

**INTEGRATIVE TRANSCENDING
MYSTICISM BEYOND CONTEXT AND EXPERIENCE**

by

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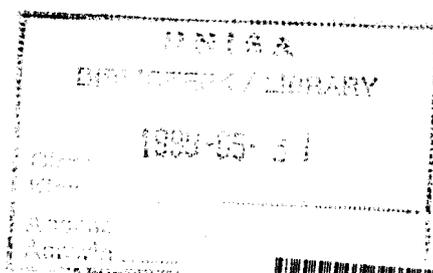
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"I declare that *Integrative Transcending: Mysticism Beyond Context and Experience*, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

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INTEGRATIVE TRANSCENDING

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Summary:

This study explores an interpretation of mysticism as a way of life that is a response to what the mystic conceives of as ultimate reality. The suggestion is that what lies at the centre of reality is the sense of a dynamic non-dialectic absence/presence. Mysticism is suggested to be an exploration of this centre of reality that takes the form of a conjoined movement of transcending and integrating. The argument of the study is developed in light of the contemporary approach that has made mysticism either totally grounded in the mystic's socio-linguistic context (Steven T. Katz) or detached from it in a 'pure consciousness event' (Robert K. C. Forman *et al*), both of which are primarily driven by a focus on mysticism as an experience. What is judged to have been overlooked in the contemporary discussion is that which is argued as being most endemic to mysticism, that is, the explorative life-enactment of that which the mystic conceives of as ultimate reality.

Key terms:

Mysticism - comparative studies; Religion; Ultimate Reality; Transcending; Integrating; Mystical life; Spiritual life

for Kitty . . . angel in disguise

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PREFACE

“The art of naming,” writes Frederick Buechner, “what a fatal art that is because if, on the one hand, to name a thing is to be able to address it, to appropriate it, to have a way of understanding it, it is, on the other hand, to erect a barrier between yourself and it which only on the rarest and most inspired occasions are you ever able to surmount again.”¹ Nothing could be closer to the truth than these words about the fatalistic shadows that hound all academic explorations of religion and especially of mysticism. To observe, becomes to objectify, so that the academician tends to be on the outside looking in. The result is that academic explorations of mysticism that do not allow for open-endedness, for the possibility of participation in what is being described, are thereby separated from the very thing being sought. The crux is to find a mode of expression that affirms both the need for naming and the need to leave the sense of mystery intact.

In many ways, this study has been an exercise in naming and therefore fraught with the danger that comes with this process. It is from this respect that I have been fortunate to have been guided by two mentors, professors Kobus Krüger and Eugene Peterson, who have both represented for me examples of the way of approaching speech and language in a manner that affirms the nature of the subject that this study explores. They have both given name to what is at hand but have also given room for my own exploration to take shape and form. For this I truly thank them.

I also wish to thank my family for giving up part of themselves so I could give myself to this task. Whatever accolades are due, rightly belong to them. I would also like to acknowledge the friendship and listening ear of Endré Kovacs who peered into the formation of this work at its gestation stage, and continues to listen to my inarticulate search for spirit.

If what has been written here does not cover sufficient ground, then it is perhaps a

¹ Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1982), 14.

reflection of the constraints that all beginnings must have. This study represents the beginning of what I hope will be a lifelong process that will grow to cover greater ground and have more depth. My reflections on eastern mysticism in particular, are more recent and therefore tentative. However, in the study, I have endeavoured to be balanced in my presentations of both western and eastern perspectives on mysticism. I might not have succeeded at maintaining this balance, but that was my intent. On the whole, I hope that my explorations intimate and argue something that seems to me, to present itself as there to be known, explored, and realized, as open mystery.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has begun to familiarize oneself with the mid and late twentieth century theoretical studies of mysticism will soon discover that there is one predominant question that has been the backdrop to most of these studies. To paraphrase Bernard McGinn, the question that one constantly sees recurring is: What is the nature of mystical experience and what may we know from it?¹ Though this is an important question to ask, what has happened to theoretical studies of mysticism in the latter half of the twentieth century is that the inordinate amount of attention given to the preceding question has tacitly become equated to the question: What is mysticism? The result has, not surprisingly, been definitions of mysticism that point to the requisite need for mystical experience and identify mystics as people who have or have had what could be called mystical experiences.² This tacit identification of mystical experience and mysticism masks a major distinction between them and therefore desperately calls for a reconsideration of how we interpret and understand mysticism. What this study will seek to assert is that mysticism, though encompassing mystical experience, does not equate to it but is rather the search for a way of life. The suggestion being made is that one could be a mystic and not have had a mystical experience in the general sense in which it has been interpreted. What is being argued is that the distinguishing characteristic of mysticism lies elsewhere, that is, it is something much more endemic to human religiousness than the contemporary arguments present. More than any other factor, this study argues that it is the mystic's conception of ultimate reality and the mystic's concession of how to be in contagion with it, that defines and structures what mysticism is. Key to this interpretation, for the mystic, is the

¹ Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 314.

² For some examples of this approach see the following: R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 31-35; Sallie B. King, "Two Epistemological Models for the Interpretation of Mysticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56.2 (1988), 258; Robert K. C. Forman, "Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism and Forgetting," in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. Robert K. C. Forman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 7.

sense of inherent identification with the ultimate ground of reality that the mystic is seeking. It is this that should be realised as the informing paradigm of mysticism and the mystical way of life. What this suggests, at the least, is that mysticism studies, especially those with a comparative focus, would be greatly enhanced by focusing the major part of their energies on what the mystics seem to suggest as the *essentia* of their devotion, that is, not mystical experience, but rather the mystical quest or life, informed by and grounded in what the mystic conceives of as ultimate reality. This approach to mysticism studies, much overlooked in the contemporary scenario, is what this study attempts to explore as a way of bringing a much needed balance to how we interpret and represent mysticism.

There is one further reason to forge another approach to mysticism studies of a theoretical nature. In addition to a focus on mystical experience, what has happened in the field equates to what may be called a stalemate between two predominant approaches on how to frame an answer to the previously noted question: What is the nature of mystical experience and what may we know from it? Steven T. Katz is the predominant figure who has made the determining move in this more recent development in the field of study. Beginning with the 1978 anthology edited by Katz, the presented argument has been that mystical experience is contextually determined and bound. In Katz's own words, "*there are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) mystical experiences*".³ To put it in mild terms, this thesis has been found untenable by a number of scholars. Gradually, the respondents to Katz's thesis have formed an alliance and published multiple articles and an anthology to counter the newly received view. The counter personage in the ensuing dialogue has been Robert K. C. Forman as editor of the opposing anthology and chief progenitor of the argument that there is such a thing as pure mystical experience, that is, an experience that is not contextually determined or bound by the mystic's socio-religious context. This has been

³ Steven T. Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978), 26.

identified by Forman and others as the "Pure Consciousness Event" or "PCE".⁴ A number of other scholars have much more recently tried to forge a mediating dialogue between the Forman and Katz theses, but without much progress. Rather than trying to clarify an already congested and muddled pool, what seems to be the best approach, to paraphrase Thomas Kuhn's term, is to 'shift paradigms' in the whole manner in which the discussion is being carried out. This study, taking the clue from J. S. Krüger⁵ and joining it to what has briefly been argued above as the *essentia* of mysticism, will seek to reframe the whole question of whether mysticism is contextually driven and proscribed (Katz) or whether it lies totally outside the socio-religious context (Forman).

What will follow through from the study's suggested interpretation of mysticism is that, judging from our common humanness, there is no sufficient basis to suggest as Katz does that the contextual nature of mysticism presents multiple 'ultimate' realities. That is, the argument will be that there is only one⁶ ultimate reality, no matter where, when or how the mystic is located. Further, from the same basis, there is sufficient basis to argue, as the mystics do, that there is a region of communicability between ultimate reality and the contextually located mystic. In this case, the recognition will be that the approach of the mystic figures in and also shapes what mysticism is and turns out to be. The determining factor in all of this will be seen to be the mystic's conception of ultimate reality. This discussion will be effected by returning to the early part of twentieth century theoretical studies of mysticism and picking up the comparative approach that made the basic recognition that we need to account for two broad views of mysticism, generally labelled as mysticism east and mysticism west. The key demarcating element here, which this study

⁴ See, Forman, "Mysticism, Constructivism and Forgetting," 21-25.

⁵ J. S. Krüger, *Along Edges. Religion in South Africa: Bushman, Christian, Buddhist* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1995), 274-294.

⁶ This should not imply that ultimate reality is necessarily singular, rather, though it may have plurality within, what is being suggested is that this plurality is of something that is a unit, or is unitary.

will seek to highlight, is of how we may account for the conception of ultimate reality as 'Emptiness' on the one hand and as 'Fullness' on the other hand. It is here that the contemporary approach to mysticism will be forced back into a reconsideration of this different question to hopefully yield the answers that have eluded or rather left the field unresolved due to the creation of the two but stalemated approaches. It is figured that since there will be broadly two socio-religious contexts being considered, that is mysticism east and mysticism west, this should answer the question whether mysticism is a common human religious phenomena or a contextual and socio-religious one alone. That is, is there a basis on which we may see a common framework between mysticism east and mysticism west despite their distinctive conceptions of ultimate reality? This question is important in as far as mysticism is being argued to be the life-enactment of what the mystic conceives of as ultimate reality. In the end, this approach should be able to shed light upon the Katz-Forman discussion and at least proffer an answer to the question whether mysticism as identified, is both contextually driven and lying beyond context. What will have been removed is this whole primary reference to mystical experience in the determination of the answer, since that whole approach has left us in a quandary.

As far as the methodological approach to the study is concerned, it will be argued that mysticism as a life-enactment of the mystic's conception of ultimate reality, takes place as a movement of the two conjoined dimensions of transcending and integrating. This is something that happens in the mystic's life as an 'all-in-one' process, that is, there is no transcending stage as such, which is then followed by an integrating stage. The image that fits more what is suggested to take place, is of a dynamic spiral whose fulcrum lies in the mystic and is continuously moving to and from the transcendent reality and the contextual reality. This is the picture that the reader should keep in mind. However, for purposes of clarity, the study will consider the two conjoined dimensions separately, beginning with the transcending dimension and then ending with the integrating dimension of mysticism. Throughout all of this discussion, the informing structure will be the relevant perspectives

as represented by both mysticism east and mysticism west. For the sake of cohesive reference, this demarcation is largely that between Buddhism and Christianity, and in the case of Buddhism, much more centrally, Zen Buddhism. Taoism features in some prominent places mainly because of its nuanced presentation that makes certain points and themes clear. The dialogue that will precede and also ground this exploration, as has already been pointed out, will be a reexamination of some of the early comparative approaches to mysticism that also contributed much, by way of background, to the contemporary Katz-Forman dialogue. What this study will do, is pick up that whole discussion as a way of taking a different route that could have been taken had the approach not calcified into a preponderant concern with mystical experience. The comparativist approaches that will be reconsidered will be those of Rudolf Otto (1932), R. C. Zaehner (1957), D. T. Suzuki (1957) and from a more recent perspective, the approach taken by Michael Stoeber (1994). As will become clear in the study, the work carried out by Suzuki, as one of the first persons that closely pursued the question of mysticism east and mysticism west, becomes key for the study. Another key author for this whole approach is Thomas Merton, who towards the end of his life had a passionate interest in a common exploration of mysticism, east and west. If anything, these two authors are guides that point some way towards the approach that can yield positive results for both mysticism east and mysticism west.

In terms of the outline of the study, the following is what I have worked with. There are four chapters in the study, each with some key sections that help move the discussion along and also do the job of maintaining the cohesiveness of the study. Chapter one, of necessity, is concerned with preliminary issues of an exploration of the literature that this study is part answer to and criticism of. I have chosen to devote a chapter to the discussion that is informing the predominant contemporary discussion. My judgement is that this has been the one major highlight of the late twentieth century as far as theoretical studies of mysticism are concerned. It is in a sense, as the chapter describes it, 'the legacy of twentieth century mysticism studies'. As this study is occurring right around the end of the twentieth

century and the beginning of a new millennium which, hopefully, will bring about a new forging of the links of common human kinship, I wanted to give some kind of reckoning of some of the issues that we are occupied with at the end of the twentieth century as far as mysticism is concerned. So I feel in a sense, that this survey work has not been in vain, and will go some way in what I hope this study might in a small way signify, a changing of the guard towards more open recognition and affirmation of the deep rootage of the common religious human quest. In terms of content, chapter one traces the development of Steven Katz's thesis and his co-contributors. The section after that is a consideration of the key responses and critiques to the 'Katzian' thesis. Key among these will be the thesis put forward by Robert Forman and others. The last section of the chapter will look briefly at some of the studies that have tried to forge a mediating dialogue between the stalemated Forman and Katz theses. The transition for the whole study will occur with the consideration of J. S. Krüger's model for interpreting what he calls 'human depth experiences'. What Krüger's model will represent is both a critique of the preceding theoretical approaches and a pointing of possible ways forward.

Chapter two of the study is titled 'mysticism and the search for an interpretive framework', and will pick up Krüger's model and highlight "the idea of the empty, ever-renewing centre of the world", "the opening of consciousness to infinity, to origin itself"⁷, as the sense of ultimate reality that lies at the centre of the interpretive framework that the study is seeking to explore. Before going underway with that exploration, there will be a consideration of how similar kinds of theoretical frameworks have been grounded. As already pointed out those to be examined will be the ones put forward by Otto, Zaehner, Stoeber, Suzuki and considered very briefly, that by Nelson Pike (1992). As already noted, the approach that will be highlighted as of relevance and significance to the study at hand will be that by Suzuki. The basis on which an approach for interpreting mysticism east and west will be

⁷ Krüger, *Along Edges*; 276, 289.

recognised, is the centrality and importance of an apophatic approach in mysticism. The best description that will be offered of this approach as an interpretive base, will be that of an 'a/negative apophasis' or of a 'non-negative negation'. Brief explorations in both mysticism east and mysticism west of what this approach involves will be presented.

