Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210-1290) describes her experience as that of "the rippling tide of love, which flows secretly from God into the soul, and draws it mightily back into its Source." This was a semipoetic way of describing fusion with the inner Light. When mystics use the symbolism of light, they are describing the illuminative, not the highest unitive, Way.

During the illuminative phase, contact is set up between the conscious (everyday, aware) mind and the deep Superconscious. The latter might be projected outward to facilitate communication. Julian (died 1416) enjoyed conversation with her "courteous and dear worthy Lord." Dante's (1265-1321) description of illumination was transcendental and nonpersonal, but describes essentially the same state. The Absolute might be sensed to be at once humble and omnipotent. The famous phrase of Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), "The whole world is full of God," is much more organic and vivid in the original Latin: "The whole world is pregnant with God." The sixteenth century mystic Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) similarly described the mystical realization.

There are as many kinds of descriptions of the Absolute as there are temperaments, and as many temperaments as there are mystics. And the mood or clarity of a single mystic might change from hour to hour.

Suso (1295-1366) is an example of a mystic who used a wide spectrum of descriptive devices to indicate his experience. He wrote, "Whence comes this gentleness and beauty, this joy and sweetness of the heart?... Come, let my heart, my senses, and my soul immerse themselves ..."In his heart, he felt all good and beautiful and desirable things. He described this as "that beloved Object, whence comes all love." With flowing tears and open heart, he embraced "his sweet Friend."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 92/ THE LUMINOUS THEOPHANY: GOD IN THE SOUL, GOD IN THE WORLD

\*\*\*

The world is Light. This is the summary of a certain type of mystical revelation often encountered in the illuminative Way. This "Light" is either equated with, or closely related to, the inner consciousness of eternal Love. When the mind of the mystic is flooded with this numinous Light, so is the "outer" world. This experience is often reduced to the fairly nebulous phrase, "the Presence of God."

In terms of description, that phrase helps not at all. Descriptions of this state, however, do not always tend to be poetic. While earlier phases of the mystical journey required a narrowing of the focus of attention, concentration, or

consciousness, what happens here is actual and literal expansion of consciousness. It is not the forsaking of the "many" to find the "One," but the revelation of the perfect One dwelling within the many.

Here, the Absolute is seen as indwelling the "outer" world, instead of being perceived inside the soul. Both descriptions are true, but the world-God is a projection. This Creator, seen everywhere in the world, filling its every nook and cranny, is still deep within the unconscious Mind, within the soul-level of that unconscious. God is the inner Dreamer of the outer world, reconciling both "inner" and "outer" Godimages. But only the inner God is absolute. The outer God is His/Her reflection or mirror.

This illuminative phase of the mystical experience also contrasts with the former "mortification" of the senses, since these same senses are enhanced and sharpened during this stage. A real radiance, representing the intrinsic holiness of Mind, is seen everywhere, and the "meanest" things "shine" with God or Lovemind. For once God is "seen" or intuited in orison (silent, inner prayer), He/She is known and felt to be everywhere. This form of illumination is called a "simple form of pure Love."

It was this experience of the illuminative phase or Way that was studied at the turn of the twentieth century under the name "cosmic consciousness."

It is easy to see why mysticism could be confused with pantheism. Pantheism is the belief that the Absolute is the material universe itself. Mysticism sees the Absolute as ensconced or dwelling within that same universe. But in mysticism, the component of God as Dreamer, God as Mind, removes the ultracomplex concept of "God" from the naive simplism of pantheism.

Still, historically, some mystics sound very pantheistic in their descriptions of the Absolute. The mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) had three separate illuminative experiences. They were all externalized, and so sounded pantheistic. The first lasted for seven days, and was his "awakening." ((An "awakening" is the very first mystical experience, during the illuminative phase.) His second, around the year 1600, sent him into a trance, while he was gazing at a polished disc. Here he saw the irreality of the phenomenal world. In 1610, this experience, greatly enhanced, recurred to the humble shoe-maker. He learned more, he said, in fifteen minutes, than he could have learned through years of normal study.

This experience was similar to that which occurred with George Fox (1624-1691), who wrote, of the soul, "Alike in howling gale and singing cricket, it hears the crying aloud of that 'Word which is through all things everlastingly.'"

After this kind of experience, the mystic feels a powerful resonance with all life. She is not distracted or misled by mere appearances, which are deceiving. She knows all life to be part of a single supernet. This she feels to the bottom of her being, in every fiber, with crashing, stunning reality.



In this nature-mysticism, the direct knowing of the heart replaces the mere clumsy approximations of the senses, and a much deeper, more real, underlying Reality is sensed. The world grows, gradually or suddenly, undistorted, and is known with ultralucidity. Everything is perceived through the lens of love, enhancing bliss and a sense of inner connection with all. Through Love and the allembracing Mind, everything does become quite beautiful. Underhill states this with poetic beauty: "Beauty is simply reality seen with the eyes of love." Ordinary, common, even ugly objects suddenly become the repositories of transcendental beauty. Under the influence of psychotropic drugs, people have been known to enter a state close to this one, and have spent the entire afternoon expressing astonishment at the awesome beauty of a fingernail.

This same state was entered by the poet Blake (1757-1827) when he, in his words, "put off the rotten rags of sense and memory." He was lifted, he said, to this state of great lucidity by "imagination uncorrupt." For imagination merges imperceptibly with nature, in this glorified state of consciousness.

Blake said, "To me, this world is all one continuous vision of fancy or imagination." The conscious mind, when purified of, and released from, the senses, is entered by the deeper inner Self, the transcendental personality of the soul. This progressive vision of the beauty of the world is an indispensable aspect of soul-growth.

Every creature and flower becomes a "theophany," or revelation/manifestation of the Ultimate. Francis took this idea more seriously than probably anyone else.

The mystic does not deny the reality of the world, but simply that that reality is absolute. The world is real, but its reality is only secondary, and relative, to that of the Creator or inner Mind. The mystic undergoes a full metamorphosis of her mind, on many levels. Afterward, she shares a primal and very deep life (Mind) with all of creation. The absolute barrier between human and nonhuman dissolves. This is "nature mysticism" and "cosmic consciousness" at their best.

It is because of the very depth of this revelation that mystics often, but not always, seem to have some influence on other species. Creatures, specifically, can tend to become relaxed and calm around the mystic. Not that wild animals are immediately tamed. Wild birds are not likely to land on her hand, or wild dogs lick that hand. But the mystic approaches them in a calm, nonthreatening way, increasing their own peace.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 93/ NATURE, THE PERFECT CREATOR, AND THE IMPERFECT WORLD

\*\*\*

Nature mysticism celebrates Venus and Aphrodite, for it is the wild exuberance of natural Love, made pure by cosmic Love. In the life of the Peruvian saint-mystic Rose

of Lima (1586-1617), nature-mysticism took on a lovely and transcendental beauty. Everything seemed, to her, to be filled with the "magic" of the Light of Love. Everything, in her inner eye, reflected the Eternal. The world of nature was a temple for the adoration of the Lovegod. In this kind of mystical experience, every creature and plant is seen as a form of Light-manifestation.

In the Kabbalistic mystical diagram called the "Tree of Life," the sephirah (lightsymbol) called "Yesod" is a symbol of the archetypal universe deep within the unconscious Mind. It has been called the "treasurehouse of images." This is analogous to Plato's universe of "ideal forms." This world is seen as only the "shadows" of Yesod.

This is appropriate. Only a cursory contemplation will show that the outer world is a projection of the inner. And the "objects" of the inner world are capable of much greater perfection. They never have to get old or break down. Deep within your mind and mine dwells the Creatormind, and it is perfect or flawless.

What does this mean? It means that the Mind which dreams up the world is precisely stainless. But what of the imperfect world? If the world is dreamed up by a sane, loving, perfect Mind, why is it so screwed up?

Largely because the Mind has willed itself into what were originally playful states of ignorance. In playing the game of this world, souls long ago willed themselves to forget their inner essential and divine nature. This seemed to be the ultimate game, and it brought tremendous excitement, even though those souls knew fully well that they could not be harmed by the "virtual" or dreamworld. The time came when almost no one remembered. All this virtual world was created as a kind of amusement park. Souls incarnated here to play, to have a good time.

But some souls wanted to play more and more complex and exciting games. And what could be more exciting, more entertaining, than to forget that it was all a game? This is analogous to climbing inside a drama in your tv, and interacting with the show. When souls dared to will themselves to forget their true identities, they, in turn, forgot that this world was virtual, a dream. That's when the games started to get a little too serious. Now, the time when people knew the truth about all this is thousands of years in the past. We are just relearning what those souls willed themselves, so successfully, to forget.

Under the leadership of mystics, the world is once again beginning to remember.

The Creator is like a pure white light, stainless and flawless. But the other minds that exist within it as subsystems of itself are like shards of colored and opaque glass surrounding that Light of perfect Supermind. By the time that that Light manifests as this world, it has been filtered through the memories, karma, and other distortions of the billions of minds making up our planetary community, and so, the world is distorted.

The "world" or "universe" of archetypal ideals is actually the deeper levels of the unconscious Mind. This world, contaminated by other levels of the unconscious, is

exactly how the Absolute expresses itself in spacetime. Its perfect Power must "trickle" through more and more superficial layers of Mind. This might be said to be the "trickle up" theory of worldcreation.

The altered state of Love that allows the mystic to see the oneness between inner and outer is not gained by datagathering. It is gained only by living every day in the cognitive awareness of the Way of the world, and continuously re-minding oneself through "mindfulness" that that very world is unreal, illusion. Continuous meditation makes it possible for the mystic to "cruise" at "high altitudes." Her inner eye is fixed steadily on the inner Creator, and so, she never gets lost in the creation. As the lower aspects of her nature are allowed to die through mortification, the true Self or soul has less competition. There is less distraction, and so, things are seen (intuited) with increasing clarity.

Ultimately, however, Love is the final Power that takes one to the Core or Creator. The old mystics called this "charity," and the mystic Richard Rolle (1300-1349) writes, "No one knows this sweet charity except he who is 'taken by it.'"