Chapter three begins proper, the exploration of the theoretical framework that this study will be suggesting. The first section will examine how transcending and integrating are religious constructs that are closely related and are part and parcel of one movement. What will be suggested is that mysticism is quintessentially a conjoining of these two dimensions and may be distinguished from general religion in that it seeks to deepen, widen and extend these dimensions to the greatest extent possible, that is, mysticism is suggested to be about range, rather than essence. The study will then seek to highlight the one key element that gives significance and organises all else that the mystic is trying to accomplish in his or her relationship with ultimate reality. This is what will be called 'the prime directive of mysticism'. Because of the nature of this 'prime directive' and what the mystics recognize as the 'abnormal' human condition, what becomes key for the mystic is the process of 'self-transcending'. This study will seek to put this process into context. Next will be an examination of what 'self-transcending should logically lead to, that is, 'enlightenment'. This logic, of enlightenment following a process of 'self-transcending, is however, only viable for purposes of study, since given the very nature of enlightenment, one cannot be too dogmatic about when during the mystic's transcending-integrating dance, it occurs. Nonetheless, this seems a good place to deal with it.

The fourth and final chapter of the study will seek to answer the question: How does the mystic integrate, rather re-integrate, what is taking place in his or her transcending, back into the normal, living, contextual scenario? Another way of phrasing the question, which some of the literature has followed, is: What is the relationship between mysticism and society, or the mystic and society? Some of the arguments presented in the literature to answer this question are examined, predominantly those by Danto, Proudfoot, Wainwright,

Katz and Horne. What the study will argue for, contrary to the preceding exchanges, is for an interpretation of the relationship as being one of 'transmoral action'. The basis of this way of acting is grounded in what is identified as the mystic's 'modus operandi' which is basically, the predominance over all external issues of an 'inner imperative' derived from the mystic's transcending movement in ultimate reality. What will be argued together with the preceding, is the paradoxical grounding of the mystic's action in a depth reality that is variously understood to be goodness, or love, or compassion. Further to this, it will be shown that the mystic seeks to extend this aspect of ultimate reality experience into the whole range of his or her outer reality. The mystic will therefore be argued to be someone who has a 'cosmos awareness', that is, rather than a 'cosmic awareness'. This much will constitute an ending of the presentation of the suggested theoretical framework the study will be exploring. The next phase, not surprisingly, will be a bringing together of the two concepts of transcending and integrating into one frame. The idea will be to recast the argument to form an image of what mysticism as a conjoined pursuit of both aspects will look like. Some tentative conclusions will be made pointing to the relevance and efficient basis for considering the validity of what may be called a common human mysticism, one that is both and at the same time, derived from the contextual but also lying beyond it in a transcendent realm. Finally, a brief concluding excursus highlights what the study has argued and points out other areas of interest that however, lie outside the range of the present work.

1

THE LEGACY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MYSTICISM STUDIES

From 1978 on, the amount of literature devoted to the study of mysticism has seen tremendous increase.¹ The days when the pivotal works on mysticism could be easily noted have been quickly overcome by the increasing number of authors contributing to the discussion.² Underlying this new interest is a pivotal issue that goes beyond the simple increase and broadening of scholarship in a subject area. The interest and issues here have been generated by a decided and controversial shift in the methodological approach to the subject. That there has been so much interest either suggests enthusiastic approval or the need to redress what is being seen as an inherent flaw in the approach. Two broad questions are at play in the discussion, one, what is the nature of mystical experience and two, what is the significance of mystical experience.³ The significance of the contemporary discussion is not so much the attention being given to these questions, but rather that consideration of the questions has demarcated along two broadly opposed lines of inquiry. On the one hand is the view propounded by a group of scholars in an anthology published in 1978 and on the other, the critical reviews put forward by a gradually defined group of scholars whose critical responses culminated in the 1990 publication of an anthology advancing the contending view.⁴ In addition, roughly since 1990, there has been a growing number of other scholars that have sensed the impasse created by the two predominant views. The response of this third group of scholars has been to forge a mediating dialogue or to offer

other models that accommodate, to the extent that that is possible, the views represented by the definitive 1978 and 1990 anthologies. These three distinctive milieus represent roughly the three aspects to what will be considered here as the legacy of 20th century mysticism studies. A 'legacy' of course represents something inherited, indicating that the roots of the contemporary discussion lie in an earlier period, in this case early and middle 20th century (see note 2 above). Although a discussion of such 'roots' is of importance, the subject seems better served by a presentation of the spirited contemporary discussion, since that discussion also highlights the main points of connection, rather contention, with the earlier works.

Mystical Experience and the Theory of Contextuality

As usually happens, the issue that became central to the 1978 anthology noted above, had been presented before. The most immediate and closest representation of the argument was put forward by Bruce Garside in a 1972 article titled *Language and the Interpretation of Mystical Experience*. The title is significant in that it highlights succinctly the central issues informing the general argument. Garside's thesis argued against what he saw as the prevalent opinion among preceding mysticism scholars to the effect that all mystical experiences are essentially the same. According to Garside, this opinion is not borne out by the divergent interpretations of mystical experience among mystics. The central issue for Garside, is framed by the question of whether mystical experience could be separated out from the mystic's context, that is, can one differentiate between a *description* of mystical experience and an *interpretation* of mystical experience. Garside's contention, contrary to previous scholars notably, Walter Stace and Ninian Smart, is that it was not possible to make such distinction. Following a model he calls of "Kantian inspiration", Garside presupposes that "experience is a product of the interaction of the organism and the environment, involving both external stimuli and interpretive structures of the perceiver . . . experience being the product of the synthesis of percepts and the *a priori* structures

of the understanding” (1972: 93-4). According to the argument, humans are seen to perceive the range of reality through the structures of the understanding that society and culture presents to them. Such perception ranges from the ordinary (perception of physical bodies) to the more complex and nuanced perceptions of the emotions and interrelations with other people. As one moves from the gross perceptions to the more nuanced perceptions, the process of cultururation and socialization becomes more central. The upshot is that, “mystical experience, being about as far removed from the ordinary perception of physical bodies as possible, is likely to be a highly socialized experience” (Garside 1972: 94). The key aspect in this process of socialization is argued to be language. Following Wittgenstein, Garside sees ‘language’ as something that articulates a culture’s whole conceptual framework, that is, its self-understanding and way of life. According to Garside, this conceptual framework is what enters into the process of mystical experience, not as an extrinsic element, but rather as a constitutive factor. The conclusion Garside derives from the preceding is that;

If experience is the product of stimuli and conceptual framework as suggested above, then people of different cultures and religious traditions would necessarily have different religious experiences. It makes no sense to look for an “authentic” description of a mystical experience “undistorted” by an interpretive framework. (1972: 99)

Garside’s conclusion six years earlier, is echoed in the 1978 anthology edited by Steven Katz who begins his own analysis by presenting the singular presupposition framing his whole argument: “[L]et me state the single epistemological assumption that has exercised my thinking and which has forced me to undertake the present investigation: *There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences.* [Neither] mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they are unmediated. That is to say, *all* experience is processed through, organized by, and makes itself available to us in extremely complex epistemological ways” (1978: 26 - emphasis original). Although Katz does not refer to Garside’s argument, the central issue is the same, that is, there are no ‘unmediated’/‘undistorted’ mystical experiences. The significant difference is that Garside

concludes with this assertion while Katz precedes with it as key to his argument.

The first application that Katz's epistemological assumption leads to is the rebuttal of any concept that may be termed a 'perennial philosophy'.⁵ Katz's argument is that the idea of the existence of a perennial philosophy is part of the early missionary enterprise to foster cross-cultural ecumenical understanding with the basic idea that despite divergent presentations, all religions "really teach x ", x variously labelled as God, Brahman, Tao or Allah, and so forth. Katz's counter is that such a scheme of religious understanding is basically mistaken. God, Brahman, Nirvāna, Nature and such various labels of what may be termed x , are mutually exclusive and necessarily so. The idea of x should therefore be seen as an empty notion. In Katz's reasoning, to label the notion x as variously as the religious diversities require, simply takes the descriptions, in this case of mystical experience, "out of their total context [and] does not provide grounds for their comparability but rather severs all grounds of their intelligibility for it empties the chosen phrases, terms, and descriptions of definite meaning" (1978: 47).

With the preceding understanding, words like Nirvāna, Allah, Brahman, Yahweh and so forth, are seen to be highly contextualized and as not transferable to some common universal referent beyond their individual contexts. To illustrate this point, Katz highlights and criticises Stace's argument for the validity of a common core in the trans-religious understanding of mysticism (1978: 46-54). To assume that the presence of similar sounding terms in the varied mystical traditions points to commonality, for example the notion of nothingness, *ayin* in the Kabbalah tradition, *mu* in the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist understanding, is to be misled by a gloss. Katz's counter-understanding to such an argument is that "language is itself contextual and words 'mean' only in context" (1978: 47). The mere presence of similar sounding terms in the mystical traditions does not guarantee the presence of a common referent. Thus, any argument for the existence of a universal core in mystical experience, from such a basis, is necessarily falsifiable.

There is a second dimension to the argument. Not only do the mystical traditions as a whole, fail to indicate or intimate the existence of some trans-religious reality, even within each specific mystical tradition, there is also no possible indication that an individual mystic's religious experience points to the existence of some 'given' reality. That is, although we may be dealing with a single context, that does not guarantee the existence of the common reality posited by the mystic's tradition. Any claim for such a reality is only *appearance*. Even in those mystical practices and techniques, for example, fasting, yoga, meditation, where the aim is the 'liberation' or transcendence of the individual from his or her particular reality and context, no-one is able to go beyond such context to some transcendent specified reality. That is ;

These processes of 'liberation' *appear*, on the face of it, as movements which lead the 'self' from states of 'conditioned' to 'unconditioned' consciousness, from 'contextual' to 'non-contextual' awareness. . . Those who advocate this position, however, are misled by appearances. For it is in appearance only that such activities as yoga produce the desired state of 'pure' consciousness. Properly understood, yoga, for example, is *not* an *unconditioning* or *deconditioning* of consciousness, but rather it is a *reconditioning* of consciousness, i.e. a substituting of one form of conditioned and/or contextual consciousness for another, albeit a new, unusual, and perhaps altogether more interesting form of conditioned-contextual consciousness. (Katz 1978: 57).

According to the preceding argument, all that happens in the mystical disciplines noted above, is that one encounters an analogous reality. Ultimately, no claim may be made that one has reached pure consciousness or something other than one's previous, albeit reconstituted, reality. That which is encountered is only that which one works towards and expects to see. For Katz (1978: 59), this whole exercise is akin to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The question of the presence of an 'Ultimate Reality' is therefore a central one to Katz's thesis. His general argument is that the assumption of a metaphysical category that mystics may encounter and have sometimes claimed to have encountered is not borne out by evidence, since "the claims are more often than not mutually incompatible" (Katz 1978: 50). That is, there is no evidence from the mystical traditions for the existence of a 'given'

common reality. Further, to intuit such an ontological category is a fruitless exercise that only serves to cut short the sort of epistemological inquiry Katz sees himself as undertaking (see Katz 1978: 59). What Katz seems to be emphasizing is that the evidence is actually for different ontological realities. His entire paper is, as he puts it, a “ ‘plea for the recognition of differences’ ” (1978: 25). His overall purpose is so the data on mystical experience is approached contextually. According to Katz, it is such an approach that is able to accommodate *all* the evidence without reducing it or forcing it into an *a priori* category. The result is so that, “ ‘God’ can be ‘God’, ‘Brahman’ can be ‘Brahman’ and *nirvāna* can be *nirvāna* without any reductionistic attempt to equate the concept ‘God’ with that of ‘Brahman’, or ‘Brahman’ with *nirvāna*” (1978: 66).

With such a radical thesis on the epistemological extent of mystical experience, it is no surprise that the anthology in which Katz’s paper appears, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978), was to become a key text in the gradual formation of a ‘contextualist’ theoretical framework for carrying out mysticism studies. Ten articles appear in the book and together, they muster criticism against what the authors see as the then predominant thesis, that all mystical experiences are or largely similar. However, what is of note is that none of the other authors go as far as Katz in advancing their overall thesis of the diversity and plurality of mystical experiences. Apart from Katz’s, the other papers that make a run for the thesis are the papers by Peter Moore, Frederick Streng and Carl Keller. The paper by Ninian Smart deserves mention in that as the lead off paper for the book, it already posits a tentative interpretation that puts a question mark over Steven Katz’s, later to become controversial, thesis of contextuality.

Smart’s paper proposes a theory for understanding religious experience that is predicated towards open-endedness. First, Smart distinguishes between two kinds of religious understanding, existential and theoretical. The former is the ability to personally understand what a given experience is like and the latter, the ability to understand the explanation of something. As far as Smart anticipates, there is no reason for creating a hard and fast

demarcation between these two types of understanding. However, a theorist should, in principle, be willing to seek out or have an existential experience of what is being evaluated. According to Smart, this movement from theoretical understanding to an existential understanding of religious experiences is something that needs to be cultivated.⁶ This also means that there is a need to recognize “degrees of interpretation”, since “experiences are always in some degree interpreted: they as it were contain interpretation within them” (Smart 1978: 14). In order to carry out theoretical interpretation, one therefore needs to strike a balance between inflationary and deflationary interpretation. Inflationary interpretations, are those that go beyond the phenomenological instance of an experience, that is, jumping to conclusions. On the other hand, the corollary, where one may be literally correct about something but misleading at the same time, is just as undesirable. Especially when it comes to mystical reports, sensitivity is necessary, because, “what is reasonably well established is that there are similarities in differing cultures between mystical reports, while at the same time there are rather divergent doctrinal claims made in the relevant traditions” (*ibid.*).

A similar kind of reasoning is applied to the general claim that religious experience is inexpressible. According to Smart, this notion has its roots in the human need to express what he calls, “performative transcendence”, that is, “performatively using words to sketch expression beyond their conventional limits” (1978: 18). The reasoning is that since the ‘object’ of religion is transcendent, discussion of the same should not mislead by assimilating the ‘object’ totally to ‘worldly’ categories. It is also the need to understand that God, the transcendent, is not completely transcendent, he “lies, as it were, along the spectrum of our experiences, and his transcendence cannot absolutely hide him away” (Smart 1978: 20).

From the preceding, it seems clear that Smart’s thesis is of a contiguous and dialectical interpretation of mystical experience. Polar interpretations that do not leave enough room for contingency actually work towards the debasement of the currency of religion (see Smart 1978: 18). Such currency of religion has to do with being able to express degrees of

understanding, the willingness to search for something that one may not find, the understanding that the transcendent is both here and beyond, both comprehensible and incomprehensible (Smart 1978: 10-11, 14; 16-17; 18-20). Although Steven Katz as editor, provides a summary of Smart's article in his introduction to the book, and notes it as the article that "raises certain essential epistemological and methodological issues for any and all inquiry in this area" (*Editor's Introduction* 1978a: 3), it is not clear that Smart's article had a defining influence on the shaping of the final anthology, especially of the thesis put forward by Katz. Although Katz's thesis has generally been taken as representative of the whole argument of the book, Smart's qualification needs to be heard.

A second qualifier to Katz's thesis in the same anthology, would be Peter Moore's paper. Moore actually comes to a conclusion that is antithetical to the one advanced by Katz. According to Moore (1978: 122), "it is premature to expect any definitive answer to the question whether there are a number of phenomenologically distinct types of mystical experience or simply one basic type". That is, what should be accorded is that there are both "strong structural correspondences" and "considerable variations" between mystical experiences in the different traditions. What cannot be made clear is which of these factors is more significant, the 'correspondences' or the 'variations'. This means that one should avoid being conclusively definitive.

The title of Moore's paper, *Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique*, also reflects the three parts to his paper. In the first part Moore is intent on dismissing the claims of the "radical ineffability argument" (1978: 103). In some ways the point is mute, since he qualifies his argument with the word "radical". Moore's argument is that claims for *radical* ineffability must be dismissed since they come from what he calls "third-order writing", that is, "accounts of a mainly theological or liturgical kind which although referring to some mystical object or reality do not refer, unless very obliquely, to mystical experience itself" (*ibid.*). This preliminary argument leads to Moore's counter assertion that mystical experiences should be seen as accessible and open to philosophical analysis. Moore suggests

that the principal aim of such analysis is to distinguish between the mystical experience and its interpretation. Moore's argument is for the recognition of a range of relationality between mystical experience and interpretation, that extends from *retrospective interpretation*, "doctrinal interpretations formulated after the experience is over" to *raw experience*, experience "unaffected by the mystic's prior beliefs, expectations, or intentions" (Moore 1978: 108-9). This scheme of relationality between experience and interpretation calls into question the thesis presented by Katz, as is clear from the following pointer:

In particular it is worth stressing that the scheme in no way implies a reductionist account of mystical experience (though, again, it would be consistent with any reductionist account put forward). The category of raw experience leaves open all the important questions regarding the ultimate source and significance of mystical experience. (Moore 1978: 109).

The final part of Moore's article considers the relationship between mystical experiences and mystical techniques (1978: 112-114, 120-121). Moore argues that mystical techniques are central to an understanding of the nature of mystical experience and should not be dismissed out of hand. What mystical techniques suggest is that there are varied stages to mystical experience. The stages are inter-related, with lower stages developing and culminating into the higher stages. The tendency in analysis is to concentrate on the higher stages thus reducing mystical experience into a highly abstract phenomena. What needs to be taken into account is the range of mystical experience as reflected by the various mystical techniques. This point affirms and closely parallels Smart's scheme for understanding religious experience (see above).

In a manner that immediately goes beyond the confines of Katz's thesis, Frederick Streng begins his paper (*Language and Mystical Awareness*) by assuming "that there is a 'spiritual realm', an ultimate context of value, or 'suchness' which cannot be totally comprehended by analyses which define it solely in terms of material energy or social function" (1978: 141). This 'spiritual realm' is not something that is radically different from other forms of life,

it is only something that bears special designation. This special designation is something that language places on the 'spiritual realm', and this in turn, shapes the soteriological value that mystical awareness is afforded in the specific context. Language is therefore seen to be intricately tied to the reality of the ultimate and the nature of mystical awareness. For Streng, the soteriological value that language places on mystical awareness is something real, that is, it is something that has positive psychic value on the mystic. When one shifts from a conventional awareness to an awareness that results in an ontological understanding, it is mystical awareness that is being highlighted (see Streng 1978: 162-3). Ultimately, how one uses language in relation to what is considered ultimate, affects the nature of awareness one seeks and achieves. Streng's argument is therefore for the recognition of the shaping influence of the mystic's language context. This understanding of the impact of language on mystical awareness resonates closely with Bruce Garside's (1972).

Streng also argues that one cannot assume "that the nature of ultimate reality assumed in (all) mysticism is an undifferentiated absolute Being" (Streng 1978: 141). Using illustrations of the use of language in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, Streng argues strenuously against an overarching assumption of Being for the interpretation of mystical experience. That is, one needs to affirm the validity of a conception of ultimate reality that is other than Being. In this way, Streng's paper seems to affirm the ultimate reality of both the perspectives of 'Being' and 'non-Being'. In this conditional way, Streng's paper supports Steven Katz's thesis for the recognition of 'real' differences, though it does not go as far as Katz's in implicating the non-existence of an ultimate reality or realities.

Another article in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* that both supports and undoes Katz's thesis, is Carl Keller's. Keller's whole argument is predicated on the nature of how we interpret what we call mystical literature and how we may use it to deduce and support conceptual theories about the nature of mystical experience. The ultimate argument is that the very nature of mystical literature means that it cannot be used as support for mystical arguments. This is an interesting point, since co-contributors to the anthology, including

Katz, follow this very approach. That aside, Keller identifies eight genres to mystical literature. According to Keller, such diversity demonstrates how “narrow are the limits of our ability to know that essence of mystical experience” (1978: 95). While Keller seems to be making the knowledge of mystical experience dependant upon mystical texts, he is in fact arguing the opposite, that is, that the whole discussion should be moved away from an evaluation of mystical texts to the analysis of mystical language. The argument is that since the gap that separates linguistic expression from actual experience is insurmountable, one cannot study the nature of mystical experience by examining mystical texts; “we are dealing with languages, and with languages alone” (Keller 1978: 95). That is, what mystical texts give witness to is the mystical *tradition*, not the mystical *experience* itself.

In 1983 Steven Katz edited and published another anthology as a follow up to *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*. This second anthology titled *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, unlike the first one, has a distinctly demonstrative rather than methodological approach. Most of the authors follow the assumptions put forward by Katz in the earlier volume, and go on to show that mystical understanding and experience is contextual and therefore plural. The only distinctive paper in this respect, is the paper contributed by Katz himself. Katz’s thesis here, an extension of his earlier one, is that while mystical experience is generally accorded to contain elements of radicalism, it actually contains certain neglected “conservative” features. According to Katz (1983: 3-4), mysticism is a dialectic that oscillates between two positions, radicality and conservation. Using examples primarily from the Jewish and Christian traditions, Katz argues that the whole educational process and training in the mystical traditions, predisposes one to conservatism. The other pole is the possibility of radicalism, which Katz reinterprets; “I want to suggest this: mystics *do* stretch texts in all directions through their employment of allegorical and symbolic readings; yet this very use of allegory and symbolism . . . functions to *maintain* the authority of the canonical sources under interpretation rather than to destroy or transcend them as is usually assumed” (1983: 30). That is, rather than challenging and seeking to overcome tradition, radicalism

actually works to preserve what the mystics see as the true nature of their tradition's sacred texts. The mystic is therefore not a random radical and "the very radicalness of the mystical hermeneutic is itself a conservative feature" (*ibid.*).

A second aspect of the conservative nature of mystical experience is the pre-determining nature of the ontological schemata of the various traditions. Here Katz seems to shift from his previous position and argues for the 'existence' of different ontological structures; "the ontological structure(s) of each major mystical tradition is different and this pre-experiential, inherited structure directly enters into the mystical occasion itself" (1983: 40). These ontological structures "pre-create" mystical experience through the form of expectations that they allow, so that in the end, one cannot argue for what may be called a 'pure' experience. A third dimension of mystical 'conservatism' Katz argues for, is the relevance and shaping influence of personages in the traditions that come to assume the role of exemplars and models. Although Katz advances the preceding as arguments for the nature of mystical experience as conservative, this thesis is largely a restating of his earlier thesis, essentially that all mystical experience is *contextual*. That mystical experience is *conservative*, is only so in the very fact that it is predicated to be *contextual*.

Contextuality and the Possibility of Pure Consciousness

Reaction to the two anthologies edited by Katz, especially to *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978), has gradually grown into a distinctive body of literature in its own right. Not surprisingly most of the criticism has been directed at the more radical elements contained in the articles, which largely means most of the rebuttals have been directed at Katz.

An example of a critique that highlights the radical elements to the thesis of contextuality and plurality is William Wainwright's *Mysticism* (1981). Wainwright's critique of Katz is an attempt to balance Katz's thesis by tempering the arguments that Katz puts forward but

Wainwright views as unfounded and unsupported. The first, and not surprisingly, is the initial epistemological assumption made by Katz (see Katz 1978: 26). Wainwright assesses correctly that the assumption is unexplained and therefore unsupported. Although Wainwright initially agrees with Katz that no experience is entirely 'pure', the second critique is that this should not be seen as entailing "that the nature of mystical experience is significantly determined by the religious tradition to which the mystic belongs" (1981: 20). The third critique is a variation of the second one. Wainwright accepts that there is a correlation between the mystic's religious tradition and the type of mystical experience the mystic will have, however, it is not a necessity of this correlation that the tradition overdetermines or constitutes the experience. For Wainwright, the overall import of Katz's thesis is that any attempt to locate what may be called a typology of mystical experience is futile. It may, however, very well be that differences among a class of elements may be put aside to highlight the fact that the elements belong to the same class. That is, diversity in itself does not entail lack of conjoinness. An illustrative example Wainwright offers are the relatively few classifications (mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, etc.) of the vastly diverse animal kingdom. Here, such vast diversity, does not preclude common classification. Applying the argument, Wainwright concludes that "diverse mystical experiences [do] not show that it is unreasonable to classify mystical experiences under a few general headings . . . a cross-cultural typology of mystical consciousness might still be possible" (Wainwright 1981: 22).

The preceding critical point by Wainwright is also highlighted by Peter Byrne (1984). The challenge to Katz is just how far one can go in according uniqueness of perspective to each individual context. Katz's thesis in the end, implies that there is unending plurality to mystical experiences, that is, it implies that there are as many mystical experiences as there are mystics. The problem of making conclusions from this view, as Byrne shows, is that "this simply reflects the fact that each of us represents a unique point of view upon the world and if we wish to stress the uniqueness of that point of view we may always find a

shade of difference which distinguishes even the experiences of those who occupy a common culture" (1984: 239). Byrne's counter argument, like Wainwright's, is that even though we may always expect two accounts of an event to differ, this recognition does not mean we cannot "accept incompatibilities as not at all discounting the identity of what is experienced, provided these can be readily explained by the hypothesis of error in one or more of the experiences" (*ibid.*). That is, what needs to be determined is the purpose for which incompatibilities might be overlooked and the experiences treated as belonging to the same class. According to Byrne, the ecumenical understanding of mysticism is driven by this kind of reasoning. The question is, what is it that is in view, what is it that needs to be highlighted about the experiences, what are the points of convergence alongside the divergences. Identification of mystical experience is therefore dependant upon the purpose for which the identification is being made. A legitimate form of this thesis of identification could be what is at play in the ecumenical exploration of mystical experience as "a universal and unified focus of religious devotion" (Byrne 1984: 238).

Katz's thesis, as far as it is based on a philosophical epistemology, has been attacked on that basis by J. William Forgie (1985) and by Anthony Perovich (1985). Forgie's analysis attacks Katz's thesis as failing to sustain a proper Kantian perspective and actually going beyond what a Kantian position would entail. This criticism is legitimate in that Katz and his precursor Bruce Garside, both highlight Kant as the basis of inspiration for their closely parallel theses (see Katz 1988: 757, also 1978: 59; Garside 1972: 94). However, according to Forgie, both Garside and Katz espouse a view that should be described as 'hyper-Kantian', that is, "a view which, though broadly Kantian in inspiration, goes beyond Kant and assigns to non-categories, e.g. non-universally shared beliefs and concepts, a causal role in determining the phenomenological content of experience" (1985: 208). The point of contention is that Garside and Katz seem to suggest that categories/analogues are capable of shaping the phenomenological content of an experience, a view which Forgie sees as unsustainable by Kant's philosophy, since for Kant, "categories 'shape' experience by

determining that those judgements will take certain forms. They do not contribute to the phenomenological content of the experiences they shape" (*ibid.*) The 'hyper-Kantianism' of Garside and Katz is also evident upon at least another point. According to Forgie, Kant's philosophical presentation is of *a priori* categories understood as universal, and not as culturally determined and varied due to the divergent human contexts. For Forgie, what Katz and Garside highlight as *a priori* categories, that is, religious beliefs and concepts which shape mystical experience, should rather be called 'elements' not 'categories', since these beliefs and concepts vary from one socio-religious tradition to another.

The point upon which Anthony Perovich mounts his attack of Katz's presentation is the fact that the theoretical framework upon which he bases his thesis had already been advanced and abandoned, for good reason, in the field of science. What had happened in the field of the philosophy of science, had been the suggestion of a model of the contextual theory of meaning as developed by Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend (see Perovich 1985: 66). Essentially, the assertion had been that the 'meaning' of a word may only be derived from the specific theoretical system in which the word is employed. The problem, as Perovich points out, is that rival scientific theories were therefore made "incommensurable" to each other, that is, "if the meaning of a term is determined by the theoretical context in which it is employed, no terms figuring in different theoretical contexts can share their meaning; this undermining of any common ground for the two theories seems to make comparison of the claims of the different theories impossible" (1985: 67). Further, the lateral perspective of the possibility of disagreements between theories also becomes redundant, since in order to deny something over and against another thing, implies a region of commonality between the opposing views. According to Perovich (1985: 67-8), this state of affairs was soon found to be untenable and in need of qualification, "for in its extreme version every change of belief becomes a change in the meaning of our terms; we cannot change our minds without changing our language as well". The gradual qualification, was to move away from questions of meaning to questions of reference (see Perovich 1985: 69).

The general argument was that if theories could at all be made comparable then there needed to be some degree of assuredness that the referent that the varied viewpoints had in view was the same.