Even immersed in the ocean of inner and infinite Love, however, the mystic is not always placid. For progress implies growth and movement, and that implies change. Change inevitably implies some disturbances. Walter Hilton (died 1396) calls the Way "a rest most busy." This is similar to the paradoxical description of the Way as "the empty fullness." The Way is a gradual, incremental appropriation of the divine within the human mind. It is the result of an inner force of evolution, impelling all nature and Mind onto an upward spiral of ever-increasing growth towards perfection, the "home" or "country" of the mystic pilgrim. It is a voyage to the heart of Reality, the Center or Core of the soul. The transcendental Self, in turn, begins to appropriate unto itself more and more of the mystic's personal unconscious and conscious mind. This is no steady state, or inactive and placid condition during its evolutionary and revolutionary phases. The mystic Tauler (1300-1361), in fact, called it a "stormy love." The mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) describes it as "an eternal hunger." It is, he elaborates, a "craving ...after an uncreated Good." He says it is "eternal insatiableness." It is a passion for eternity, which will probably be everlasting in duration, since absolute perfection is a goal that takes forever to reach.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 94/ STRANGE SCENTS, VISIONS, AND REVELATIONS: PARASENSORY EXPERIENCES AND MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

Mysticism, they say, is a delusion, a mental aberration. It is all either nonsense or mental illness. When they have looked inside their heads, they have found nothing. Ridiculous materialistic extremists often stupidly dismiss everything that cannot be

measured by their crude, primitive instruments. They mock and shrug off all parapsychological events. Terrified of mystery and the unknown, they wish violently to shut it out. They respond like a five-year-old who shuts her eyes during a scary movie. Blissfully blind to their own shortsightedness, they are like the brilliant bureaucrats who wanted to close the U.S. Patent office in the 1870's, because "everything has already been invented." Stupidity this gargantuan at least deserves acknowledgment.

French psychiatrists thought that they knew everything about mysticism. At the turn of the previous century, when almost nothing was known about anything, they were eager conveniently to flush away all mystical phenomena as mental illness. An easy but shallow dismissal, this did not trouble them with the colossal task of examining the data with an open mind. These lazy and inaccurate observers sought to homogenize all visionary experiences into a pathology.

But we revisit the question: Can all extraordinary mental phenomena be lumped together carelessly, imprecisely, and dismissed as mental illness? Were all the visionary experiences of Jesus and other great spiritual luminaries simply crazy?

The most blind and blundering deadend imaginable is the only fruit of such bitter, frightened cynicism. It slams shut the doors of the heartmind on all mystery. To dismiss the supernormal as the abnormal, mistaking it for the subnormal, is a blunder of preposterous and gigantic proportions. It is blindly, ignorantly, arrogantly to repeat the mistakes of history. These caused the greatest spiritual masters to end up nailed to crosses.

On the other extreme, we find those poor, desperate, often gullible, persons who give equal credence to all inner events. , Those of the madman are on a par with those of the mastersage. These extremists are actually increasing the credibility of the ultrarational debunkers of all things mystical. These include the so-called "channelers" who speak for extraterrestrials and for assorted dead people. They need to remember the tongue-in-cheek observation that "just because they're dead doesn't mean they're smart." Also, replacing angels with aliens does nothing to change the fact that it is the same old human fear and insecurity.

The great mystics continually warned their disciples against giving too much importance to visions and voices. Mystics do not court these bizarre manifestations of the unconscious Mind.

As psychonauts, they are going to encounter these parasensory oddities, but mystics do not consider them attractive or desirable. They tend only to confuse, and deflect the mystic from the Way inward.

The true mystic is so much more sophisticated than the gullible dabbler in psychic phenomena. The mystic does not quickly, easily, or automatically assume that any vision or voice is from the Absolute. For she realizes the ultracomplexity of the unconscious Mind, with its thousands of layers, any of which could serve as a source

for any paranormal messages. These represent only the contact between the aware mind and the ocean of other layers of the unconscious Mind in which this mind is immersed.

Paranormal messages can use any of the senses to express: Perfumed air might appear suddenly in an event which older mystics called the "odor of sanctity." Some mystics have heard "sweet music." Some have felt physical sensations, as if they were being touched.

Symbols are used in these communications, which are **not** aspects of real experience. Instead, they are the Mind's interpretation of itself, in symbolic language or pattern. These symbols express deeper Mindlayers. The scent of roses does not represent roses. It represents the presence of the inner beauty and tenderness of the rose.

Only when these symbols become transformed into objects of the senses, as for example in a vision, do they seem to be literal. This occurs when the senses are made aware of these stimuli, or when they are consciously detected.

But these presentations are symbolic. The next logical question is, Are the visions of mystics simply hallucinations? Or do they manifest an actual Reality? If they do present a Reality, it is a strange one. For, it exists within the mind. But It also has objective existence. It is, in other words, a Power greater than, while residing within, the Self. It is the "inner Other," the "Beyond within."

This Reality is greater than the egoself. But since the vision still occurs in the Mind, it cannot be "outside." The mystic solves this apparent dichotomy by a logical conclusion: There must be another Self greater than the ego. This is the Self called the "soul." Any vision occurs with in the soul.

This soul is connected to the Coremind at one end, and to the conscious mind at the other. The revealed vision is a manifestation of a deeper Reality or Mindlevel. It is trying to express Itself to the conscious mind. The soul is the bridge between this deeper Reality or Absolute, and the conscious mind. Is this from the "outside"? We must keep in mind the following: **In mystical events, all spatial language is only symbolic.** For in terms of mind, there simply is no literal "outside." For everyone lives in **only** a mindworld, an inner world of which the "outer" is only a dreamprojection.

There are visions, and there are visions. If a vision mirrors only what a mystic already knows or believes, it is likely from the level called the "personal unconscious." (See "Chart of Mind.") If a vision contains knowledge of the past, or something unknown to the mystic, it might arise from the unconscious level called the "soul." But if it is of cosmic significance, and represents something that, in the long history of the soul, could never have been learned by the mystic, it arises from the collective unconscious. And if it is a revelation of unbounded Love, or the deep unity of creation, it probably arises directly from the Core-level, the Absolute.

So, even though dreams arise from these same levels, visions are not **just** dreams, for they do not tend to be as personal, and tend more often to contain components of cosmic spiritual truth. They seem to come usually from deeper levels than ordinary dreams. Most importantly, they are revealed to the waking mind, when it is fully conscious.

So, there exist varieties of visions. For example, Joe Smith claimed to have had a vision in 1830, which later became the foundation for the dogma of the Mormon cult. This "vision" did not lead people to the unity of mysticism, but portrayed a quirky interpretation of history masked as "revelation from God." God, or absolute Mind, is simply not interested in setting up divisive doctrines and dogmas, but reveals the love that interweaves all lifeforms. So God-- at least, the God of the mystics-- is not behind every vision.

Also, for one more example, cultleaders have received "revelations" that the end of the world was coming in the years 96,666, 1000, 1666, 1844, 1874, 1914, 1925, 1975, 2000, etc. These "false prophecies" obviously did not originate with Truth. Some visions, by contrast, have real, almost immediate, therapeutic effects, making the simple wise and the tormented serene. These true, often mystical, visions flood the personality and heartmind with Love, Light, and new wisdom. They provide new and real, useful information, or result in profound, lifechanging alterations in consciousness. They are authoritative, but not dogmatic. They have spiritual, not merely religious, content. They carry with them new understanding and new feelings. Often, they reflect views that are opposite those of the egoself. These Love-based revelations come from the deeper levels of Mind. Some arise from the Creator-level, pure Spirit or the Absolute Itself. Only these can be called truly "mystical."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 95/ MADNESS, VISIONARY INTERPRETATIONS, THE SUPERCONSCIOUS, AND AUDIOREVELATION

\*\*\*

Blown away by inner fireworks, carried away by the irresistible currents of Love. Visions can overwhelm the mind, and literally carry the mystic into realms of delight and wonder. Some visions are archetypal. This means that they speak to us in symbols that mean about the same thing to all people. Examples include some visions of the Passion of Christ, or those of Our Lady. Some visions, however, float up from even deeper levels of the unconscious Mind.

This kind of vision is very special. It tends to consist of images floating up on the waves of tremendously powerful feelings. This kind of vision does not tend to contain symbolic messages, like the ones discussed earlier. To understand these visions, what is needed is a rational system of classification, a taxonomy of Mind-events, an

"apocalyptology." But by what test can visions be evaluated?

They can be classed or categorized according to their lifenhancing quality. Genuine mystical visions bring with them one or more of seven gifts: 1) Love, 2) energy, 3) courage, 4) strength, 5) knowledge or wisdom, 6) direction or guidance, or 7) improvement of everyday life. Those visions that come from more shallow levels of Mind do not have these healing effects. But, in terms of traditional theology, those that come from the deepest level (the Superconscious or Absolute) "come from God."

This implies that other phenomena called "visions" can be relegated to the realm of dreams or hallucinations. But the reality is nowhere nearly so clearcut. Even the visions of the greatest and most profound mystics can be, and often are, a mixture of types. The situation of visionsorting becomes even more complicated when a mystic has a vision when she is ill, altering her brainchemistry. Due to these and related factors, the visions of even mystics are not always reliable, and are never infallible.

For example, some mystics have seen visions of the "devil." This occurred, in fact, with two of the most renowned mystics, Theresa (1515-1582) and Julian (died 1416). In both cases, there is evidence that the visions were semipsychopathic, representing not clarity, but the results of exhaustion. For healthy mystical visions-- or the visions of healthy mystics-- are concerned exclusively with the Good and the Beautiful, with the Absolute, with Love, and its qualities. These are universal among all mystics everywhere, and represent the gold standard, or the "God standard" of mystical vision. The plain truth is that mysticism results from a kind of genius. And the genius of the mystic, like that of other artistic and creative types, can sometimes manifest interior dysfunctions. But this by no means invalidates the value of true mystical experience, anymore than the fact that some authors were clearly mad invalidates the whole of literature, or the madness of some artists invalidates all art. Also, the fact that a violin can be played so that it sounds like dying cats does not invalidate the beauty of performance by a virtuoso.

At any rate, visions can be pictures of real experiences, but themselves have no objective reality. For the Absolute can use only the materials which it finds already in the unconscious Mind to communicate Itself to the conscious mind. Revelation must of necessity move through the filters and interpretations of the personal unconscious. So, each mystic has different perspectives, and varying symbols with which she indicates the Absolute. Often these visions can be even culturally affected. Plotinus (205-70 B.C.), for example, sees Venus, while Suso (1295-1366) sees wisdom personified. Theresa (1515-1582) sees Christ, and Blake (1757-1827) the characters from his own books. Ignatius (1495-1556) sees the holy Trinity.

Visions arise from, and are modified by, three areas within the mystic: 1) her conscious and unconscious thoughts, ideas, and concepts, 2) intuition or feelings

arising from unconscious sources, and 3) perceptions and sensations, influenced by the structure of her personal nervous system and her brain's interpretation of stimuli.

The Reality or Absolute that she "sees" (perceives) cannot be rendered understandable by mere words. But like the poet, she must try to use these crude tools to indicate the Indescribable. So, she chooses symbols in a vain attempt to "translate" this Absolute into images that can be grasped by the average linear, logical, verbal mind. And precisely as the best painting "paints itself," and the best poem or novel "writes itself," so the mystical experience plays itself out autonomously, apart from any control by the mystic. This aspect is called "automatism." In the mystic, personality is "automatically" metamorphosed by the vision itself. For the mystic vision is often the revelation of a consciousness or even conscious Being deep within the unconscious Mind. This Being is called the Absolute, or the Superconscious Mind, the "inner Other," the "Beyond within."