The connection of the preceding analysis with Katz's thesis is that in the end, any kind of contextualist thesis has to be moderated into two aspects; "that the theoretical context confers meaning" and "that not every component of that context . . . enters into the meanings of the terms we use" (Perovich 1985: 70). According to Perovich, Katz's thesis tries to sustain and maintain only the first half of this moderated thesis. Judging from the developments in the field of science, no-one advancing a view of contextuality could with the moderated thesis, make a claim as Katz (1978: 47) does, that "words 'mean' only in context". There is therefore no basis to claim that mystics from varied religious backgrounds cannot be using terms bearing the same meaning, that is, words that are both similar sounding and synonymous (see Perovich 1985: 71; cf. Katz 1978: 46-7).

Another point of contention for Perovich is that Katz's thesis remains unqualified and therefore ambiguous since Katz does not state that "*all* beliefs shape experience" nor that "*some* beliefs shape experience" (Perovich 1985: 71). The former would be philosophically untenable and the latter would not preclude the possibility of common mystical experience, as Katz's thesis requires. What needs to be accorded and what Katz does not accord, is that even where one accepts the contextualist theory, not all beliefs shape experience. That is, there should be the recognition of the possibility that "some changes of belief leave experience unchanged, just as they leave meaning unchanged" (Perovich 1985: 73). The problem therefore becomes one of finding the criterion upon which one can determine what beliefs enter into experience and which ones remain unconstitutive. According to Perovich, no one since Kant has offered such a criterion and until this is done there is no legitimate philosophical reason to dismiss the possibility of common mystical experience occurring in different religious traditions.

Though specifically directed at Katz, James Robertson Price's (1985) critique is really directed towards the entire epistemic approach to mysticism studies up to and including Katz. Price's question is directed at determining whether "human knowing in fact takes place in the two-component process of experience and interpretation indicated by Katz" (Price 1985: 86). As already noted, the need for this question is not really of 'Katzian' origin, but rather something Katz inherits from previous analyses of mysticism and mystical experience, notably those of Zaehner (1957), Stace (1960) and Smart (1965). Nevertheless, the import of Price's assertion is that the two-component process leaves out a key aspect to the process of human knowing, namely the ability to make evaluative judgements of what we know. That is, instead of two components, the process of knowing involves three aspects: experience, interpretation *and* judgement. Price argues that experience does not of necessity change the reality of that which is experienced. From this argument, it is possible that an experience may not be a true reflection of the actual nature of the reality. The upshot of the argument is that there is an ontological aspect to experience, something upon which judgements of the rightness of experience may be made. The crucial factor about the ability to make knowledge judgements, counter to Katz's position, is "the possibility, in principle as well as fact, of transcending the limitations of personal and cultural mediations to grasp what is in fact the case" (Price 1985: 90-1). In other words, "I can and do transcend my own interpretations every time I correctly perform an act of judgement" (Price 1985: 92).

In terms of mysticism and mystical experience, the preceding means that mystics (and non-mystics) are in some sort of contiguity to what may be conceived of as knowledge of the real. According to Price (1985: 88, 93), Katz fails to posit this idea of the real even though he tacitly agrees upon such a principle as signified by his example of Manet's paintings of Notre Dame (see Katz 1978: 30). Without an understanding of the real, that is, one upon which judgements of experience may be made, Katz's analysis undermines our understanding of reality and of the way we relate to it (Price 1985: 92-3). However, Price does allow that positing the idea of the real does not resolve the problem of interpretation. The problem

that remains, even after judgements are made, is that the real may still be misrepresented and misinterpreted. This means that our approach to the real has to incorporate the willingness to make adjustments to what we judge to be the real:

. . . the person who will most consistently make correct judgements is the one who is willing to entertain and satisfactorily answer all relevant questions which might emerge to qualify or overturn a present interpretation. Such a person will be committed to the truth, whatever its cost, and therefore committed to transcending all the levels of the bias - personal, social, religious, cultural - which thwart that commitment and distort the performance of judgement. (Price 1985: 94)

What Price does not offer in his analysis is just how it is we may have an 'objective' apprehension of the real, one upon which we can know we have made a right judgement of. His analysis might work for the example he explores, that is, the painting of physical objects, but not so clearly for ephemeral realities. Katz would claim that the 'objective' apprehension of an ontological reality is not possible and therefore is something to be abandoned in the process of understanding mystical experience. Price however, seems willing to explore and live with the possibility of error about the real, as long as the possibility of re-interpretation still remains. In the end, Price's analysis is an argument for the possibility of a mutual exploration of the real, though it might be true that mystics from different traditions come at it from different perspectives and therefore know different aspects of it (Price 1985: 97). According to Price, while the latter, different perspectives, affirms Katz's thesis, the former, mutual exploration of reality, does not.

Katz has hardly responded to the surmounting number of his critics, however, two papers that Katz directly responds to, are the papers by Huston Smith (1987) and Sallie B. King (1988). Smith's paper is an argument for the possibility of 'perennial' philosophy, something that Katz had earlier dismissed (Katz 1978). Smith uses the term 'perennial' only to keep parallel reference to Katz's use of the term, his preferred term is "primordial" philosophy, and the reason why he prefers this term is made clear from his critique of Katz's thesis. 'Perennial' for Smith, refers to a deductive intuition about the metaphysical nature of reality

(see Smith 1987: 554, 560). This deductive intuition has nothing to do with an actual "experience" of some reality, but rather with "pure intellection" (Smith 1987: 554). According to Smith, for Katz to dismiss 'perennial' philosophy on the basis of the impossibility of cross-cultural mystical *experiences*, is to miss the point about what 'perennial' philosophy is about. Smith's analysis is that what leads Katz to his conclusions is his underlying acceptance of a contemporary philosophy whose thrust is that "all spheres" of human interaction must be judged on the basis of socio-historical human contexts and not on the basis of some non-human reality (1987: 558-9). Essentially, such a philosophical stance results in self-limitability, and according to Smith, leads to a half-truth about the human situation, since "pushed to logical extreme, cultural conditioning becomes, first, cultural subjectivism, and finally cultural solipsism. It renders unintelligible the ways and degree to which we can and do communicate, understand, and yes, even experience cross-culturally" (1987: 560). What is ignored is the dimension of an Absolute which is also Infinite. Smith notes that to do so, is to ignore something "we are so (unwittingly) party to . . . that it contributes the only finally authentic part of our being" (1987: 562-563).

Not surprisingly, Katz (1988) takes issue with Smith's critique. First and foremost, Katz bemoans that fact that Smith's argument does not allow room for disconfirmation; "though logically consistent, this entire hermeneutical procedure is wholly uninformative and thoroughly *prioristic*. It is, in reality, a grand tautology. Nothing can count against it" (1988: 751). Katz argues that Smith's approach seems to ignore all the evidence to the contrary, that whatever it is that is posited by the different traditions is pluriform. The corrective Katz offers to this view is that he is not denying the possible existence of transcendental realities or even Reality, "rather, my view . . . is that while such transcendental realities or Reality may well exist, it (or He, She or It) can only be known by us in the way such metaphysical realia become available to us given the sorts of beings we are" (1988: 754). Unfortunately, Katz does not spell out just what the 'ways' we come to know such *transcendent* realities are, since it seems according to his thesis, the kind of beings we are,

contextualised beings, entails that we cannot *transcend* our context (see Katz 1978: 50-9).

Sallie King (1988) argues that Steven Katz's thesis is essentially a reduction of experience to language and consequently of mystical experience to doctrine. Her analysis is that Katz's epistemological model follows a Wittgenstein model in as far as it holds that "there are "no private languages," no purely private experience, and consequently, no purely "private" realm at all because all our experience derives its meaningfulness from the public realm of culture and language" (King 1988: 259). According to King, the essential problem that Katz faces and ultimately avoids facing is one of analyzing and comparing an experience that is essentially non-material. Katz's thesis by its avoidance of this more subtle examination is therefore reductionistic, it relegates mystical experience only to the observable, to language. Ultimately, the problem that needs to be acknowledged is that experience does not necessarily reduce to language. King uses the examples of the coffee drinking tradition and the experience of listening to music to illustrate this point (see King 1988: 264-67). For King, Katz's epistemological thesis is "radically inadequate" and should therefore not be accepted as the basis for an argument of the irreducible plurality of mystical experience.

Katz's response to King (1988: 754-57), like his response to Smith, is defensive. He retorts that his thesis does not *reduce* experience to doctrine, but rather that experience is *mediated* by the context (prior training, doctrinal education, etc.). Further, "to say that experience is mediated is not to say that there is no difference between description and experience" (Katz 1988: 756). This is a problematic statement, in that Katz's thesis as already noted, is predicated on arguing against Stace and Zaehner, that one cannot argue for a distinction between description (interpretation) and experience, since experience is inherently and essentially interpretive (see Katz 1978: 26-32).

Judging from the responses Katz's thesis has received, as so far presented, it is not surprising that the thesis had stirred up sufficient controversy to warrant a concerted and well ordered rebuttal. Such a response and rebuttal was gathered by Robert K. C. Forman in the form

of an anthology that stands ideologically apposite Katz's 1978 anthology. Forman's anthology, *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (1992), betrays by its title what the co-contributors saw as the one essential element that needed protection and defence against the onslaught of a 'Katzian' thesis. The main argument of the book had already been briefly explored by Forman himself (1988), by Donald Evans (1989), and by L. Philip Barnes (1990). Its validity had also been intimated by one of the later contributors to the volume (see Almond 1982: 176).

Donald Evans (1989), though agreeing with Katz in general, critiques him on the basis that his "neo-Kantian epistemology may be mistaken in ruling out the possibility that some mystics successfully shed all conceptual and linguistic frameworks and enter a state of pure consciousness" (1989: 59). Barnes' (1990) thesis is largely similar, that is, the possibility of a common mystical experience exists in that "introvertive mystical experiences", following Walter Stace, are all the same in that they are a contentless inner state. The reasoning seems to be predicated upon a logical deduction from the process through which introvertive mystical states are supposed to result from, that is, "whereas extrovertive mystical experience usually occurs spontaneously, introvertive mystical experience occurs, with very few exceptions, only after a long period of spiritual training and mental preparation; and introvertive [mystics], of whichever religious tradition, follow the same spiritual exercises" (Barnes 1990: 11). Though Barnes' last statement is somewhat inflammatory, the gist of the argument is similar to what Robert Forman (1988) presents in his article. Forman's argument is however more tentative, "I am making no argument for universality here. It is not clear to me that *all* traditions harness the forgetting techniques, or that all techniques *are* equally effective . . . Rather the claim is more modest: when a tradition uses techniques which effect a forgetting, then automatization and concepts may not play the "heavy" formative role Katz gives them" (1988: 264). The preceding closely parallel arguments, thus make the possibility of a "pure consciousness event" defensible and also counter any hard thesis against the possibility of common mystical experience.

Forman's introduction to *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (1990), constitutes the broad delineating paper for the book. Forman highlights five areas of criticism to Katz's thesis, a thesis which, according to Forman, has virtually become the 'received' view on mysticism (1990: 9). A preliminary issue and one already highlighted by Perovich (1985), Smith (1987) and reiterated by Philip Almond (1990), is the whole issue of whether the cross-disciplinary humanities approach had been properly appropriated and applied to mysticism. Although this is an issue Katz does not recognize, the question is whether the shift from early 20th century 'perennialism' to a contextual theory of mysticism is not largely a response to similar developments occurring in the general field of the humanities. The recognition in fields like sociology and psychology has been the movement towards the general idea that experience results from the various background aspects that the subject brings to an experience. Forman's concern is whether this model can at all be applied to mysticism before certain questions have been answered; "For example: Are there limits to the general constructivist theory of human experience and, if so, what are they? How can we recognize them? Are there some experiences, or some specifiable aspects of human experience, that are not "constructed" by our language and belief" (1990: 5).

What seems clear to Forman and his co-contributors is the special designation that "pure consciousness" needs to bear in the description and interpretation of mystical experience. Forman describes what he calls the "pure consciousness event (PCE)" as a "wakeful contentless consciousness" (1990: 21). Katz's assertion had been that there was no substantive evidence that something that may be called 'pure' consciousness was possible (see Katz 1978: 57). Forman and three other contributors to the anthology answer Katz's assertion by highlighting instances of 'pure consciousness' experience in Hinduism (Chapple 1990), Buddhism (Griffiths 1990), in Jewish mysticism (Matt 1990), and in Meister Eckhart (Forman 1990a). These four papers constitute Part I of the anthology and serve to establish, contrary to Katz's assertion, that varied mystical traditions furnish evidence of PCE's. This alone constitutes the largest concerted rebuttal and main criticism to Katz's thesis.

Forman, in the introduction, criticises Katz's thesis more directly. His first concern is that the evidence Katz presents does not serve to establish the thesis. That is, it only serves to show how the various religious belief systems differ and does not establish that belief systems actually constitute mystical experience (Forman 1990: 15-16; cf. Carl Keller 1978). Another aspect to this criticism is that Katz does not specify what concepts or constructs actually enter into what experiences (cf. Perovich 1985: 71). The problem that results is that Katz's thesis seems to suggest that "every concept affects every experience" (Forman 1990: 17). Another shortcoming, a criticism already highlighted by Price (1985), is Katz's failure to consider or recognize that the same referent might be designated by different terms and may even bear different senses. Forman does not appear satisfied by Katz's interpretation of novelty and radicality in mysticism as being essentially conservative; "I do not think that such a conservative hypothesis can stand up to the data of mysticism. The history of mysticism is rife with cases in which expectations, models, previously acquired concepts, and so on, were deeply and radically *disconfirmed*" (1990: 19-20; cf. Katz 1983). The final part of Forman's introductory paper is a reiteration of his 1988 article and presents the centrality of "forgetting" in mystical practice as a model for interpreting mysticism.

Part II of *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* is composed of seven articles that furnish philosophical responses to the 'constructivist' thesis. According to Forman (1990: 30), the central argument is to show that a constructivist thesis has not and cannot furnish a plausible explanation for the occurrence of PCE's. Some of the key issues raised that do not already confirm previous criticisms are worth noting. Donald Rothberg (1990: 183-87) argues from the basis of "deconstruction", that an emphasis on context and constructivism does not adequately account for the examples of its incidence in mysticism and consequently does not account for the experience of 'pure consciousness'. Another key criticism by Rothberg, which unfortunately he does not fully develop, is that constructivism though emphasizing 'context', does not itself provide "an adequate inquiry into *our* historical context" (1990: 164). Though Rothberg's central concern here is with contemporary

epistemology and the historical approaches to the interpretation of mysticism, this question begs for the broader consideration of the historical human context.

As already noted, Philip Almond's article (1990) provides a succinct summary of the impact that contemporary socio-linguistic epistemologies have had on the study and interpretation of mysticism. Other than this initial argument, Almond's paper goes over territory already covered by other critics of the 'Katzian' thesis. Anthony Perovich (1990) extends his earlier criticism (1985) that constructivist epistemology though so argued, does not really represent Kantian philosophy. Here, Perovich is keen to show that had the constructivist authors considered how Kant himself viewed mysticism, they would not have seen mystical experience only in the narrow sense of "human" experience. What has been overlooked is that "according to Kant, mystical knowledge is to be distinguished from ordinary empirical knowledge not only by its object, but also by its epistemological structure: mystical knowledge consists in a communion with God and a sharing in the divine self-knowledge of His Ideas" (Perovich 1990: 244). The key issue for Kant, according to Perovich, is that mystical experience is non-ordinary human experience since it involves the abandoning of the human discursive intellect and the sharing of a divine one (see Perovich 1990: 246). The failure of the constructivist theorists to consider this key Kantian interpretation of mysticism means that a philosophy of mysticism with such an oversight, rests on a mistake.

Steven Bernhardt (1990) and co-authors Prigge and Kessler (1990) both argue that the 'pure consciousness event' is the one type of mystical experience that has an adequate basis for the designation of 'universal mystical experience'. By "universal", Bernhart qualifies the designation by noting that it is only relevant in reference to the phenomenological nature of the experience during its occurrence. In other words, interpreting PCE's as universal does not mean that mystics from every tradition have had them, but rather that when they occur they are phenomenologically the same (see Bernhardt 1990: 228-29). Prigge and Kessler's sense of the 'universalness' of "unitive mystical experiences" is predicated on what they call the "negative definition of sameness", that is, "two experiences . . . are qualitatively the same

if and only if they are different, and they are different if they have different qualities or aspects" (1990: 282-83). According to this definition, since "unitive mystical experiences" lack the key factor in determining sameness and difference, *vis á vis*, "content of consciousness", in this sense, since they cannot be different, they are therefore the same.

Beyond Contextuality and Pure Consciousness

The preceding analysis has highlighted the two predominant but broadly opposed approaches to the theoretical basis for understanding and interpreting mystical experience. Various labels have been applied to this dialogue: 'contextualist-essentialist'; 'constructivist-essentialist'; 'pluralist-universalist' (see Forman 1990: 10-14; Katz 1992: 5). Notwithstanding these labels, the main issue seems to be between adopting a through-going contextualism over and against a qualified contextualism. At heart, no-one is denying that context affects experience. What is at issue is whether experience is totally so determined. Katz's position, which argues for through-going contextualism, seems, even among co-supporters, to be an extreme position. Consequently, the recent scholarly dialogue on mysticism might actually be labelled 'Katz *vs* the rest'. The counterposed camp, more clearly represented by Forman's anthology, seems to have better clarity about what is being defended and how to go about doing it, that is, what is being defended is the possibility of a pure form of consciousness and that this points to the existence of a common mystical experience.

A third group of scholars have contributed to the overall discussion but in a manner that may be seen as a form of mediation or re-orientation of both or either one of the roughly opposed Katz-Forman theses. As can be expected, most of contributions to be considered here are recent (post-1990), since the authors are working with the backdrop of the preceding dialogue. There are however two pre-1990 proposals that are best considered in this context. The first is by John Apczynski (1985), the second by Sallie King (1988).

Apczynski considers Katz's thesis epistemologically ambiguous. Though Katz argues that

mystics from different traditions have different experiences due to the shaping and mediating nature of their “ontological presuppositions”, this claim begs some further unanswered questions: “Precisely how do such ontological schema function in the formation of experience in order to make them different? Do they completely determine it? Are the experiences different, in other words, simply because they are shaped by different cultural contexts” (1985: 196-7). In order to answer these questions and to complete what he sees as a shortfall in Katz’s epistemology, Apczynski proposes what he describes as a model of an ‘epistemological theory of radical openness’ (see Apczynski 1985: 204).

The model Apczynski suggests is adapted from Michael Polanyi’s work on the nature of scientific knowledge. The point of connection with mysticism is Polanyi’s interpretation of what he calls ‘tacit knowledge’, that is, the human ability to know more than we can display or tell (see Apczynski 1985: 198). This tacit dimension functions as a field of orientation toward which we have the ability to ‘break out’. That is, we have a heuristic ability to go *beyond* toward something which we have tacit knowledge of. This process functions on both a primary and a primordial sense. In the primary sense, “the particular manner or mode in which the mystic concretely breaks out [is] by a reliance on the power of the tradition’s symbols to carry him away” (Apczynski 1985: 203). ‘Primary’ therefore refers to the particularity of the mystic’s context (cf. Katz 1978). On the other hand, the ‘primordial’ represents the ontological ground toward which the mystic “breaks out and experiences uncomprehendingly” (Apczynski 1985: 203). According to the model, knowledge involves a tacit orientation towards a primordial dimension that individuals, most consistently mystics, can seek out. Though Apczynski qualifies the model as not referring to the presence of an underlying ‘noumenal’ reality, he would be hard pressed to distinguish where one ends and the other one begins. In the end, the fair criticism of Katz’s thesis is of its failure to account for a primordial dimension to mystical longing.

Like Apczynski, Sallie King (1988) begins with a critique of Katz’s epistemological model (see section II above). The second part of King’s paper suggests an alternative epistemological

model for the study of mysticism. What King wants to highlight is that “mystical experience is a form of awareness in which the experiential sense of a separate subject and object is not present. It is pure “consciousness-of” something” (1988: 273; cf. Forman *et al*, 1990). Mystical experience is seen as having existential and transformative power. It is something predicated by the person’s orientation to “that which grounds one’s existence, one’s phenomenological selfhood” (King 1988: 274; cf. Apczynski 1985). For King, this ‘ground’ does not indicate any claim for the nature of ultimate reality, it is something existentially grounded. This existential dimension is argued to be something that is consistently present in mystical experience and thus bears the possibility of serving as a valid component in the interpretation of a cross-cultural mystical experience.

Another related component is what King (1988: 275) calls “axiological grounding”, that is, that which existentially grounds one is that which the person holds as being of absolute value. According to King, these two dimensions reflect and are cognizant upon the validity of a “primitive” experience, a state in which there is no subject-object split (King 1988: 271, 275-76; cf. Apczynski’s use of “primordial” 1985: 203). The result is that mystical experience and experience in general, involves a “noetic” element correlated to the “primitive” experience. Again here, as in Apczynski’s case, one can sense that the response is to the failure in Katz’s thesis to properly account for the sense of the absolute in mystical experience. The difficulty with King’s model is her assertion that since her epistemological model does not involve a division between subject and object then there is no relevant need to think in terms of ‘mediation’ (see King 1988: 276). In other words, King seems to dismiss the impact of context on mystical experience at all levels. In this sense King’s model, by dismissing context, seems too relaxed, while Katz’s on the other hand is too restrictive.

Bernard Lonergan’s work, already called upon by James Robertson Price III (1985), is further extended by Kevin Joyce (1994). Joyce suggests Lonergan’s “interiority analysis” as a basis upon which determinations of common mystical experience may be made. According to Joyce (1994: 80), ‘perennialist’ and ‘constructivist’ presentations fail because they both make

two assumptions; that mystical data equates to the content of consciousness and that the doctrinal terms provided by the mystics is sufficient basis for analyzing the content of mystical experience. Joyce argues that such theoretical grounds are inadequate and that the discussion needs to be shifted to the more common ground of interiority, that is, "to the patterns in which consciousness operates when we use our minds . . . not the *object* or *content* of consciousness, but the *operations* of consciousness" (1994: 80-1). The application of such a model would involve four steps: transposing mystical language into terms applicable to interiority language; critical comparison of the relevant operations of consciousness; a comparison of the philosophical and theological language being employed and fourthly; a determination of whether the experiences described are similar (see Joyce 1994: 86). A critique to Joyce's suggested model, is that in the end, one is still dealing with doctrines and mystical data. The model does not provide a more immediate analysis of mystical experience as Joyce seems to suggest. Since this is the same critique upon which Joyce advances his thesis, it does not seem as if he escapes his own critique, what has changed is only the goal of the evaluation and not the object of the evaluation. The model therefore fails to go beyond much of what is already represented by the contributors to *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (1990).

Although the theses maintained by Katz and Forman may appear irreconcilable, Larry Short (1995) attempts just such a reconciliation. According to Short (1995: 661), the main issue between Katz's thesis and Forman's thesis is one of mediation and how it relates to mystical experience. While Katz maintains that mystical experience as mediated, cannot have a common core, Forman's contention on the other hand is that pure experience as contentless is necessarily unmediated. Short's thesis by way of reconciliation, offers that it is possible for mystical experience to be both mediated and have a common core. According to the argument, what both Katz and Forman overlook is that mediation involves more than socio-linguistic parameters as both seem to assert; it also involves the pre-linguistic and the categorical. Short seems to maintain and therefore accord with Katz, that all experience

is mediated, since he interprets mediation as internal to the process of understanding itself, something akin to the relationship of having eyes (mediation) and being able to see (understanding) (see Short 1995: 663-64). However, since this mediation involves different levels, the upshot of the argument is that “by turning off language, we remove the sociolinguistic from the equation and are left with a non-linguistically mediated core of being in the world without language” (Short 1995: 668). What Short is not claiming though, is that this non-linguistically mediated common core is the same as that conceived of by Forman as a ‘pure consciousness event’, since the latter is dependant solely upon interpreting understanding as a product of our sociolinguistic concepts. The problem with Forman’s interpretation, according to Short, is that though it is conceivable, it creates a gap which “offers nothing other than itself to constrain our understanding”. On the other hand, his understanding of the non-linguistic experience of being in the world without language is able to traverse any gap since it is “a product of the interaction of what is there (the non-linguistic experience) and what we bring to it (the signs, concepts, distinctions, categories, etc. - the conventions that constitute our language” (1995: 670). However, Short does accord that the PCE may be possible, “perhaps even as a consequence of the same behaviour that disables language” (1995: 668). What he questions is its value, whether it can be related back to the socio-linguistic world.

Though Short’s scheme is promising, it is doubtful that he has provided a sufficient reconciliation for Forman’s thesis, since the central thesis for Forman is the possibility of *unmediated* experience rather than the existence of a common core. Towards the end of his paper, Short parallels the non-linguistic mediated experience to experiences of being “in the zone”. This unfortunately, somewhat muddles and over-generalizes his discussion since such experiences tend to be spontaneous and isolated unlike mystical experiences which are argued to be tendentially cultivated. Notwithstanding these critiques, Short’s paper is worth noting.

Another attempt at reconciling the theses represented by Katz and Forman, is presented

by Michael McLaughlin (1996). Taking his clue from Katz's call for a two-pronged approach to mysticism studies, McLaughlin argues that both the positions are well represented in the scholarship and are therefore part of one objective as far as mysticism studies are concerned. The two approaches to be undertaken, as noted from Katz (1978), are one, the "careful, expert, study of specific mystical traditions . . . to uncover what their characteristics are and especially how they relate to the larger theological milieu out of which they emerge", and two, "fundamental epistemological research into the conditions of mystical experience . . . to lay bare the skeleton of such experience so far as this is possible" (see McLaughlin 1996: 179). McLaughlin's argument is that the first approach is being more clearly addressed by Katz and co-contributors as evidenced by the three anthologies edited by Katz (1978, 1983 and 1992). According to McLaughlin, though it is Katz who also called for the second line of inquiry, he himself has not demonstrated this approach. The central issue with this second approach, seems to be that of what McLaughlin calls "the conscious subject", that is, a focus on the subject as the maker of meaning (see 1996: 183). According to McLaughlin, this type of inquiry, though it is being more clearly addressed by Forman, is also represented by some co-contributors to Katz's anthologies, for example, Peter Moore and Robert Gimello, whom McLaughlin calls "incomplete contextualists" (1996: 179). McLaughlin calls the general view represented by this approach, "cognitionalist" thus highlighting the main focus as being on the epistemic role of mystical experience.

As far as the views expressed by the 'incomplete contextualists' and by Forman *et al* are concerned, McLaughlin may be correct in highlighting their complementarity, however the view expressed by Katz himself, is more difficult, if not impossible, without modification, to see as reconcilable to studies arguing for 'pure consciousness'. It is interesting though, to note that Katz had already been challenged on the need to pursue approach (2) of his methodology (see Huston Smith 1987: 557). His response then was to simply point out that he was simply calling for an investigation into the nature of mystical experience not for the identification of a *generic* mystical experience (see Katz 1988: 752-3; Smith 1988: 759).

The latter, would of course, undermine Katz's thesis, while the former maintains ambiguity. It is unlikely that Katz would change his view, that is, he would remain averse to generic approaches.

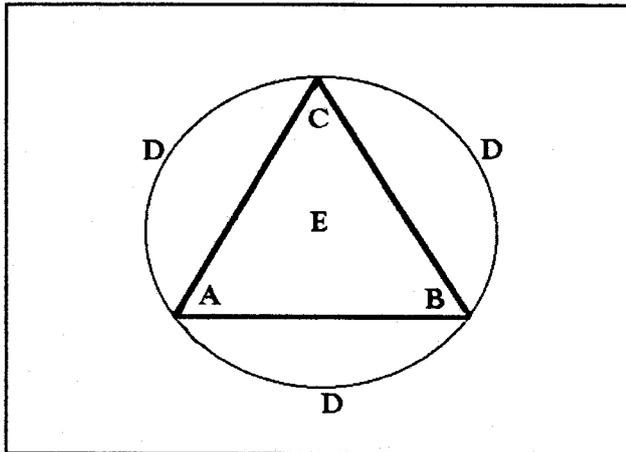
Bruce Janz (1995), rather than reconciling, attempts to dismiss both the Katz and Forman theses. While displaying initial appreciation for Katz's thesis, Janz is also concerned to show that the essential premise of the arguments by both the 'contextualists' and the 'essentialists', is the underlying assumption "that mystical experience is analogous to sense experience" (1995: 87). According to Janz, this underlying assumption is something that has been arbitrarily misapplied to mysticism from a view arising from philosophical empiricism advocating a positive relationship between sensation and knowledge. Janz's counter is that mystical experience displays certain key characteristics, namely being "hermeneutical" and "non-intentional", that are undermined by this empiricist/pragmatic approach. By 'hermeneutical', Janz wants to show that experiencing and understanding are contemporaneous aspects of mystical experience. By describing mystical experience as 'non-intentional', Janz is simply pointing out that unlike the conception of sensation, mystical experience does not entail a subject/object split.