As unconscious (Superconscious) material floats up to be made conscious, the mystic's life tends to be saturated by, immersed within, the inner ocean of the great Unconscious, or the inner sea of Light/Love.

The first form of communication between the unconscious Mind and the conscious mind is often heard rather than seen. It might occur in the form of what are symbolically called "voices," or, more literally, "auditions." These are "audiorevelations," or things revealed through the sense of hearing. The first thing that the unconscious mind generally does to grab the attention of the conscious self is to call the name of the mystic, sometimes twice or more.

In the case of many if not most mystics, there is no literal "inner voice," but simply a strong urge which the mystic representationally calls a "voice," as in the phrase, "voice of conscience." Or, if a literal voice is sensed, it might well be the mystic's own voice. Usually, at this stage, the mystic is being educated by her unconscious Mind, and might be encouraged or even commanded to do or say something specific.

This unconscious Mind, this Superconscious, is so immense, so wise, so powerful, that to the conscious mind it really feels as if it were an "other." So, the mystic might well think of it as we refer to it here-- as the "inner Other." Of course, it is not really "another," but it represents a Self so overpowering, and in some ways so alien, that nothing could be more natural than to posit its autonomous existence as "another."

When It manifests Itself, whether through visions or auditions, it seems to be, and presents itself as, allpowerful and allknowing. It is both these things, for It is God. It makes itself known through three kinds of "auditions," or audiophenomena.

The first is unclear, inarticulate, difficult to pinpoint or define with any clarity. The second pattern of audiorevelation is clearer and more lucid, but "speaks" only within the mind. The third way in which parts of it might be perceived is through a kind of lucid hallucination, or the hearing of (a) literal voice(s). This "exteriorization"



or "externalization" appears to originate outside the self, and is "heard" with the literal ears. Mystics are universally in agreement that the first is the best, although the least impressive from the viewpoint of metaphysics. That is, the mystic prefers the unclear message, for this audiorevelation allows for maximum flexibility of interpretation. As the transmission becomes clearer, paradoxically, moving towards the second mode, it becomes more subject to illusion/distortion.

St. Ambrose (339-397) wrote, of the first type of audiorevelation, that It was "heard without utterance." In other words, the very best mystical audiorevelations are completely silent, heard in the stillness by the "inner ear" of the psyche. These types of message Underhill calls "imperative intuitions," and they elude speech altogether. They are attributed to direct divine activity. These are usually not clear messages at all. They are simply what Underhill calls "invasions from beyond the threshold," or perhaps more accurately, visits or entries from below the threshold. They are not sequential, but all-at-once. They convey an unquestionable certainty. Again, Underhill: Eternal truth bursts in upon the temporally conditioned human mind." This occurs instantly.

These inner experiences, whichever of the three types they represent, produce three manifestations: 1)certainty and conviction, 2) serenity and tranquillity, and 3) interior joy or euphoria.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 96/ VISIONS, REVELATIONS, AND EXTERIORIZATIONS

\*\*\*

Visions strike like lightning, out of the blue. The mystic does not have to coax or elicit them. They can be surprising, even unnerving. The kind of audiorevelation that occurs spontaneously has been called, in apocalyptology, "automatic audition." The great mystics have denied, with St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), that all must be from God. In a sophisticated view, they recognized, as "psychonauts" (explorers of inner space) that revelations or pseudorevelations can arise from any level of Mind. At times, said John, a mystic "has only been speaking to himself..."

Mystics are not big on revelations or visions of these types. For they can too easily be appropriated by the ego, to draw attention to itself. ("Look at me! I've received a revelation straight from God. That means that I'm special-- more special than you.") This irreverence is close to blasphemy. Anyone who arrogates "visions" to herself, and talks about them, is **no real mystic**, but a pretender and a fake.

The real mystic takes no **credit** for any kind of revelation. For genuine revelation occurs during a state of bliss when the conscious mind is not even active at all. So, the vision happens **to** the mystic, and is not **from** her. There is literally nothing, then, for which the mystic can take credit. If she seeks to transform the vision into a

cheap grab for egoglory, she is comparable to the fool who brags, "I'm the humblest man in this room," in this way disproving his own premise.

The special mystic intuition called "revelation" is an abrupt, uncontrollable flood of knowledge that rises up to engulf the conscious mind. These audiorevelations can be quite startling, and are not at all regulated, or even influenced, by the conscious intent or mind. (Again, for emphasis: These audiorevelations are **not** heard by the ear, but by only the mind.) St. Theresa (died 1582), who had so much in common with St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), trusted her inner intuitions so much that she allowed them to guide most of her lifedesign and major activities. But, as she matured in mystical sophistication, she learned the fine art of discrimination, clearly identifying which impulse was from her personal unconscious, and which from the inner Absolute. St. Hildegard (died 1179) lived her life under similar inner direction.

What St. Francis (died 1226) heard from the figure on the cross was a similar exteriorization. An "exteriorization" is a projection outward, into the dreamworld or "material, outer" world of an image within the deep unconscious Mind.

Despite their periodic usefulness, exteriorizations are distrusted and disliked by mystics. And with good reason! Exteriorizations are a source of great selfdelusion.

Exteriorization-revelations can take the form of dialog between the inner Absolute and the mystic. This can be seriously modified by imagination from a more shallow area of the unconscious. On the other hand, it can represent lucid, valid communications.

It can occur between the conscious mind and the soul. Or it can happen between the soul and the Spirit. If it is Spiritsoul, it might only be picked up and interpreted by the conscious mind. Predictably, these dialogs characterize the illuminative rather than the unitive Way, for the self retains at least a symbolic separation.

The impulse-direction ("voice") of the Spirit is distinct from that of the soul. In very rare instances, this "voice" can be exteriorized. This might not be healthy. In extreme cases, it might even be dissociative identity disorder (what used to be called "multiple personality").

Still every unconscious projection/exteriorization does not necessarily represent pathology. In fact, no process is more natural, effortless, and healthy than projection. (This is synonymous with "exteriorization.") In fact, we do it all the time, according to mystics. For we all project continuously, not only in our nightdreams, but all day, in the ordinary world. Also, we all "argue with ourselves," from time to time, expressing a similar symbolic inner dialog.

Still, there can be little doubt that this inner dialogue is, unlike much selfchatter, autonomous (selfgoverning). Relative to the conscious mind, it is completely independent. Since it arises from deeper levels of the unconscious, the aware mind has little or no influence over its contents.

The messages, such as they are clear at all, can appear in a certain rhythmic

speech. The manner and method of presentation can seem more important than the actual content, at least to some mystics. Automatic auditions (hearing) tend to be similar in form to some specimens of "automatic writing"-- a similar phenomenon. It is like the finest poetry, which also has an unconscious origin.

Like audiorevelations, "optorevelations" can reveal. These are manifestations which take on a visual form. These come in a wide variety. They can encompass a --+ wide spectrum of related phenomena. Spiritual people, through the ages, have, at any rate, a definite affinity with "light." This is often a crucial component of an optorevelation. But still, mystics do not encourage pursuit of photophenomena for their own sake, as these too are considered "mere" or secondary distractions from the pure inner Way.

Here, we need to be crystalclear about one fact: Too much emphasis on phenomena **of any kind** is antimystical and antispiritual. It can be, and often is, spiritually lethal. For it can always resurrect and empower the ego, weakening the inner connection with the Spirit. So, no genuine mystic will ever evidence the least particle of pride relative to the reception of "revelations." Speaking of these revelations, St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) says even, "We must fly from them." He says, "Inasmuch as they are exterior and physical, the less is the likelihood of their being from God. That which properly ... comes from God is a purely spiritual communication ...". He also writes of the true mystical or unitive Way: "In the high state of the union of love, God does not communicate Himself ... under the disguise of imaginary visions, similitudes, or figures." He warns of the soul's 'leaning' on these symbolic forms. Vision, as optorevelation, is seen as untrustworthy, even suspicious. It is very amenable and liable to deception, including subtle selfdeception.

So, revelations do occur. But they tend to get in the way of, interfere with, the mystic's sole and obsessive goal to fuse with the inner Love nature.

But there are distinct varieties and classes of "vision." Some are not even seen at all, but felt. This is the most common form among universal mystics, and is considered by them to be much more reliable. We must always keep in mind that whenever the mystics use the verbs "see" and "hear," they are most often speaking symbolically, and refer to urges, guidance, and direction. When they are impelled or compelled in some specific direction, it is because of what they have felt as a powerful guiding "hand," which is itself also only an analogy or metaphor.

So, we miss the entire point of inner visions, including optorevelations, if we insist that they are literally optical in nature. In fact, three types of optorevelation have been reported: 1)intellectual, 2) imaginary, and 3) corporeal or physical. These are analogous to the three types of audiorevelation discussed above: 1) inarticulate or unclear, 2)interior and clear, and 3) words exteriorized.

First, the intellectual type of optorevelation is not as its name implies. It is not intellectually clear, bound by logic. It tends to be nebulous, amorphous, unclear. It

is called "intellectual" only because it is revealed, in obscurity, to the intellect of the conscious mind. In fact, it is so subtle that it cannot always be distinguished from the mystical state of pure contemplation, which has no intellectual content at all. It's a mysterious, indefinable phenomenon, not sought, but appearing before the mind in a state very nearly invisible. It is not "seen" by literal sight. This kind of optorevelation, in fact, is not even "seen" by feeling. Instead, it is known intuitively by the entire self. Quite indescribable (where have we heard that before?) it is simultaneously intimate and warm or loving. This "intellectual" vision is also called by mystics the "formless vision." Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) writes of this phase of development, saying of the soul: "She does not yet know, or see, that He [God] dwells in her." Still, she says, God "speaks" to the soul. This is the interface between soul and Spirit. She says further that the soul "rejoices in that sight," having shifted the metaphor from an audiorevelation to that of an optorevelation. St. Theresa (died 1582) says clearly of this experience, "It is not vision."

This sense of divine but nebulous "presence" can be exteriorized into literal space, projected outward by the psyche. So, it differs in this way from literal immanence. This sense can also appear in forms that are more concrete, usually personal. That is, personality is either derived from, or superimposed upon, the awareness of this divine presence. Christian mystics identify the "presence" of God with the human nature or aspect of Christ-- that part of him that was "true man." This is the invisible, unseen "Jesus Christ" that stood "by the side" of Theresa. "A most tender love for Him" resulted. Here, in fullest awareness of Love, consciousness is at its zenith. Paradoxically, in this kind of "inner vision," **nothing** at all is seen-- not even with the "inner" eye, the eyes of the mind.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 97/ "IMAGINARY VISION," PASSIVE AND ACTIVE

\*\*\*

Naked Love is formless. "Stripped of all images" is the paradoxical reference of Suso (1295-1366) to the highest form of mystical "vision." Obviously, it is not visual. This means that, during the apogee of inner vision, the mystic is "seeing nothing." This, says Suso, "approaches the state of pure contemplation." This is a still and empty inner space. It is not God within, but the guestroom cleared out to make room for the entry of God.