The main argument Janz advances is in relation to what he calls the 'hermeneutical model', which he illustrates with an analogy of reading a novel (1995: 89-92). The applied argument is that, contrary to the essentialists and contextualists, mystical experience is not *really* primitive experience nor is it *really* constructed experience. According to Janz and his 'hermeneutical model', there is no dichotomy between these two central factors. Janz's argument is that both these elements are part and parcel of one experience. Robert Forman (1996) who critiques Janz's paper, finds the analogy of mystical experience as akin to the contemporaneous experience of reading a novel helpful, however, he finds Janz's denial of mystical experience as incorporating aspects of sensation as not truly representative. Forman also finds Janz's thesis as predicated on trying to understand non-intentional (mystical) experience on the basis of the analogy of an intentional experience (reading a

book). His main corrective to Janz's thesis is therefore both for the recognition of the implicit presence of sensation in mystical experience and for the sense of immediacy (non-intentionality) required in mystical experience.

The general trend of the preceding papers (section III) seems to suggest the need for the recognition of the efficacy and centrality of both context and a region of "primitive" or "primordial" awareness to mystical experience. J. S. Krüger (1995), has offered a model that seems to bring these varied and disparate views together into a harmonious whole. Krüger's model is of a triangle circumscribed by a circle (see below). The three points, A B C, represent the sociological, biological and psychological dimensions that come into play in the formation of what Krüger calls 'human depth experiences'. The sociological dimension A represents "the conditioning, structuring and controlling role of society and its ideas" (Krüger 1995: 276). The tendency here is towards conformity, so that a mystic always operates in a given socio-historical context. Point B on the model represents the biopsychic or prepersonal dimension, and emphasises the embodied rootedness of human experience, that is, this dimension allows for "a descent into and a rediscovery of the forgotten realm of primordial images and experiences that sprout from the biopsychic constitution of the mind, phylogenetically rooted in the prehuman layers of life and non-life" (Krüger 1995: 280). The reflection is that in the end, all human experience is connected, through evolution, to a primordial realm. Point C of the model is the uniquely individual and personal dimension. "Here the focus is not on social pressures or on biological drives, but on the *subjectivity* of the *individual* human being, who through introspection discovers the inner world of experience" (Krüger 1995: 284). According to Krüger, A to C overlap and operate on the level of 'science', but are in turn circumscribed by an overall religious framework, represented by D (the matrix/universe) and E (centre point). D represents "the overall conditionalist perspective", that is, "the multitude of interacting biological, environmental, climatic and other factors influencing human existence" (Krüger 1995: 277, 275-6). D correlates with E, "the centre-point or *origo*: the eternally creative 'now'-'here'",

“the idea of the empty, ever-renewing centre of the world”, “the opening of consciousness to infinity, to origin itself” (Krüger 1995: 275, 276, 289).



- A - Social Dimension
- B - Primordial Dimension (rootedness in prehuman, prepersonal existence)
- C - Individual, Personal Dimension
- D - Matrix of the Universe (the overall contextual dimension)
- E - Centre-point (non-diachronic *origo*)

(Adapted from J. S. Krüger (1995), pg. 275)

Krüger’s holistic model is informative in that it points to the varied dimensions that need to be considered in the interpretation of mystical experience. The dimensions point to the possibility of two general and interrelated approaches for the study of mystical experience, a scientific perspective (A to C) and a religious perspective (D and E). The scientific perspective allows for the presentation of [A] conditionalist theories, [B] neurophysiological and neuropsychological studies, and [C] phenomenological interpretations. The religious view allows for [D] an exploration of how experience relates to questions about the nature of the universe and [E] the question of a dynamic source and how it relates to the human situation. However, in the end, “the two perspectives must converge not through shrinking the web of contextuality in any way, but through expanding it to cover *more* than historical links and sociolinguistic conventions, and to cover the human species in its *entirety*” (Krüger 1995: 279) The model therefore highlights how accommodative and embracing consideration of mystical experience really is, that is, it is much wider than Steven Katz’s thesis and the ensuing dialogue that has arisen for a view largely restricted to A, the social dimension.

Endnotes

1. A rough indicator of the general trend is evident in the number of dissertations per year recorded by University Microfilms International (UMI) whose subject was mysticism. From 1975 to 1978, the average per year is 9. From 1979 to 1982, the average jumps to 28. 1983 to 1988, average 30. 1989 to 1993, average 41. 1994 to 1997, average 47.
2. A list of early pivotal works would include the following; William James *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902); Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (1909); Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (1911); Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (1922); Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West* (1932); Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* (1957); Robert Charles Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (1957); Walter Terence Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (1960).
3. These are the two issues that Bernard McGinn sees as central to what he sees as a distinctly Anglo-American emphasis in the philosophical discussion of mysticism. See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, 314. McGinn (*ibid.*) also highlights three distinct movements to 20th century mysticism studies, theological approaches, philosophical approaches and third, comparativist and psychological approaches. According to this classification what this chapter concerns would be the philosophical approaches. Arguably, these have become the most central aspect to late twentieth century mysticism studies, and therefore determinative of the other two approaches. In this sense, there is justification for using the word 'legacy' in reference to the philosophical discussions dominating late 20th century mysticism studies.
4. Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (London: Sheldon Press, 1978); Robert K. C. Forman, ed., *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
5. An expression popularized by Aldous Huxley's book of the same title (1945).
6. An argument already made central by Fritz Staal. *Exploring Mysticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

2

MYSTICISM AND THE SEARCH FOR AN INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

From Context to Centre

Late 20th century theoretical studies of mysticism have largely been dominated by a discussion on the socio-linguistic and contextual nature of mystical experience. As presented in chapter one, the two key representative texts in this discussion are the two anthologies edited by Steven Katz and Robert Forman respectively, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978) and *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (1990). The latest work by the two authors display that rather than broadening the discussion, their respective concerns with the exploration of the nature of mystical experience have become more specialised and narrowed. Katz's work has generated into a concern with the nature and use of language in mysticism (see Katz, *Mysticism and Language*, 1992).¹ The primary concern for Katz, is a reconsideration of the thesis of ineffability and the general assertion that mystical experience transcends linguistic analysis since it purports to 'engage' the Ultimate. Katz's argument is predicated upon the concretization of mystical experience; essentially that the only concrete dimension available in its consideration is mystical literature and beyond that the issue is one of linguistics. The author who had had the foresight to see what Katz's thesis on the contextual nature of mystical experience would lead to is Carl Keller. Keller, who contributed to Katz's 1978 anthology, had sounded that in the end, the study of mystical literature should be "dealing with languages, and with languages alone" (1978: 95).

Notwithstanding Keller's foresight, the problem with this kind of an approach is that it has less and less to do with the central aspects of mysticism per sé. Without a consistent reference to the larger subject, such studies easily lend themselves as ends in themselves. What is in danger of being lost is the larger religious context of the mystical quest.

A similar kind of development can be noted in the extension of Forman's work into the field of the scientific study of consciousness. To some extent, this is a natural development since Forman's work has primarily been focused on considering mystical experience through what he has called the 'pure consciousness event' (PCE). In a paper delivered to the Tuscon II conference *Towards a Science of Consciousness 1996*, Forman has extended this category to include two other types of mystical consciousness, the 'dualistic mystical state' (DMS) and the 'unitive mystical state' (UMS). Identification of the DMS emanates from the recognition that mystical experience often results in the mystic having the sense, "of being in touch with his or her own deepest awareness, experienced as a silence at one's core, even while remaining conscious of the external sensate world" (Forman 1996a: 10). This is an important step towards the recognition that mystical experience is more than an event (the PCE) and is rather the cultivation of a state of awareness (the DMS). With this interpretation, PCE's are seen to be ultimately grounded in something more pervasive, the 'dualistic mystical state'. Such a caveat is what was lacking in the discussion of mystical experience emanating from the 'Katzian' thesis that Forman and others have responded to. The 'unitive mystical state' as identified by Forman is something that has generally been attested to in a variety of mystical traditions. The general interpretation is that it points to a sense of realization of the conjoining of the self and all reality. Overall, the gist of Forman's presentation is for the recognition and exploration of what mysticism points to as regards the nature of human consciousness, namely the need to make a "distinction between awareness per sé and the ordinary functional processes of sensation and thought" (1996a: 14). The suggestion is that awareness acts as a "non-localized, quasi-spatial" transcendent field of reality that allows for the participation of ordinary individual human

consciousness (see Forman 1996a: 11-14).

While the recent work by Forman and Katz both point to a deepening of their respective theses, it hardly needs reiteration that the paradigms informing both their projects as far as the central nature of mysticism is concerned, still remain unresolved.² Points of note at such resolution have already been presented (see chapter one). The overall need that was expressed was for a comprehensive and holistic vision into which the diverse viewpoints may be articulated and harmonised. This is where Krüger's model for understanding 'human depth experiences' is of outstanding value. It points to the larger view that must be present, either immediately or as an undertow, in all considerations of the nature of mysticism and concomitant experience. More often than not, such a larger view is what is missing from the presentations arguing for or against the radical interpretation of the contextual nature of mystical experience.

Krüger's model reflects two dimensions to mysticism, what may be called the 'context' of the mystical quest and the 'orientation' of the mystical quest. The former is what Krüger identifies as A to C in his model of the universe (see Krüger 1995: 275). A to C highlights the concretised context in which mystical experience and the mystical quest occur. Each of the views, the sociological, the biological and the personal/psychological, allow for scientific explorations of the nature of mystical experience. However, that allowed, it is the views D and E, that allow for the distinctiveness of mysticism as a religious phenomena. It is these perspectives, perspectives about the ultimate nature of the universe (D) and the idea of a dynamic and non-diachronic centre to reality (E), that highlight the primary orientation of mysticism and the mystical search. These two perspectives are fundamentally linked as orchestrating and pointing to questions about the ultimate nature of humanness. Reflections on the nature of the universe (D), intimate a sense of this ultimate horizon whether the initial perspective is distinctly religious or is scientific, as in the work of Albert Einstein or Stephen Hawking. D eventually fades into E, and becomes a search for an articulation of "the never-ending moment by moment emergence of events from and their

return to E the centre point or *origo*" (Krüger 1995: 276). It is the exploration of this perspective that marks and highlights the central aspect of a search as an exploration concerned with mysticism. It may be stated that without presenting a view to E, it is questionable that any analysis can come close to presenting a view that may be called the view of mysticism or the mystics. This is why the understanding or acceptance of the larger view is so needed in analyses of mysticism that fall primarily in the range of what Krüger identifies as A to C, the scientific range. The view to E is therefore something that needs to be incorporated into the analyses of the diverse contexts of human religious experience (A to D) and needs to be seen as something that all the other contexts proceed from and return to.

Ultimately, how the view to E is interpreted constitutes the overall framework with which an investigator interprets and understands mysticism. The view to E, the idea of a dynamic, non-diachronic source and *telos* of reality, something that allows for presence and participation, is something that we may rightly describe as 'God'. The search for an interpretive framework for mysticism is therefore, in this regard, a search for the recognition of the dynamic movement at the centre of reality, and a search for the door or doors to participation in this movement. Such a search is not the reiteration of a belief, but rather an exploration of what is there and what presents itself as something already known. Mysticism is therefore the search for the identity, the unclenching, of what is at the centre of reality. It is a search for intimacy with an absence that presents itself as a fleeting presence. What needs to be emphasized is that mysticism is a search, or rather the attempt at articulating ways of searching. In that sense, the ultimate goal of mysticism is not salvation but rather the way of search itself, predicated on the idea that the search is the goal, that the seeds of the ultimate goal are already incorporated in the journeying.³

Central to the articulation of E is what may be called the 'divine mystery', the recognition that at the centre of reality is something that can only be searched for and found on its own terms. This is where the source of frustration with certain kinds of knowing that are so

central to academic explorations of mysticism arise. The nature of divine mystery as something to be approached on its own terms will not pander to curiosity and 'objective' investigation. 'Objectivity' but not in the sense of 'objectification' is allowed in that there is freedom to take certain steps that in the end allow for the goal, a view or a truth of the way things are. The steps themselves may be paradoxical, but in the end they are not contradictory. They allow for the transformation, not necessarily the relinquishment, of the human tendency for the control of the subject matter. This is something that the mystics have known and appreciated from the beginning. The expression of frustration with this approach is to bracket out what may be said about the divine mystery at the centre of reality.⁴ The alternative is to, as it were, dive into the depth of what mysticism is about, and to articulate something that can echo from different coasts, perhaps giving distinctive voice but with a recognition that the echoes are of one sound. Much has been said about the so called 'perennial philosophy' that there is no need to reiterate the discussion here (see chapter one). What needs to be said in light of that whole discussion, is that the idea of multiple dynamic sources at the centre of reality is at best simplistic or ulteriorly derived and does not take due cognizance of our common humanness; our ability from diverse human shores to articulate something that resonates with a sense of the truth which is recognisable. What needs to be allowed is that what Krüger has labelled as E at the centre of reality, is something that is together, that is, though it may not necessarily be singular, it is something that represents a unitary 'dynamic' source for reality.

In seeking to articulate the divine mystery, what must not be lost is the concretised reality of the human context, the overall contextual dimension (circle D in Krüger's model). In the end, the articulation of an interpretive framework that starts at the centre also has to affirm the social, biological and personal dimensions of reality. This is not to say that everything must be proved to be true, rather that the model must show fluidity of fittedness, it must show that different dimensions may be accounted for without making any of the other dimensions obsolete. As stated before, this is why articulations of frameworks for

mysticism that start from the concrete reality (dimensions A, B or C of Krüger's model) but bracket out an understanding or an interpretation of the ultimate nature of reality (dimensions D and E) are misleading as to the nature of mysticism or mystical experience. This is not to say that all dimensions must be accounted for all the time, rather that everything must be in view all the time.

Between East and West

The study of mysticism has increasingly shown that two predominant views are at play in the articulations of mysticism from different traditions. The two views are what may be called 'mysticism eastern philosophy' and 'mysticism western philosophy'. This is a rough generalization but one that is attested to in diverse literature.⁵ While there is some truth to the assertion that these philosophies are geographically derived, there is better reason to think, not in terms of geography, but rather in terms of the philosophy represented by each respective demarcation. In this sense, mysticism eastern philosophy must be seen as representing the idea, mostly characterised by Indo/Asian traditions, briefly, that at the centre of reality is *emptiness* (silence). Mysticism western philosophy would be the idea largely represented by the Near/Middle Eastern approach, that at the centre of reality is *fullness* (word). Another way of interpreting the respective philosophies is the understanding that mysticism western philosophy understands the ultimate nature of reality as *positive* and the response to it as one of *affirmation*. On the other hand, the idea represented by mysticism eastern philosophy would present ultimate reality, not as *minus*, but rather as *zero*, or as *no-thing*. The response to this presentation of ultimate reality would be one of the *negation* of reality. Such a use of the word *negation* does not represent the *denial* of reality but rather the *disregarding* of reality. Another corollary interpretation is that mysticism western philosophy would reflect the idea of ultimate reality as having *personal* distinctiveness, or as having *being*, while mysticism eastern philosophy would highlight the non-existence of such personal distinctiveness or 'beingness' to ultimate reality. While the words *impersonal*

and *non-being* have been used to identify mysticism eastern philosophy, such identifications need qualification. These words do not quite fit the eastern category because 'impersonal' denotes the idea of one thing as less than another thing, and 'non-being' only gains relevance in conjunction with the idea of 'being'. Contrary to these, the central idea of mysticism eastern philosophy that needs to be maintained seems to be the idea of *emptiness*, the lack of distinctiveness to what is considered as the ultimate. These are the rough demarcations between mysticism western philosophy and mysticism eastern philosophy. For the sake of reiteration, it needs to be stated that the ideas are not geographically bound since both presentations have been articulated by mystics whose geographical roots lie in the West and in those whose roots emanate from the East. Geographical delineation, though accurate to some extent, only highlights the fact that one idea is predominant over the other in the respective locale. Perhaps it might be better to speak of these west-east philosophies as the mysticism of *fullness* and the mysticism of *emptiness* respectively, or alternatively, the mysticism of *being* and the mysticism of *nothingness* (cf. Krüger 1995: 133; Carter 1990: ix-x, xxxi-xxxiii, xxxvi-xxxviii).

What the preceding highlights is that any search for an interpretive framework for mysticism has to reckon with at least two predominant views about what is at the centre of reality. This issue more directly faces comparativist studies of mysticism whose subject matter traverses the two predominant views, that is, those studies that consider mysticism as both centred on the idea of 'being' and on the idea of 'nothingness' or alternatively, 'fullness' and 'emptiness'. Surprisingly, very few studies have made such a comparativist approach a central aspect of analysis. Judging from its title, one might consider Rudolf Otto's *Mysticism East and West* (1932) as meeting that criteria. However, notwithstanding the implication in its sub-title (*a discussion of the nature of mysticism, focussing on the similarities and differences of its two principal types*), Otto's book is really an exploration of the mysticism of two key mystics one from the geographical West and the other from geographical East, whose mysticism though four centuries apart, shows a tremendous spirit of kinship (see Otto

1932/[1970]: 15, 95). According to the non-geographical qualification made above, the mysticism of Sankara and of Eckhart which is the subject of Otto's book, may rightly be called radical explorations of the mysticism of *fullness* (theistic mysticism). In this sense the mysticism of both Eckhart and Sankara would fall into the range of what was noted above as mysticism western philosophy. Nonetheless, Otto's book functions at and occupies a significant place in the historical development of the exploration of the nature of mysticism, East and West. As one of the early books which, though haltingly, explores the echoes of congruity between the religious sensibility of personages from the East and West, it highlights the pervasiveness of the mystical quest across varied boundaries. However, Otto is keen to qualify that what he is not arguing for is the idea that "mysticism is always just mysticism, is always and everywhere the same quantity" (*op. cit.*, 14; cf. 157). What he maintains instead is that "in mysticism there are indeed strong primal impulses working in the human soul which as such are completely unaffected by differences of climate, of geographical position or of race" (*ibid.*). Otto therefore suggests a way of approach in considering the comparative formation and nature of mysticism, East and West.

The surprise about Otto's book, considering the time of its appearance, is the suggestion of congruity between the explorations of a Hindu mystic and a Christian mystic. That in itself was a significant boundary to overcome and there are signs that Otto, in part B of his book, was uneasy with and had to qualify his thesis of congruity. Thus Eckhart's mysticism as opposed to Sankara's is reconsidered as more dynamic; less abstractive; humble; as more objective; as ethical rather than a-moral; as world valuing (see Otto 1932/[1970]: 191, 196, 200, 208, 225, 229). Notwithstanding these annotations, the main dimension of qualification for Otto is the mystical experience. It is with regard to mystical experience that Otto argues for the idea of differentiation in general. The reason as Otto puts it, is that "the point of departure and the essential distinction is not that the mystic has another and new relationship to God, but that he has a different God. This difference of object results in a difference of relationship, but it is the difference of the object itself which is the

determining factor” (*op. cit.*, 158). Thus, though both were not highly experiential mystics, the mystical experience of Sankara would be figured as essentially different from the experience that Eckhart would have, this despite their highly congruous depictions of Brahman and Godhead.

Despite the preceding qualifications and hedging by Otto, what he had achieved and indicated as potential sources for a comparison between mysticism eastern philosophy and mysticism western philosophy has continued to yield results for such an endeavour. More significantly, his highlighting of Eckhart as a mystic whose ideas find an echo in eastern sources, created an avenue for the comparison of Christianity with the Eastern religions, primarily Hinduism and Buddhism. The attraction of Eckhart in the carrying out of such comparative studies is his conception of God and Godhead. This is the very point upon which Otto begins his study of the mysticism of Eckhart and Sankara. What Eckhart does is extend the normal Platonic conceptions of God as Being, thereby radicalizing them as Otto highlights here:

Eckhart contrasts the “Deitas” with “Deus,” the Godhead with God. God is for him the conscious, personal, tripersonal God of Church doctrine. This self-knowing, thinking, self-contrasting, and as such, strictly personal God, is “God.” But, “God becomes and disbecomes,” says Eckhart. . . Out of the Godhead comes God: Godhead is the ground of His possibility, and He is enfolded again within the Godhead in the course of the “God process.” The seer has to pass beyond “God” into the silent void of the Godhead itself. That is the highest vision, and whoever still has “a God” has not yet reached to the highest and the last. He stands only at the verge of eternity, but not yet within it. (Otto 1932/[1970]: 23)

It is this reflection of “Godhead” that closely parallels Sankara’s conception of Brahman beyond the Hindu personal God, Ishvara. Like Eckhart’s Godhead, Brahman is conceived of as that which is unchanging, without distinction, nameless, indefinitum, infinitum (see Otto 1932/[1970]: 24-28). Otto identifies such an understanding as reflecting the “numinous” character of what each of the mystics conceive of as beyond what may be called Pure Being or Highest Being. The character of what lies beyond these conceptions indicates something

“incomprehensible and inexpressible, so that every predicate which could be used would veil and upset the very conception” (*op. cit.*, 22). It is therefore not only Eckhart but Śankara, who also displays the paths of linkage between theistically grounded religion and religion based on the idea of emptiness. However, the surprise is really Eckhart in that he is both regionally and historically separated from where such ideas are prevalent. Śankara had the backdrop of interaction with Buddhism so that his philosophy may be considered as reflecting his attempt to respond to the challenge of the Buddhist conception of reality.

Eckhart's development of a complimentary philosophy is even more impressive in that it opens up other avenues of comparison with mysticism eastern philosophy, that is, conceptions other than his understanding of God and Godhead. Joseph Politella in his article *Meister Eckhart and Eastern Wisdom* (1965), identifies at least three other areas of complimentation between Eckhart and the East: creation; the relationship between knowledge and salvation; and the application of meditative practices (Politella 1965: 122-132). According to Politella, creation for Eckhart is an eternal now, an appearance making visible what is already of God. It is also expressed as a beginning in God and with God. The Father speaks in the Son and through that *Logos* causes all things to be. It is the birthing of the Son that is continually taking place. Politella points out that this conception of creation is recognizable in Zen and Vedāntist thought where creation is seen as an illusion, a figure of speech necessary for time-space understanding, but one that is not real in fact. What is real is the Eternal, the void. In the end such a conception of creation in both Eckhart and the East is a reflection of the understanding that “the real _ finds expression in the visible world, but the expression is not the essence” (Politella 1965: 126). Paths to salvation for Eckhart, Vedānta and Mahāyāna Buddhism are predicated on what is understood to be “saving knowledge”, a knowledge which according to Politella “transcends the categories of the discursive mind . . . can be expressed only analogically by words . . . is an intuitive knowledge (*op. cit.*, 128). The emphasis is on how the uncreated became the created. Through such a reflection, one gains an insight into how the created may

return to the uncreated. It is a soteriology based upon knowledge (see Politella 1965: 127-128; cf. Endnote 3). This immediately leads to a comparison of the respective forms of meditative and contemplative practices in the pursuit of the "saving knowledge". All seem to concur that "the purified life must always come before the beatific vision" (Politella 1965: 129). Personal purification and detachment from illusory attachments are highlighted. Generally, such practices are considered to be the spiritual ascent to a revelation or entrance into the reality of God (see Politella 1965: 131-32).

It is clear from the preceding that one cannot underestimate the role of Eckhart in the carrying out of any dialogue that seeks the articulation of an unmarked territory between mysticism eastern philosophy and mysticism western philosophy. Perhaps if not Eckhart per sé, then at least an exemplifying of the methodology with which he approached and broached mysticism western philosophy to reach ground which is recognised and appreciated by both mystics and philosophers from the East. One of these Eastern philosophers who has had a further influence in deepening Eckhart's mediating role is Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki through his book *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* (1957). However, before considering that work, it is also crucial to highlight another book published the same year as Suzuki's that has had a watershed effect on the comparativist studies of mysticism. That book is by the Oxford don, Robert Charles Zaehner and is titled *Mysticism Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience*.

The occasion for the writing of Zaehner's book was the publication of Aldous Huxley's book *The Doors of Perception*. What Zaehner probably did not foresee was how his response to Huxley would determine the course that later mysticism studies would follow after his book. Huxley's book had been an exposé of his 'mystical' experiences through the use of the drug mescaline. What had irked Zaehner was Huxley's apparent conclusion that "praeternatural experiences . . . must all be basically the same and that what he experienced under mescaline can therefore be related to the highest concepts of religion which the mystic claims to realize at least in part" (Zaehner 1957/[1961]: ix). A corollary concern with Zaehner was the

underlying theme of Huxley's book that mysticism and mystical experience was always and everywhere the same. The question of the differentiation of mystical experience was therefore central in Zaehner's response to Huxley. By this highlighting of mystical experience, especially through the creation of a dialogue based on a controversy, drugs, Zaehner's book created the pattern of response for such dialogue, namely, a preponderant concern with mystical experience, as is evidenced by two of the main responders to Zaehner, Walter Stace (1960) and Ninian Smart (1965). This pattern of dialogue and focus of study continued into the contemporary discussion as was highlighted in chapter one of this study. In a way, social developments in the Anglo-American culture continued to give sustenance to this focus of study throughout the 1960's and 1970's. In the Western cultural phenomena of those decades, the concern with Eastern spirituality evolved into a concern with the psychedelic awakening of spiritual experience. The seeds that had apparently spurred Huxley on to his experiments had thus generated enough of a ground-swell to begin a social movement. It continued to be furthered by the studies and psychedelic experiments of Timothy Leary and Alan Watts in America and by Zaehner himself in England.

The approach Zaehner takes in providing bounds for Huxley's claim is to make a clear distinction between nature mysticism on the one hand and religious mysticism on the other hand. With respect to religious mysticism, Zaehner makes a further distinction between what he describes as monistic mysticism and theistic mysticism. It is this latter distinction which concerns us here although the former, Zaehner's exploration of nature mysticism, takes up more than two thirds of the book. This is understandable since Zaehner's argument is to try and restrict Huxley's and like presentations into the range of nature mysticism and so limiting the basis for its comparability with religious mystics. Zaehner's book is therefore important on at least two fronts, one, on the nature of mystical experience and of its relationship to 'natural' experience and two, it is important for comparativist studies of mysticism. In the latter respect, Zaehner's book, by making a decided distinction between monism and theism, has generated as much commentary as his distinguishing of psychedelic

(mystical) experience from mystical experience.

The basis upon which Zaehner compares and distinguishes between monism and theism is by highlighting the mysticism of Sankara as monistic and to be distinguished from the theistic mysticism of Christianity (cf. Otto's use of Sankara as theistic mysticism *Mysticism East and West*, 1932: chp. 10). By Zaehner's estimation, "Sankara bases his whole philosophy on those Upanisadic passages which proclaim that the individual soul is identical with the Brahman, the Absolute, World Soul, or God. This leads him on to the logical and inevitable conclusion that all diversity must be illusion, a self-deception practised on itself the Deity" (1957/[1961]: 153). With this interpretation of Sankara, one wonders what Zaehner would have to say about Eckhart. Not surprisingly, Zaehner calls Eckhart a "near monist" (*op. cit.*, 21). There is some hesitancy on Zaehner's part on labelling Eckhart monistic, thus Zaehner is content to say that he *appears* to be monistic or such other qualified statements (see Zaehner 1957/[1961]: 205-207).