The second type of vision, after intellectual, is "imaginary vision." In this, there might be sensory input. The soul "sees" with an inner eye the visions of the unconscious Mind.

Imaginary vision is spontaneous and automatic. It is the uncovering of an inner Power and its divulgence of inner vision. Since this Power is possessed by all creative

people, the difference between art, poetry, and visionary mysticism is here just a matter of degree. The mystic imaginary vision itself can become living art.

A fuller term for this experience is "passive imaginary vision." It is a state of consciousness that can be described as "waking dreaming." Material floats up from deeper levels of the unconscious Mind to be recognized by the conscious mind.

This passive imaginary vision can produce literal spontaneous mental pictures. Because this is so, this does not represent the highest mystical state. For it is still in the lesser realm of images or metaphoric representations. It is called "passive" because the self looks at them, but does not participate in their activities.

There are two main forms of imaginary vision, symbolic and personal. Mysticism's history and literature are packed with a plethora of pictures (symbols), often elaborate, complex, and beautiful. These are the contents of imaginary symbolic visions. They require intellectual interpretations if they are to make any sense to anyone. Sometimes, mercifully, an interpretation of the vision comes along with the vision, in a package-deal, as in the life of Suso (1295-1366).

Some metaphors, on the other hand, are clear, requiring little elaboration. Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210-1290), for example, saw the Deity as a "flowing light." This obviously emphasizes the fluidity of the mystical adaptations to the world, in the Taoist sense, and displays God as the ultimate Lightsource.

For the mystic, her visions, her entire interior life, had a greater solidarity and reality than the everyday world. That world she regarded as ephemeral, ethereal, an illusion. The inner visions could also be quite vivid and realistic. They grabbed the center of the field of conscious awareness, virtually forcing the mystic's attention, dominating her mind.

A passive imaginary vision often took over all the mystic's literal senses. As in a stark nightdream, visual and auditory senses combined. This occurred in an interaction with deeper levels of Mind. This could be breathtakingly realistic.

The mindscape was often ultracomplex, a mindblowing tapestry of interacting elements. At other times, it was almost laughably simple. Mechtild of Hackborn (died 1310), for example, saw Love as a "virgin in the heart of God."

Visions are related to dreams, which are charged with dynamic symbolism. Ignatius of Loyola (1495-1556) recommended a synergy between conscious visualization and contemplation. To understand the import of this, one must get a grip on the basic meaning of meditation.

Meditation has no "goal," but its intent is to produce a thought-free space within the mind. Into this stillness and silence alone can God, the inner Absolute, enter, there to be perceived by the mystic's conscious mind. So, in traditional contemplation, there is to be no thought, no image, no content. It is just the most literal "waiting" for God. What Ignatius suggested, then, was a kind of interference by the conscious mind-- a subtle but real manipulation. This never really caught on,

because this kind of conscious meddling has no place in the "going with the Flow" that marks the true mystic.

Still, some visualizations appear on their own, spontaneously, from the deeper levels of the unconscious Mind. While these do not qualify as visions, they can be seen as previsionary or paravisionary experiences. They can serve as a transition between pure "empty" mind and a real vision.

The second form of imaginary vision, after the symbolic, is the personal. Here, a personal relationship between the mystic and the Absolute is emphasized. The Absolute is seen as the "inner Other," and it is the job, and joy, of the mystic to relate in Love to this God/Goddess. This is the Ultimate presented and perceived as the "inner Beloved." It can be an allconsuming passion to fall, and to remain, in Love with the highest, deepest Self. The Absolute is seen, in the personal imaginary vision, as the "inner Beloved." This kind of vision marks those mystics, Catholic ecstasies, who had visions of Christ during Mass. It reflects a belief already held to be sacred, but still originates in the "beyond within." Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) had precisely this type of vision. St. Theresa (1515-1582) also understood this kind of vision.

These personal imaginary visions are regarded by mystics as "less pure" than "intellectual" or nebulous visions, which are much more amenable to interpretations.

These "imaginary" forms bring with them a powerful conviction of the presence of a personality, and so are different from the obscure sense of the presence of a more abstract Reality. This kind of vision, Theresa says, can pass as quickly as a flash of lightning.

This is contact with the Absolute under an image. For the human mind is loathe to understand or approach God as the Absolute, the Ultimate, the Eternal. It needs an image familiar to it. This encloses God, and takes Him/Her from the realms of the indefinable and abstract, and places God squarely in the center of the human drama.

For God almost always assumes a human form, which is natural, since He/She is being sought by human beings. So, God often comes to the mystic as Jesus, the Buddha, some avatar, or in some other anthropomorphic (humanformed) image.

When the inner Absolute is touched, for example, as the living Christ, this is more than a mere dream. It is a real mystical altered state. That is why it is so powerfully lifechanging. This is accompanied by a rocklike certainty and an immeasurable joy. Its glory and beauty are so ineffable that Theresa says, quite correctly, that no one can even imagine it.

Yet another family of visions exists, called "active imaginary" visions. The passive imaginary vision is the result of desires of the soul. The passive variety expresses what the soul wants, deep down. The active variety does not arise in response to the soul's desires. Instead, it expresses a change that has already occurred within that soul.

That is why this kind of vision, the "active imaginary," almost always accompanies a psychospiritual crisis. It is called "active" because in this kind of vision, the soul does not just look or watch, but acts. It is an interactive vision. It might entail a journey, an inward voyage. It is this kind of vision that usually initiates the unitive Way of the mystic. (A mystical life has three great sectors: the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive Ways.)

This active imaginary vision marked the lives of Francis (died 1226), Catherine of Siena (died 1380), Theresa (died 1582), and Suso (1295-1366).

The most famous of these active visions is the "inner marriage" of Catherine of Siena, who saw herself marrying a representation of Jesus (symbolizing the union of her soul to God.) In the vision, Jesus gave her a wedding ring. After the vision, she said that the ring still remained. But only she could see it. Of course, this vision might contain components of personal and sublimated fantasy. (The energy of even her sexual potential had become a servant of Love.)

This demonstrates the nature of the "active imaginary" form of vision. This vision was so real, in fact, that it falls under the category of "corporeal" visions-- those that involve the body. (This also has some parallels with the later Theresa.)

Predictably, mystics are highly suspicious of personal and selfinvolved visions. They actively distrust any vision which grants gifts of rings, roses, or other material trinkets. They tend to dismiss these as trivialities. Also, mystics universally distrust the personal input of the ego, which they say contaminates this kind of vision. (For example, the vision of Catherine of Siena was based on a historical person called Catherine of Alexandria. This proves that egoknowledge had seeped into the vision.)

This vision of Catherine, however, did manifest her passage into a new level of spirituality. This was that phase of inner growth which Richard of St. Victor (1123-1175) called the "third stage of ardent love."

This Love was vividly related by St. Theresa. She had a vision of an angel with a spear. He stabbed her in the heart, and ignited her heart, setting it ablaze with the "Love of God." The pain was great, but, she says, also "sweet." (This pain was not physical, but spiritual.)

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 98/ AUTOMATIC WRITING, INSPIRATION, AND MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

When God moves through the keyboard, the book produces itself. God has been moving through pens and other writing instruments for millennia. This is undoubtedly the source of the world's greatest poetry and scriptures. It is also the source of some exquisite mystical writings, although rarer than expected.

Blake (1757-1827), the noted poet, and the selfstyled "mystic" Madam Guyon (1648-

1717) are incidents of this kind of unconscious scripting. Of course, automatic writing does not require any sort of supernatural explanation. It is simply the unconscious Mind's being granted, by the conscious mind, access to the instruments of writing.

And the spiritual pen has been, by far, mightier than the sword. Mystics almost never laid claim to any kind of automatic writing, and regarded it with the same healthy and dubious skepticism with which they regarded cheap parlor tricks or fads promoted in the name of spirituality. Still the mystics will admit freely that their own writings emerge from deeper, unconscious levels of Mind, without conscious control--the very definition of genuine automatic writing.

The accounts of the mystics tended to "write themselves." They were "inspired." Mystics acted only as transmitters of, media for, the deepest Mind. This is the Way in which they wanted to live their lives twenty-four seven. St. Catherine of Siena (died 1380) is the archetype of the mystic who communicates from deeper Mind levels. For she dictated to a secretary while in the deep state of ecstasy. This state of absorption was a trance-state, and the writing bears all the hallmarks of automatic composition.

Automatic writing can be simply the confused and confusing meanderings and babelian babblings of an unclear, illucid mind. This gibberish is circular if complex. Many words are used to say few things. The writing is redundant, incredibly obscure, polysyllabic and superfluous. It makes an art of muddy obfuscation. Most often, these people act as if they are being paid by the word. They will never say in a few words what they can say, with greater obscurity, in a thousand. Even with this massive multiplication of words, however, one can't help but feel that most of it is "filler" at best, gibberish at worst. Far too many "automatic" writers and channelers talk/write too much, but say nothing.

The mystics were not this type of lazy, indulgent person whose only aim was to impress others. This is an egobased travesty and counterfeit of true spirituality. The mystic Merswin (1307-1382), in some ways one of the more questionable of mystics, illustrates some of these styles. And Blake (1757-1827) came right out and claimed that his writing was under the control of other, spiritual minds, souls, or spirits, whom he called his "celestial friends."

There is a great chasm between frauds/phonies and mystics. The former don't trust themselves to take responsibility for their writings or speech, because they believe, deep down, that they are worthless, and not worth anything. They have nothing worth hearing. So, their "channeling" is just a way to make themselves feel important, while still giving in to low self-esteem. (It is quite an elegant solution.) Mystics have, by contrast, never claimed absurdities, such as the "channeling" of extraterrestrials or dead people. Instead, they have spoken for the Absolute, without the need for intermediaries.

She might not always understand what flows through her mind. St. Theresa (1515-



1582) likened herself to a parrot, who repeats words but hasn't the foggiest notion of verbal meaning. Like other inspired people, she wrote swiftly, without hesitation, and without corrections. She wrote in an entranced state, absorbed in the Absolute. Most of her ideas were foreign, alien, or completely unknown to her conscious mind. During inspired writing, the mind of the writer seems blank. In fact, the emptier the conscious mind, the greater the creativity and productivity. It is like a kind of inner "hearing," or audiorevelation. The mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) wrote this way in his book *Aurora*, in 1610. Its production was spontaneous, uncontrollable, and quite rapid. Still, its final content was not free of the input (contamination) of his conscious mind.

If the inner vision is still literally optorevelational (visual), then the exalted mystical state called "freedom from images" has not yet arrived. The mystic is still, obviously, in the illuminative Way, not yet the unitive Way. She must strive against any tendency towards superstitious reverence for the mere image. Her desire is to avoid this idolatry. For she will worship only what the image represents-- the inner, invisible Absolute.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 99/INTROSPECTION, ATTENTION, AND CONTEMPLATION: THE DYNAMIC TRAINING OF A MYSTIC

\*\*\*

Deep within the dark canyons and caverns of the mind the mystic floats, on an exploratory mission. Introspection and introversion are the factors that define the mystical path. For mysticism is the remaking or restructuring of consciousness. And since aware mind floats upon the ocean of the unconscious Mind, its darkest, scariest levels must be exhaustively, exhaustingly explored before luminous metamorphosis into Supermind can occur.

This dark inner continent has been mined for millennia. The major terrain and mindscapes have yielded glittering, sundrenched treasures. Recognizable landmarks have been catalogued. Major trails have been carved out. But still, each explorer must find her own way through the tangled and complex mindworld. Each pioneer follows the guideline of Chuang Tzu, who wrote, "A path is formed by walking on it."

So, mysticism is facing the unforgiving storms, rivers, and rugged terrain of the inner forests and cliffs. It is never just reading about, or admiring, the Quests and treks of others.

What has emerged from all these inner voyages? It is a common, but dormant,

factor, destined to emerge as supreme. This is: the Coremind, Essence, Spark of the soul, inner Spirit, Absolute, Ultimate, or Superconscious Mind. When the mystic awakens to its reality, her inner journey has begun.

Selfdefinition or identity is, in time, revised. With the passage of a little more time, a new life begins to overcome the sense-dominated and worldcontrolled "marionette" self. This accompanies the most powerful, lucid, and ecstatic sense of freedom/liberation. The mystic life is actually a life process that creates a resonant and entrained harmony between the self and Reality. The being of the mystic is in continual Flow, or adjustment. Periodically, she must be "fine-tuned," and this occurs through involuntary inner shifts. Her entire life is transformed into one long schooling in the mystical arts.

Contemplation--the regular discovery of the inner still, clearmind-- is the major tool of the blossoming mystic. Contemplation creates inner clearmind. And this clearmind becomes the natural medium through which the divine Love expresses Itself. Clearmind is a magnified, enhanced form of withdrawal of attention from the "outer, material" world. It involves a shift of the entire focus and concentration. It is created by a shift of the whole Mind to an inner Target. At first, this Target is undiscovered and unexplored. So, at the start, mysticism begins with a blind inward-turning, seeking for it knows not what. It all starts with blind feeling around "inside your head," even if you have no idea what's in there! The key is focus, to concentrate every micropsychon of mindenergy on a single target. So, beginning mystics often start with attentionfocusing on a candle flame, a geometric form, or a mantra.

In time, and as the mystic becomes accustomed to the inner mindscapes, she begins to release a natural faculty for perception and enjoyment of the good and the beautiful in her own psyche. In time, she forms linkups with interior goodness and beauty that, later, will lead her inevitably into a state of union with the inner Absolute.

Contemplation is the stilling of chatter of the conscious mind. It is the method that permits subtle factors to be felt. Without this increased sensitivity to inner factors, the journey inward would not be possible. It is an art, and growth in this art is created by education of the conscious mind. But more importantly, real growth occurs through actual experience. No one who just hears about mysticism automatically becomes a mystic. No amount of booklearning can make a mystic. A mystic is like a dreamer. To be a dreamer, one must actually dream. To be a mystic, one must have at least some inner experience relevant to the Way.

Studies of mysticism affect only the relatively shallow conscious mind. They might constitute a kind of technical training. But one would prefer not to be operated on by a new physician who has only read textbooks. As in many other fields, then, it is experience that counts.

New mystics do not begin with fullblown mystical experiences. They spend as much time as possible in meditation or contemplation. Usually, they keep dreamjournals. They become cognitively aware of conscious and unconscious thoughtpatterns. In short, they are **always** actively engaged in the study of Mind--through the only accessgates available, their own minds.

Mysticism, in short, involves structuring of life and time, and overall discipline. Nor is the mystic ever "perfected," but spends her entire life cultivating higher and higher states of inner consciousness, perfecting the twin arts of stilling and Love. Mysticism demands hard work, training, and exposure to conducive stimuli such as this book.

The mystic Way develops over time, parallel to the mystic's cultivation of inner vision and expressions of Love. Most of all, it demands a graduated, incremental training of the will. The human will is incredibly stubborn and tenacious. It expresses at every opportunity, in memories, opinions, control attempts, overtalk, assumptions, judgments, and preferences. The ego often expresses through voice. So, an appropriate, but moderate, mystical exercise is "Voluntary Minimal Speech." )See Appendix 1.)

This simple list represents just a part of the inner "garbage" that the mystic has to "haul away" from her mind. It is only with the death, or neutralization, of her personal will that the mystic can turn her life over to the Absolute. This "thy will be done" training is among the most challenging. Many releases must be performed by the mystic. Her inner journey is long, twisted, and often stormy.

All this is the price of absolute freedom and bliss. With her eyes on the prize, the mystic knows that all her hard work will be like exchanging dust for gold, dust, for diamonds. For her reward is nothing less than an eternity of ecstasy!

Without this training, people tend to become simple quietists, lazy, unproductive pseudomystics who enrich the world not at all. A real mystic, by contrast, will always be expressing Love, and, in this way, enriching all life on the planet. The true mystic stands ahead of her time, and guides her culture. But she need not be a radical rejectionist, repudiating everything that is considered mainstream. The mystic is already so unique within that she does not have to play silly "look at me" games to show how "special" she is. She does not have to be either radical or reactionary.

For the real mystic, simple awareness that the Absolute exists is not enough. She must practice assiduously its regular contemplation. She must continuously turn her thoughts, and attention, to It. Whenever her thoughts are not otherwise engaged intellectually, she responds to the need to contemplate her inner Beloved. This is the real mystical meaning of "devotion." Love comes first, and she never stops thinking about It, concentrating on It, and yielding to It. She is rapt in a selfforgetting attentiveness whenever her life permits it. In time, this leads to selfmerging or mindmeld.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 100/ THE VANISHING OF THE SELF INTO LOVE

\*\*\*

Every nanopsychon, during every nanosecond of her life, the mystic turns towards the inner Beloved. It is allconsuming. In concentrating on the God/Goddess within, she turns off all competing signals from the world. She stops thinking.

As she does this, sometimes she enters an altered state in which she notices that things are slowing down. This is actually because she is being revved up, speeded, by her contemplation. When this phenomenon kicks in, the renounced world intensifies, as its signal become stronger, more lucid, and brighter. Every sense becomes amplified, enhanced, and more vivid. Still, she relentlessly returns her focus to the inner Absolute. She might have to do this over and over again. In time, as she retains relentless focus, the barriers or membranes between herself and her inner Beloved begin to melt away, vaporize, vanish. This is Mindmeld, fusion, unification, or "communion" with the Beloved.

When she touches this state, she finds that **everything** has sublime and celestial, transcendental qualities. The whole world becomes good, pure, beautiful, and perfectly balanced. Then her Beloved is seen in the entire world. A profound, bottomlessly tranquil, invincible serenity and Love arise within her heart, and it is as if she were "in Love" with everything and everyone. This is the point described by some mystics as the "mystic marriage" between the soul and Spirit.

The conscious mind enters a deep, unruffled stillness, and its many pingponging interests are at last quieted, as the mind settles into placidity. Reflective, discursive, and analytical thought all disappears, and Mind sinks into soft, glowing liquid Mind. The inner vision is awakened only in, and by, the suspension of the multiple functions of the conscious mind. Underhill notes that, in humble receptivity, emotions, will, and thoughts are all lost together. They vanish into higher and peaceful Mind.

In another form of contemplation, the mystic goes even further inward-- so deeply that the "outer" world is completely forgotten. That is, instead of being transformed into beauty, the "outer, material" world simply is not a consideration. At the very beginning, all attention is diverted from that world and concentrated on **only** the Beloved. **All** faculties are riveted upon the invisible, intangible Core, Essence, or Center of being.

To do this completely, with devotion, the mystic must remove the final obstacle. "Nothing stands between God and yourself," say the Eastern mystics, "but yourself." So that she does not cast shadows in the perfect Light of Love, she must disappear without a trace into the great Flow of that Lovemind. She must yield to what mystics

call "sinking into your nothingness." She must vanish into higher Mind. This is utter humility, but also complete rationality. For all that is real within her comes from this ultimate Reality. Everything else is phony, illusion, and so, by losing herself, she really loses nothing. In fact, she gains everything.

So, she moves to an inner state of blankness. She becomes like an empty white sheet of paper on which nothing has been written, and offers herself, in truest selfsacrifice, to her beloved in order that He might scribe on the tablet of her heart His own infinite Love. There is no room here for cleverness, hyperkinesis, busy-ness, or overanalysis. Like a flower, like a bird, like a nursing infant, she just lets go, and is carried on the wings of Love to higher and higher union with her inner Beloved.

This stunned, ecstatic gazing into the Ground and Source of the soul is called "introversion." This introversion is an artform which can be learned by anyone, but which will be learned only by those who have the temperamental propensity for it. The awakening to the existence of the deeper Self, and rebirth as that very Self, must precede introversion. In its earliest phases, the practice of this introversion is voluntary or deliberate. It can be quite difficult, especially for the mind unaccustomed to concentration. But with the passage of enough time, new habits are formed. When this happens, the mind naturally drops into a state of contemplation even involuntarily, automatically. With the passage of still more time, the power of the inner stillness can surpass even that of the egowill.

What is the practical use of this inner focus? Take as example the use of the mantra-- a repeated simple phrase designed to create inner focus. In the beginning, it is quite weak. Habitual thoughts keep erasing and overcoming it. But with practice, the phrase becomes stronger. In time, one finds the mind returning to it whenever it is not otherwise occupied. It is the normal baseline for the mystic, to which she effortlessly returns. In time, after she uses the mantra, she will be able, in the midst of a hurricane of emotional forces, to return to the inner stillness created by the mantra. It will be stronger than those forces, and will overcome them. The mantra, her access to inner stillness, will have the power to take her to this inner space even when stresses are reaching the pressure-cooker screamingpoint.

It is when meditational stillness has become her natural state that the mystic draws real strength from it. At that point, autonomous, spontaneous mystical states can appear. When this happens, the conscious mind can feel that it has encountered a tsunami of unconscious force, and can literally be swept away into a sea of Love. During that period, the person is cut off from the "material, external" world. The result is a rapidly spiralling rapture or ecstasy.

This kind of mystical experience is the result of much training, and the guided use of timenergy. This kind of force must spend some time incubating in the unconscious Mind before it has the power to produce genuine ecstasy. The conscious mind, by its chosen focus, can increase its intrinsic Power, creating an even more volcanic

mystical experience. By the time this ecstasy occurs, it comes abruptly.

Surprisingly, although mystical training in meditation/contemplation can prepare the Way for the coming of the mystical experience, the actual experience is not forced or cajoled into being by meditation. Instead, it is the result of a sudden, spontaneous upwelling of energy, probably karmically determined, in which all the world is transcended.

The regular practice of meditation is a continuous reminder of the immanence of God, and so is itself of great value. Also, it takes one into an inner space wherein the mystical experience is likely to be felt, or to occur. As Bernard (1090-1153) reminds us, God is "not only with us, but within us." Julian (died 1416) also: "He is enclosed in us."

There are two patterns in which the act of union manifests: 1) "outgoing," or exteriorized, ecstatic and uncontrollable, and 2) the "ingoining," which is more regulable, and gradually breaks down barriers or membranes that seem to separate us from the inner Beloved. The mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) calls this union of Love the "summit." When this state of consciousness is complete, distinctions between "inner" and "outer" become meaningless and symbolic, and simply disappear. "To mount to God is to enter into oneself," says Underhill. To go sufficiently deeply into the Self is to go beyond the self. To enter the self completely is to enter the Creator, and therefore, the cosmos itself.

To the intellect, which is not very swift, this seems like nothingness. But to the heart, it is the utter fulfillment of all desire.

This touching of the inner Beloved occurs "when the soul returns into itself," said Plato (5th century B.C.). He called this inner space "the region of that which is pure and everlasting.... Feeling itself kindred thereto, it dwells there under its own control." But, with all his wisdom, Plato managed to miss an important truth. For he thought the convergence-point between the Absolute and the mind to be the head, and not the heart. This gave rise to "philosophical contemplation," a series of intellectual exercises. Those who practice this "have not for their end increasing of divine love in their hearts," noted Augustine Baker (1575-1641).

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 101/ MYSTICAL PRAYER AND STAGES OF THE INNER JOURNEY

\*\*\*

The world's "most successful" person might well be a poor, unsung hero of Love, an ordinary person known by no one, but who knows her inner Self. Mystical success demands aggressive attention to inner Reality. It also involves unwavering Love.

In summary, the mystic Way involves: 1) moving beyond the ego and social identity, 2) conquering or sublimation of the egolife and lower (including the animal)

nature ,

3) transformation and metamorphosis of the entire being and Mind through elevated consciousness, and 4) the discovery of illimitable and boundless freedom.

The many and varied steps on the path to divine Mind are called by Christian mystics the "degrees of prayer," or "of orison"-- a mystical word for the interior prayer of silence.

Mystical "prayer" is not the same as traditional "prayer." For mystical orison (prayer) does **not** involve formality in addressing God, but rather, warm and intimate affection. It does **not** involve begging or asking for personal favors, for God knows everything that we need. It is **not** regarded as duty, but pleasure. This prayer has nothing to do with trying to change God's behavior, change God's mind, or magically affect the structure or function of the world. It is "naught else but yearning of souls," according to the mystical book *The Mirror of St. Edmund*.

Since the soul is already unified with the Spirit, mystical orison is not communication at all. Communication is unnecessary where there is already communion. So, it is a sharing of pleasure, an act of Love, between mind and soul, or soul and Spirit. It is also a time for increasing wisdom. "I discover all truth in the interior of my soul," wrote the mystic Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680).

Sometimes, this experience is all light and joy, and sometimes, dark and bare. But since the mystic has no expectations or demands, both symbolic descriptions allude to the discovery of inner treasure and beauty. The mystic sees her prayer as the coming together of two dear and mutual friends, not as ameba and elephant, for she is equal in nature and potential with the God whom she so loves and worships. Mystics have been known to have passed a whole day and night in this orison, describing it as "so sweet."

The mystical prayer sometimes takes another form: It can be a placid, trustful waiting for messages. In the West, we learn to talk to God, but never to listen for His/Her answer. Our religions tend to be so egocentric that, when we are finished speaking, we assume that the prayer is over. But if verbal prayer is talking to God, then the prayer of silence, which involves no words, is listening for His/Her answer. Underhill describes this as "a wordless rapture." This is the "orison of silence." For the highest and best mystical prayer has no words.

This kind of intense interior concentration implies a complete turning inward of all the senses. This is a movement away from the manifested many to the unmanifested "One," the inner Coremind, Creator, or Superconscious.

The mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) recommends not letting the "eye of thy spirit enter into matter, or fill itself with anything whatever, either in heaven or on earth." He suggested the alternative of entry, "by a naked faith, into the life of the Majesty." Walter Hilton (died 1396) calls the resulting state "inward stillness," and this summarizes fully the nature of mystical prayer.

Mystics do not dignify the "two-minute ritual" which most identify as "prayer" with that exalted designation. In fact, mystics do not need, or practice, the "tmr," or "two-minute ritual." Hilton comes close to the elevated, supernal, exquisite transcendence of mystical prayer when he refers to it as "burning in love, and shining in light."

The most important part of inner selftraining in mysticism is a progressive, incremental, gradual selfemptying of all that is not real, or all that is not Love. This permits, in time, an image-free touching of inner Reality, the Absolute. So, when mystics speak of "nothingness," "emptiness," or "life naughted," they are referring to this state of inner stillness and clarity. Without this state, one could never be "filled" with Love. To get to this state involves a relentless erasure of visual and sensory imagery, leading to inner hunger or poverty. All sources of illusion must be squarely faced and shut down.

James Hilton offers a remarkably simple, hence, clear formula for the progressive steps of the mystic: 1) knowing, 2) loving, and 3) knowing and loving.

Theresa (1515-1582) describes four steps: 1) meditation, 2) quiet, 3) intermediate, and 4) union.

Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1142) has these four: 1) meditation, 2) soliloquy, 3) consideration, and 4) rapture.

Three steps listed by Underhill are: 1) recollection, 2) quiet, and 3) contemplation. Recollection begins in meditation. In time, it develops into one-pointed concentration, simplicity, and inner quiet. As quiet deepens over time, it evolves into true contemplation.

These three steps are parallel to the great Way of the mystic, as divided into its three basic parts: Recollection accompanies purification or the Way of purgation. Quiet accompanies the second great Way, the Way of illumination. Contemplation parallels the third great Way of mysticism, the unitive Way.

Recollection brings the mind into subjection to Love, quiet silences the egowill, and contemplation engages the heart of Love.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 102/ REVIEW OF SOME MYSTICAL STAGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

\*\*\*

Ooc is a terrible place to be. Say most, who are terrified by the thought of being "out of control." But mystics look this same goliathdragon in the teeth, and smile. In fact, they rush to embrace it, smiles all the way. All of mysticism is, in essence, a handing over of the controls. They move voluntarily from the egomind to a deeper and wiser Mind.

Consciousness sinks into the blissful inner silence in which Love can reassure that



all is well. For Love continuously touches and interfaces with both Mind and world. The soul, in turn, bridges mind with Spirit. The egomind is not at all comfortable here at first. It is terrified out of its wits. But, in time, it finds that even its own "death" is not the horror envisaged by an overactive imagination.

Ultimate surrender is a giving up of even thought. The midnight of thought is the dawn of enlightenment.

The mystic passes through various stages. Again, in summary, they look like this: In meditation, the mystic turns every nanopsychon of her attention inward. She must do this over and over. When inner stillness is reached, the stilling of the senses awakens unconscious forces that catapult her forward and inward. Later, all personal and selfish activities are abandoned as distractions. Still later, the attitude becomes perfectly receptive, the ultimate "yin" state of Taoism. One is fully open to the cosmos whatever it might bring, and prepared not to judge it in terms of polarities (good and evil, desirable and undesirable, etc.).

How does the mystic evaluate her progress along the long and winding inner road of enlightenment? It is measured by the quality and quantity of her Love. Love must be, but must not be **only**, a warm feeling. But Love always has another factor: It must express itself in real, practical acts of service. The "I-me-my-mine" complex grows still in the quiet of surrender, loses power, and starts the long process of abdication of its sole and supreme sovereignty. Ego loses power, and starts the slow process of evanescing.

The mystic begins to express at last the latent Ultimacy or Absolutism that dwells within. She does this by the perfection of Love, expressed as service and as friendship. In time, the self is restructured, remade, recreated in the image of the Absolute, as Love. When she reaches this exalted state, every act of contemplation becomes an act of actual union. Every act of union is an act of transformative surrender to Love.

The mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) wrote, "Carried above ourselves, above reason, into the very heart of love," we are fed by the Spirit. We are, he wrote, "taking flight for the godhead, by naked love." He also wrote, "We are brought forth by God, out of our selfhood, to the immersion of love ..."

Recollection is the very beginning of introversion. It is a voluntary act, not a following of instinct. It is created by Love, and guided by reason. The strenuous exercise of an iron will is needed to bring the mind and will under the law of Love. This is the most difficult aspect of mysticism. In its beginning, the "voice" of the senses still drowns out the "voice" of the Spirit. All antiagapic (counterlove) images are deliberately expelled from consciousness, which is simplified to one point. (Mystical "recollection" has nothing to do with remembering, as in psychology.) This is that intense inward gathering in of all the senses described earlier. Recollection begins with meditation. The powerful focus of consciousness is kept continually

before the mind's eye by an act of will. The self sinks deeply into itself. Except for the Subject, consciousness seems blank. God enters into the mind, and the mind enters itself.

The next great stage of orison (inner or mystical prayer), after withdrawal inward of the senses, is inner silence. This is also called "quiet." Here, the mystic tends to glide into a new state of perception, which is indescribable. All reflective thoughts and ideas are suspended. The self opens to a broad and wide receptivity. It is filled with sweet silence and profound stillness.

The intellect can't keep up with, or even describe, what is happening. It can only yield to Love, allowing a larger will to direct it, to take over. Discursive, verbal, analytical thought vanishes. The inner door to the sensual world is tightly shut and sealed, as the self is immersed in a much more real inner world. Utter, bottomless tranquillity dawns and fills the soul with the sweet light of invincible serenity. Focus on the Absolute is automatic and effortless. Total surrender leads to a complete sense of relief and release from all tension, stress, and strain. The egoself begins its deathprocess, as the Mind moves from doing to being. Although consciousness of personality remains, the "material, external " world seems very far away.

If the deprivations are too abrupt, they might cause the mind to dwell on what it feels that it has lost. This is also called the "naked orison," as the mystic feels stripped of all things, and there is a sense of waiting. Deprivation is followed by satiation, satisfaction, fulfillment, and contentment. The field of consciousness might be completely emptied, followed by a sweet calm and gentle silence. All images, even symbols of the

Absolute, disappear. Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) writes, "The soul ... must call home all her powers, and collect them from all divided things....A man... must pour all his inward powers into himself.... He must come into a forgetting, and a not knowing. ...When one knows nothing, it is opened and revealed."

He also writes, "The best and noblest way that thou mayest come into this work and life is by keeping silence, and letting God work and speak."

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 103/ QUIETISM: PHONY MYSTICISM

\*\*\*

Death of the ego does not mean that mystics are zombies or inert bumps on logs. They are not inactive catatonics, lost within an inner world. They are neither couchpotatoes nor computer mousepotatoes. Mystics are creative, active, bright, productive people.

The idea that a simple deadening of the brain has value is a twisted distortion of real mysticism, a lazy pseudomysticism called "quietism." Quietists promote the lie

that all that one has to do is empty the mind, and sit, glassy-eyed, in some kind of trance-state. But real mystics teach that, after the self is undone, unselfed, or emptied, it is once again filled, resurrected, reborn.

This is where mysticism rejects quietism. For mysticism teaches that the mystic will always be moved and motivated by a fantastic, all-embracing Love. In this way, historically, mystics have not just walled themselves off in caves or closets. They have returned to the world of human beings, that active world, to become health-caregivers, ministers, poets, social activists, philosophers, teachers, scientists, inventors, artists, and a spectrum of other contributors to the earthvillage, to make everyone richer by their creativity.

Mysticism is highlighted by enthusiasm, even exuberance. It is breath-taking and exhilarating. It is actively and joyfully embraced, not just passively endured.

Let us be clear: The goal of mysticism is not a blank consciousness. The only reason that the mind is emptied is so that it can be again filled-- this time, by Love. The mystic's goal in giving herself up, in surrendering, is not to die, to commit spiritual suicide, but so that she might be metamorphosed in beauty, goodness, light, and Love. Her goal is to become the perfect will-free instrument of perfect Love in this world. Like a computer keyboard, chainsaw, or any other instrument, she realizes that she could not be effectively "used" by the Mind of Love if she insisted on a personal will, and an agenda of her own. She really wants to cooperate most fully with the Mind of Love for the good of the whole. So, her goal is not inner or spiritual death, but life, and more abundant life.

The mystic realizes that if she becomes quiet for the sake of quiet, if she simply escapes, withdraws, or retreats into her mind without goal or direction, she could fall victim to the perverse notions of lazy, unproductive quietism. The mystic's goal is to become the container, vessel, or conduit of divine Love, to aid and help living creatures whenever, wherever, and however possible, to alleviate and lessen suffering, to bring peace.

The mystic is not seeking a drugged state of half-hypnotized passivity. The mystic is repelled by this distortion of her art. She has no interest at all in "becoming one" with nothing, in simply blinking out of existence.

Quietists, quite unlike mystics, use their numbed states to excuse themselves from the regular duties and obligations of human life. They are not only inertial, but escapist. Unlike mystics, they want to flee from an uncomfortable and challenging world. Mystics, by contrast, with their newly found Power, face each day with fascination, interest, and healthy anticipation, even though they are free from emotional expectations.

Quietism has been around since the Middle Ages, like the "evil twin" of mysticism. The mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) denounced it. He described it as mere "idleness," something which, as we have seen, **mysticism definitely is not**. Underhill beautifully

writes, "To let peaceful enjoyment swamp active love is a mystical vice." This leads only to spiritual deadends, and to absurdities such as complete indifference-- the opposite of active, committed Love. Love leads one to care sincerely for all creatures, but quietism leads only to complacency, a kind of irresponsivity, an inner deadness.

How, then, does quietism compare with the real "orison of quiet" that we discussed earlier? The true orison arises from the soul, and so, is not actively induced or forced by an act of will. It is not careless or weak selfabandonment. It is instead, in Underhill's words, "the free and constantly renewing self-giving and self-emptying of a burning love." In the mystical state, personality is not lost in a vague miasma of gray blandness. After their experience, mystics do not vegetate into colorless beings, but become more interesting, fascinating, and polychromatic than ever before. They also increase creativity, originality, and productivity exponentially.

In real mysticism, the state of inner stillness or quiet is a smaller part of a much larger picture. It is a phase of development. But in quietism, it is the endgoal of life. 'This is not lifenhancing, and so, by definition, it is unhealthy. There is **no** virtue, mystical or otherwise, in simply doing nothing.

In fact, taken to a logical extreme, quietism could actually imply that any goal-oriented spirituality is "bad" or really "unspiritual". So, quietism produces not only lazy people, but lazy snobs, who actually believe that they, because of their inactivity and unproductivity, are better than others.

In mysticism, no state quite accurately and precisely analogous exists to the quiet in quietism, but the most similar, the ones that mystics call by the same name, is not a goal, but a state of inner preparation. This is a deeply dynamic quietude, to prepare the groundwork for further work.

Again, Ruysbroeck: "The possession of God demands ... active love."

Love is never indifferent, and to allow the mind/soul to remain dead, immobile, or paralyzed is no spiritual virtue. In other words, Love prevents and prohibits quietism. Theresa (1515-1582) described it accurately as "a death."

It would be a great disservice to the Way of mysticism to ignore or to dismiss its highly active and activating components of Love. That would be to leave out its very heart, its reason for being. Mysticism without Love is like a day without orange juice. Actually, its' more comparable to a bird without wings. Without energizing Love at both its core and its periphery, it simply cannot be mysticism.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 104/ INNER STEPS TO THE MIRACLE OF CONTEMPLATION

\*\*\*

Hells and heavens are interlocked in an eternal struggle for control. This is the

great drama of the human heartmind. Exploration of this most volatile place in the universe is as dangerous, in its own way, as flying into supernovas or blackholes. For there are as many dangers in inner space as in outer space.

Contemplation, as we have seen, is the major tool or vehicle for this exploration. It consists of a series of states called introversion (a simple going inward). The practice of the states we have earlier discussed, recollection and quiet, constitute much of the mystic's path. They create states of inner stillness that allow unconscious forces, energies, factors, and materials to surface to conscious awareness. This opens up many channels of communication with various levels of the inner Mind, the unconscious, by the conscious mind.

The true mystic is always marked by one supreme event: She has come into true, if temporary, union with the inner Absolute. This Absolute is also called Reality because the Mind is more real than matter. For the Mind, as Dreamer, or Absolute, is Source, and the material world simply a product of Mind.

Recollection is the collective name for a number of smaller steps used to train the mystic in the art of attention. These small steps also serve to lift the self to new levels of perception. In other words, after the practice of recollection, entirely new worlds of light and joy blossom in her heartmind. The invisible suddenly is seen clearly everywhere, as in every cubic millimeter of space, she detects the previously undetectable.

The states that follow recollection are called the "degrees of quiet." After passing through these, the mystic moves into a state of deep stillness. Here, she finds comfort and solace. These arise from Love, the Fountain of the water of life, at the Center of being.

The mystic is finally ready, through deeper contemplation, to move beyond even these stages. Contemplation appears in two varieties: 1) infused, or 2) acquired. The "infused" variety can explode from the unconscious Mind. It often floats up spontaneously from where it has been incubating in either the personal unconscious or the soul-level. Acquire contemplation is at least partly the result of preparations made, and techniques followed, by the conscious mind to make reception of the mystical experience more likely.

Contemplation can, on its best days, lead to the "orison of union." It usually leads the mystic to an inner state in which the senses are ignored or shut down. All knowledge of the external world can be temporarily lost during these states. Often, the mystic is in an altered state during contemplation, generally called "trance." (Actually, this word connotes a spectrum of related states, which have in common a kind of sensory shutdown.) Sometimes, this trance-state can lead to a deeper state, called "rapture," or a related state, "ecstasy."

Since contemplation is voluntarily initiated, rapture and ecstasy differ from it, as they are involuntary. The state of ecstasy is literally irresistible.

Contemplation, at its highest point, becomes the "orison of union." It is still influenced by the personal will.

Contemplation might simply be defined as "supreme knowing." This is no just ordinary "knowing," in the sense of learning, memorization, or datagathering. This is the special immediate, direct, experiential knowing of divine or ultimate Mindreality indicated by the special words *jnana* in Sanskrit and *gnosis* in Greek.

In contemplation, a dramatic fusion of will and Love takes place, so that the will of Love becomes that of the mystic. Perception (what the mystic learns about the environment) and feeling also fuse and become one single process. So, contemplation cannot be an act of separated reason. It must be an act of the entire being of the mystic. Occurring under the full brightness of Love, contemplation feeds the soul.

Contemplation is an induced altered state in which attention, concentration, the entire field of consciousness, become sharply narrowed, often to a single religious or sacred symbol. All energy, focused like a laser, begins to pour inward, towards the Center, towards the Absolute.

New levels of wisdom and Love are energized, and the mystic made aware of some layers of Mind that were previously unconscious.

One of the most outstanding revelations of contemplation is that almost nothing matters. This pervasive and very profound sense of divine indifference gives rise to an immense, overriding sense of powerful peace and serenity, and makes the mystic high. One enjoys the certainty of fully knowing the truth of this revelation. And that stunning revelation is this: Only Love, and the many things having to do with Love, matters. Nothing else does. This startling awareness is accompanied by a sense that the psyche has been lifted up, ennobled, elevated. There is a glorious sense of transcendence, of being the center of your own universe, and of no longer seeing yourself as merely another object among objects.

The second stunning factor of contemplation is that the consciousness of "Ihood" and of the world disappear. The mystic is immediately initiated into a personal, new, and Love-based relationship with the cosmos. At this point, she might feel a sense of even "falling in Love" with everyone and everything-- an action and state that can propel her into ecstasy.

In this way, contemplation can be said to be both knowing and being, which, in the end, are one and the same. She actually is that which she knows. A sense of a tsunami of beauty, goodness, and Love carry the mystic on a pure river of Love, and these qualities seem increased a billionfold.

This vision of contemplation is so incredibly intense that it can be sustained by the nervous system only for a flash, an instant. But what is known and experienced during those micromoments leaves an imprint that becomes a part of the mystic forever, changing her for the better, healing her soulmind.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 105/ THE MYSTERY AND ECSTATIC BEAUTY OF CONTEMPLATION

\*\*\*

The human mind is part zoo, part Eden, part hell, and part heaven. Mystics have as their unenviable task the cataloging and description of the dustiest, most obscure nooks, crannies, and caverns within the ultracomplex structure of Mind. Terms such as "contemplation" don't help terribly, for they tend to be far too general/generic. For example, the word "contemplation," so common in mystical literature, does not even represent a single clearly defined state. Instead, it is a collective word, describing an entire spectrum of related altered states. Further, to complexify matters, each of these many states is modified by temperament, and further altered by feelings. These states range from almost complete stillness to the fringe of frenzy, in ecstasy. The spectrum goes all the way from "life naughted" to "indescribable bliss."

"Contemplation" is also a part of any number of complex mental and spiritual recipes or mixtures. At times, it is blended with various intellectual factors. At other times, it is melded into feelings. Its stirred in with a wide variety of parapsychical and parapsychological phenomena, such as voices or messages. Sometimes it refers to purest, most pristine, undisturbed and uncontaminated consciousness. In a different context, it is itself the stillness that makes possible other events as a kind of backdrop. It also precedes conditions as the "void," a "blank," or "darkness."

The twists and turns in consciousness are wily, unpredictable, and, at times, deadly. Sometimes a mystic will pass through the darkness into the light, but other times, will make such peace with the darkness that she will spend the rest of her life in that friendly, comfortable dark. Sometimes bliss dawns during another state, and sometimes, it is known only afterwards, in retrospect.

Fortunately, in the midst of all this uncertainty, there are two telltale marks that can help to identify the series of various states called "contemplation." These are: 1) The Object or Absolute gives Itself totally. And 2) the mystic merges, Mindmelds, or fuses with that Absolute.

First, the Mindmeld is the experience of the All. It is given, as an act of free Love, or grace, and not obtained by anything that the mystic does. (She has no control over it.) This Absolute is real, the real thing, not just a symbol, partial vision, component, or aspect.

Second, the Mindmeld is not just passive, but active-- not just observation, but active participation. Quietude and stillness are moved into the state of active selfdonation. Despite the fact that the mystic can do nothing, Reality is revealed to

her soul, and then, to her conscious mind. When this Reality is Selfdisclosed, the soul then rushes out eagerly to lose itself in It. Between infinite Mind and the mind of the mystic, a kind of diffusion takes place, as Mind bleeds into mind, and vice-versa. This pressure causes the construct of the ego, the "Ihood" of the mystic, to explode. Then, it evaporates in the "passive union" of contemplation.

When she touches, and while she experiences, this Absolute, ineffable joy floods the mind of the mystic. Why is this? Because ultimate Reality, this Absolute, is Love. And nothing in the universe can so readily move a being towards complete, utter fulfillment and joy as Love. It pushes all the mystic's buttons at once, electrifies her, and overloads her circuitry with a hyperblast of sheer energy.

The ancient mystic Plotinus (205-70 B.C.) repeats yet again the familiar complaint of the mystic as she seeks to describe the strange feeling of the "Beyond within," or the "inner Other": "For how can a man describe as other than himself That which, when he discerned It, seemed not other, but one with himself?" The mystic Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) continued, in the medieval world, the best of the neoplatonic mystical tradition. He implies that there is nothing a person can do to create this state.

Most mystics agree. They say that the most that anyone can do is to prepare the "site," that is, the mind, for the coming of the experience. Just as a physician, no matter how skilled, cannot heal the body, but can only make conditions conducive to the body's healing of itself, so the mystic cannot make the mystical experience happen.

Some mystics went so far as to say that it was all up to divine grace. There is, no doubt, some truth to this, even if it might not be the whole truth. People who prepare for, and study actively, the mystical experience seem to have many more than average. On the other hand, people who have never even heard the word "mystic," who would not know a mystic from an ostrich, have been literally stopped dead in their tracks by a dazzling contemplative experience. So, factors of karmic destinarianism do seem to be at work, and relevant.

The greater truth is that the mystical experience is the one for which human nature most desperately longs. For it is utter fulfillment in Love. That is why it is also ecstasy. The rampant and destructive rage for sex on our planet is actually a twisted, perverted distortion of the need for this same Love. Hilton (died 1396) reflects all other mystics when he notes that the soul "burningly yearneth" for this experience, which he defined as "perfect love."

It seems that nothing in mysticism is ever simple or clearcut. In that way, mysticism is like life on earth. Specifically, mystics return from their mindazzling experience with descriptions that seem to be opposite polarities: They speak of "exceeding joy" and ecstasy, but they also talk of "exceeding emptiness" and "barren desert." What is going on here?



Over and over, contemplation produces these and similar sets of opposites. Part of the answer lies in the fact that a mystic filters her experience through her feelings, speaking, not literally as a scientist, but as a poet.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 106/ THE PARADOXICAL DESERT GARDEN: THE INNER DWELLING PLACE OF THE ABSOLUTE

\*\*\*

The poetry of ultimate Love is the language of the mystic. She describes the inner mindscapes with passion, fervor, and ardor. She is by no means beyond hyperbole, and even distortion, although she is never dishonest.

This style gives rise to some fascinatingly paradoxical descriptions-- and some mystics do have a pronounced attraction for paradox, and even contradiction. The "abyss," the "cloud of unknowing," and the "embrace of the Beloved" do not represent the Reality of the Absolute *per se*. Instead, they represent these phrases are designed to symbolize the **relationship** between the mystic and the Absolute. These are not accurate descriptions of an observed object, but impressions of feelings.

The contemplative experience is quite beyond the reach of any words. The mystic, completely unable to describe what she sees, ends up describing her own heart. The Absolute is not only unfamiliar, but is not even distantly related to convenient reference points or systems of ordinary thoughts, descriptions, or words. **Human beings simply have no language for this kind of experience.** Language was designed to describe interactions and relations between things. It was never designed to describe transcendental realities or exalted feelings and passions. **So, all descriptions of things mystical are symbolic.**

These descriptions, such as they are, can be divided into the following categories: 1) the strange, dark, unfathomable, the abyss of the unknown, of "pure being." This approach tends to be favored by metaphysical mystics. 2) The beloved companion of the soul. This approach is favored by those who emphasize a divine "personality."

In the first case, the greatness and ineffable glory are sharply contrasted with the mystic, who sees herself as microscopic. The Absolute is viewed as different, not just in degree, from others, but in kind. The dual response is awe and selfabasement. The mystic desires selfloss in the Absolute, the All, or infinity. The tsunami of parasensory vision is so overwhelming, the Love so magnificent, that it literally seems that any words that could be said would be blasphemy when compared with the real thing. This Absolute strikes the mystic as so wholly "Other," so magnificently ineffable, that even to attempt description would do violence to its indescribable beauty. To see Reality in this way, to encounter the Mind that is itself Reality, is to enter the "cloud of unknowing."

This is why mystical literature is so dynamic and vivid. It is not founded in traditions or dogmas, but in immediate experience. Those who describe this inner path have actually walked upon it. Every human being has, in the unconscious Mind, a memory of this glorious inner space. For we have all come from there. Mysticism, then, rouses what Underhill calls "a passionate nostalgia" in us. She calls this "a bitter sense of exile and loss." In having come to earth as mere human beings-- even though this is itself a kind of exalted privilege, especially for learning, we have lost much. For, before this life, we were all, at one time, beings of supernal and resplendent glory, souls of light. So, whenever our "old Home" is described, we naturally feel a sense of homesickness deep within the soul.

It was this ultrasweet inner space, so full of an ocean of light, bottomless peace, exalted ecstasy, and infinite Love that the mystics called the "Ground of our being." It's the "Home" not only of the Absolute, but of us all.

The mystic Tauler (1300-1361) describes this inner space as "desert and bare." This strikes us as odd, for we all remember it to be a place of abundant, overflowing beauty, lush, rich, and unbearably sweet. But then, he explains what he means by this description: "No thought has ever entered there."

So, despite the fact that this is a Garden of exquisite pleasure in the heart, from the viewpoint of intellect, it is empty. It is void of our usual discursive, analytical, linear, logical thinking processes, for it is these precisely that keep us out of this rich garden. So, from the perspective of thought alone does it seem bare. It is also barren of convenient reference-points which we call "spacetime." Time simply does not exist there. "And, since it is a mental "space," neither does literal space. Time and space existing relative to each other, both are gone in the inner garden of pleasure. Tauler says, "It is a simple and unchanging condition."

In this way do all the descriptions of this luxuriant place as barren and desolate suddenly make sense. Here, other laws also work differently. For the one possessing is also the one possessed, so that surrender is the same as ownership, and vice-versa.

So, in fully giving herself to God, God becomes hers; He belongs to the fully surrendered mystic. Other paradoxes abound in this dimension: the only way to know is to plunge unhesitatingly into the void of "divine ignorance." So, ignorance is knowing. This means that to know the divine mysteries of God, we must strip away all our superficial intellectual, linear, logical knowledge, mere data, not wisdom. Only when we are empty can we be filled, and here is the full emptiness of the mystic.

In a similar way, we must plunge headfirst into the inner darkness in order to find the Light. For the Absolute dwells so deeply in the unconscious Mind that we must pass through what seem like eons of darkness to at last touch this inner Light of Love. So, it is by embracing darkness that Light is found.

It is pure Love that has led the mystic into this timeless, spaceless world of being.

Here, the Fountain of Love infinitely operates as the oasis at the Center of the soul. This is the "peaceful Ground," the "flaming Heart of Reality."

By way of quick review, there are the following three kinds of mystic: Those who experience the Absolute as a state, process, and indescribably sweet wonder; those who know this Absolute as a person or personality; and those who combine these two methodologies.

Whichever interpretation the mystic embraces-- or all three--- she knows God the Absolute as perfect goodness and beauty, joy, rapture, and ecstasy, Light, life, and Love.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 107/ COSMIC CLOSURE: FINAL ECSTATIC UNION

\*\*\*

Love impels us into the arms of the Beloved. The embrace of the Beloved generates more and more powerful Love. So the mystical life is a selfsustaining circle of increasing radiance in Love. It is not merely in unthinkable transcendence that the mystic finds fulfillment, satisfaction, and contentment for the soul. Instead, it is in imbibing the nectar of indescribable sweetness and Love that cosmic closure is discovered.

The soul was created out of Love; only when it returns again to that Fountain of Love from which it was spawned has it completed its full spiritual and cosmic mission. To be filled forever with irresistible feelings of joy, rapture, ecstasy, affection, tranquillity, serenity, and Love is the very best "heaven" imaginable. It is so ultrasweet that this state is quite beyond all imagination. This immersion in, and saturation by, the uncreated and everlasting Light of Love is the highest ecstasy and most intimate communion possible. Even the very best and most intense experiences of Love on earth are only a microforetaste of this abiding and eternal glory of everlasting Love. Earthlove involves mind and body, and, more rarely, soul. But this heavenly Love engages every nanopsychon fully, with the blazing fire of a supernova and the intense concentration of a hyperlaser. Underhill writes of the joyfilled mystic, "Utter peace and wild delight , every pleasure-state known to man's normal consciousness, are inadequate to the description of her joy."

This communion, "above all things," is the ultimate "adorable friendship." Gone are the feelings of the ameba before the galaxy, those sentiments of microscopic insignificance that make the mystic feel like yesterday's bacterium. No, the mystic

embraces and is embraced by the Absolute as intimate friend. They are equals only in nature, and in the mystic's potential to fuse with the All of Love. And, she knows, it is in this fusion that she shall become that Absolute, hence, equal with it. For in total communion, which is total resolution and oneness, she will be indistinguishable from It. Her nature and Mind will be so inextricably interwoven with divine Mind that any energetic, psychic, or symbolic membranes or barriers between her and It will vanish. She will, at last, have returned Home.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

End of *Journey to the Center of the Soul: Mysticism Made Simple*, by Richard Shiningthunder Francis. For more information, feel free to contact the author at: [rmfrancis@juno.com](mailto:rmfrancis@juno.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*