Zaehner's evaluation of monistic mysticism is that it is precariously grounded. First off, according to Zaehner, the 'monistic' claim for the absolute oneness of God as pure monad cannot be sustained. That is, in the end, all religions have to make room for the conception of plurality as inherent in the One, since without it, the potential for the finite is not possible. There seems therefore, according to Zaehner, no basis for one to argue, as the 'monists' do, "that nothing finite can issue from the infinite" (*op. cit.*, 167). The basic assertion that cannot be maintained as a result, is the idea of any and all pre-existent souls as being equal to the infinite. This means that the oft made claim by the monistic mystics that through a process of abstraction they have become God, is mere illusion. It is seen as a failure to distinguish between 'self' and the 'second self' that appears at the end of the abstraction process. According to Zaehner, "the temptation is that with the finding of this second self the aspirant after spiritual perfection should think that he has reached his goal and that the 'second self', the *atman* of the Vedānta, is God" (*op. cit.*, 173). Basically, the problem of monism is therefore one of a lack of completeness, a failure to reach the true

goal. The true goal that monistic religion falls short of, is interpreted as the theistic realization of the personalness of God, namely, that "the end of man is not to participate in God in the mode of 'an insensible object' . . . but in the mode that is specific to the mystic as a human person, as 'an individual substance of rational nature', and as the image of God himself" (Zaehner 1957/[1961]: 189). By implication, from this argumentation, Zaehner sets up a hierarchy between monism and theism, with monism seen as having an inadequate view of God and therefore as the lower of the two. This is problematic since on this very point, Eckhart's example would contradict Zaehner's assertion. Eckhart's mysticism actually represents the radicalisation of the theistic view of God. There is therefore a basis for one to argue through Eckhart that the stunted view is a theistic view of God that has not been adequately explored. Such an argument would reverse Zaehner's conclusion.

Zaehner has been criticised in many different places for his interpretation of 'monism' and of its relationship to 'theism'.⁶ A good example of such criticism highlighting the key problematic areas of Zaehner's comparative study is Ninian Smart's 1965 article. Smart is most concerned about Zaehner's analysis and his lack of distinction between mystical experience and its interpretation. Allowing for such distinction would have made it possible to see 'monistic' and 'theistic' mystical experience from a common essential base that would still have allowed for differentiation in that the experiences could be seen as differently interpreted. From this basis, Smart argues that there is no specific theistic mystical experience, only an experience that is so interpreted. According to the construction (see Smart 1965: 80-81), reported theistic mystical experiences tend to have a high degree of hetero-interpretation due to the ramifying doctrinal schemes that they fall into. "For example the term 'God' in the Christian context gains part at least of its characteristic meaning from such doctrinal statements as: 'God created the universe', 'Jesus Christ is God', 'God has acted in history', etc" (Smart 1965: 79). By implication, 'monism' through the very attempt to undo such specifications would tend towards less ramification and may therefore be closer

to a *description* as opposed to an *interpretation* of mystical experience.

A second major concern for Smart is Zaehner's use of Buddhism as an example of monistic mysticism. What makes Buddhism stand out from such a classification is its denial of the existence of an eternal *soul* or *ātman*. What Zaehner sees as the monistic claim for undifferentiated union with the Absolute, therefore becomes a problematic formulation as far as Buddhism is concerned. Textual applications are also key for Smart's criticism. The mystic Zaehner cites most often in highlighting the shortfalls of monism is Ruysbroeck. According to Smart, Ruysbroeck's criticism of the 'quietists' as tending towards 'monism' may simply reflect that the 'quietists' were not making use of ramifying sources in their interpretations and does not entail that their contemplative experience was of a different kind. Ruysbroeck's criticism could therefore support Smart's thesis equally as well. Overall, Smart's thesis and criticism is that there is no essential difference between what Zaehner had classified as monistic mysticism on the one hand and theistic mysticism on the other.

More recently Zaehner's views have been reiterated and reconstituted by Nelson Pike in *Mystic Union* (1992) and by Michael Stoeber in *Theo-monistic Mysticism* (1994). Pike's thesis is a defence of Zaehner's classification and of the possibility of a specifically *theistic* mystical experience. At bottom, Pike's argument is that states of mystic union are fundamentally theistic experiences. Thus even though a 'monistic' mystic may reach a state that may be described as lacking a subject-object split, it is still a theistic experience, despite that description. The reason, according to Pike, is that;

. . . this negative description fails to capture an element of positive content that results from the fact that the climax moment of the paradigm union experience is preceded by a specifically theistic experience having dualistic structure. Given this context, while the final stage might be classified as "empty," it would be more appropriate to describe it as . . . an awareness of *identity* or, more specifically, as an awareness of *God-soul identity*. . . "God-soul identity" expresses a *lack* of experiential content. But it is not *just* a lack: it is a very specific lack . . . namely, the felt distinction between oneself and God. (1992: 164-65; cf. 189-90.)

Pike's central argument here is that what gives non-differentiated experience its significance is its theistic, that is, dualistic grounding. Pike is therefore offering a basis on which to distinguish theistic mystical experience as a separate phenomenological category, something he feels Zaehner had not accomplished. From this perspective, *Mystic Union* does not quite fall into the range of comparative studies as such, especially of what would fall into the range of mysticism east and mysticism west as demarcated above. Michael Stoeber's book on the other hand, more easily falls into this category.

As the title of Stoeber's book suggests, the attempt is to articulate a dialectical framework for the interpretation of theistic mysticism and monistic mysticism. Stoeber's essential thesis is that monistic mysticism ultimately tends towards theistic mysticism. The reason is that monistic mysticism cannot remain centred on the impersonal character that constitutes monistic mystical experience, that is, it always has to re-interpret and re-present itself in personalist categories, thereby tending towards theism. The upshot is that monistic mysticism amplifies into theistic realization. Stoeber thus suggests and sees the presence of what he calls a *theo-monistic* hierarchy between theism and monism. There is deliberateness about this formulation, that is, it is a *theo-monistic* hierarchy and not a *monist-theistic* hierarchy. Stoeber sees the latter as not accommodative of theistic interpretations, while the former construction allows for both. Stoeber's argument is therefore for the recognition of three types of mysticism, personalist theistic, impersonal monistic, and a dialectic between the two, *theo-monistic* experience. According to Stoeber, Eckhart, Ruusbroec (Ruysbroeck) and Rāmaṇuja would represent mystics whose interpretations fall into the range of *theo-monistic* mysticism, that is, mystics who represent both a pre-monistic and post-monistic typology. Stoeber's *theo-monistic* hierarchy therefore forces the consideration of monistic experiences as a necessary corollary to the achievement of the higher theistic experiences. The connection is made tenuous in the following passage;

The idea in the *theo-monistic* hierarchy is that one must experience a radical spiritual transformation in order to encounter most intimately an active and personal Real.

Monistic experiences are associated with this transformation, as one uncovers and experiences their divine Self which lay hidden beneath a powerful and pervasive layer of egoism. . . Through realization of the essential unity of the Source of one-Self and all things one opens up the possibility of divine communion. (Stoeber 1994: 55)

According to the argument, the dialectic of the theo-monistic hierarchy is one of progression from, by implication, a cathartic experience of the realization of the unity of all things as represented in monism, progressing to an interrelation between God and the human. Monistic mysticism with its radical non-duality is seen as involving the sense of self-surrender, of the giving up of the ego in the process of identifying with something larger. This self-surrender is seen as leading to the greater realization of the possibility of communion between the mystic and the divine. The realization opens up the possibility of theistic personal interrelation between the two. Monistic mysticism is therefore seen as a necessary but lower level corollary to theistic mystical experience.

There is something to be said here about Stoeber's use of a dialectical 'hierarchy' of monism and theism. While Zaehner made a clear distinction between the two, though obviously preferring theism, Stoeber actually makes monism a 'lower' form of mystic realization, something in-between Rudolf Otto's 'numinous' realization and the higher personalist theistic realization. This construction of course, forces the view that monism is an incomplete form of mysticism. According to Stoeber's recognition of monism, this would include Buddhism, Sāṅkya Yoga and Advaita Vedānta. By building a hierarchical dialectic, Stoeber also implies a sense of gradation to the Absolute. This view requires qualification since according to Stoeber, "the Divine in this typology is understood to be both static and active, non-dual and distinctive, impersonal and personal. The hierarchy proposes a Divine dialectic wherein the monistic and theistic elements of the Real are reconciled at both a theoretical and a practical level" (1994: 19). Stoeber's framework falls short in that it fails to provide a full reconciliation between the perspectives in view, that is, it fails to follow through on the *kataphatic* and *apophatic* dialectic Stoeber calls for (*op. cit.*, 4) and what that would involve;

namely, the rejection of the idea of gradation in the nature of the Ultimate. Notwithstanding this glaring oversight, Stoeber's book at least points in the right direction, that is, to the need of a search for a mediating dialectic between what we interpret as mysticism east and mysticism west. Such a dialectic should be one that would recognize the efficacy of each of the predominant viewpoints and at the same time allow for mutual recognition and enrichment.

The problem of disagreement between mysticism 'east' and mysticism 'west' as highlighted by the texts examined above, is of a primary focus on the issue of *mystical union*. What is not clear is that this focus leaves out too much of what was classified above as mysticism eastern philosophy. This omission presents a problem in accommodating what may be called a true framework for the interpretation of mysticism east and mysticism west. The studies in question have not really broached the fundamental contradiction between the mysticism based of the idea of 'God' and the mysticism based of the idea of 'un-God'. This seems to me the central issue between mysticism western philosophy and mysticism eastern philosophy. In this regard, concern about the relationship between monism and theism, rather than being a comparison of mysticism east and mysticism west, are really problems of relationship within a family or classification. The issue here is not whether one highlights the presence of God and the other the silence of God, but rather, whether union with God results in undifferentiated union (monism) or differentiated union (theism). The one key text among those mentioned above that would to some extent fall into the true category of comparison between the two classes of mysticism east and mysticism west would be Suzuki's *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist*. Though focusing on only these two religious views, the two central issues of differentiation fall into the categories of mysticism western philosophy and mysticism eastern philosophy identified above. Suzuki's text is therefore of some importance in highlighting the issues that need to be addressed in order to frame a concept that would affirm and yet still distinguish between these two types of mysticism.

Given the comments made above about Meister Eckhart and his expression of Christian

mysticism, it is not surprising that Suzuki chose him as the key representative Christian mystic. From a Christian perspective, perhaps this is problematic, but a side comment here about class comparisons and the formulation of a holistic framework could put Eckhart's use by Eastern mystics and philosophers into perspective. In making class comparisons with a view to formulating an interpretive framework, the place to begin is not with the most representative of the two classes, but rather with those groups or units most amenable to the opposed view. The aim then would be to highlight those elements that allow such groups or units to appear to have an insight for the other view. It is from such regions of mutual affirmation that the formulation of a holistic framework may then be constructed. It is in this light that Eckhart's mysticism and of his appreciation by Eastern authors should be viewed. In the same way, it should be in this light, from a Christian perspective, that Eckhart's controversial interpretations and his brush with the Inquisition must be viewed. The emphasis of suggesting an interpretive framework is therefore on making a beginning. Once such a beginning has been made and bears the satisfaction of the parties involved, the frame of interpretation may be expanded, if possible, to cover or to try and cover those representative cases closer to the centre of each of the classes. Clearly, a *beginning* is where Eckhart's role falls into, at least for Otto and Suzuki, though for Otto it was for a different purpose, a comparison of mysticism east and west based predominantly on 'geography' rather than 'philosophy'.

Suzuki's book *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* (1957), is therefore predominantly a comparison between the mysticism of Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism. More than anything else, the point of connection between the two is the presence in Eckhart's writings of interpretations that are amenable to the central doctrine of Zen Buddhism and Buddhism in general, namely, the doctrine of *Sūnyatā* (Emptiness). For Eckhart, the ideas interpenetrate from his views on Time/Eternity, Creation and the nature of God. Thus for Eckhart, from Suzuki's interpretation, God's "creativity is not historical, not accidental, not at all measurable. It goes on continuously without cessation with no beginning, with

no end. It is not an event of yesterday or today or tomorrow, it comes out of timelessness, of nothingness, of Absolute Void" (1957/[1969]: 13). The 'Absolute Void', the 'nothingness' corresponds to Eckhart's interpretation of Godhead. It is this theme that makes Eckhart an attractive figure for mysticism East and mysticism West comparisons. The intrication between the ideas of God and Godhead is similar to the intrication between the Buddhist interpretation of Emptiness and Samsāra (birth and death / ordinary existence). In Eckhart, the central idea this theme highlights is the procession of God or the becoming of God out of the Godhead. The subtlety of the notion is expressed in the following words by Eckhart: "before there were creatures, God was not God, but rather he was what he was. When creatures came to be and took on creaturely being, then God was no longer God as he is in himself, but God as he is with creatures" (as quoted by Suzuki 1957/[1969]: 71-2). The becoming of God is therefore linked to the becoming of creation, a dynamic multiplaneous happening, but not in the sense of a chronological event. Eckhart as it were, suspends these ideas in an understanding of a timeless absolute now. God out of Godhead does not become in the sense of time, but rather God and Godhead are intricated in a dynamic process of being and becoming.

The preceding are the ideas that Suzuki finds very attractive in Eckhart. They are another way of explicating and representing the Buddhist doctrine of Emptiness. Central to this representation of the view of God, is the view of a dynamic process of inherent 'contradiction' and paradox. This paradox seems to be what is also at the centre of the conceiving of reality as Emptiness. That is, as Suzuki points out, "to say "empty" is already denying itself. But you cannot remain silent. How to communicate the silence without going out of it is the crux" (*op. cit.*, 29). The way of recovery is in the way that words are now used and not in that words are used or even that words are avoided. The way of constructing this way of using words is what is echoed in both Eckhart and Zen Buddhism. In Zen Buddhism, the attempt is to communicate the ultimate nature of reality (Śūnyatā) by attempting to get beneath the words to something that they conceal, something that

cannot be apprehended by direct observation. Suzuki gives several such transcriptions in his book, mainly they take the form of a 'contradictory' question and answer (*mondo*) pointing to the presence of something larger (see Suzuki 1957/[1969]: 49). The purpose or goal of this process is to grasp immediately, to see and then come to an understanding of the nature of reality. In Zen Buddhism this consists of the grasping of an understanding of the meaning of *Sūnyatā*, though negatively, it also a realization of what *Sūnyatā* is not, namely, absence, extinction or vacancy.

Absence, extinction, and unoccupancy - these are not the Buddhist conception of emptiness. Buddhists' Emptiness is not on the plane of relativity. It is Absolute Emptiness transcending all forms of mutual relationship, of subject and object, birth and death, God and the world, something and nothing, yes and no, affirmation and negation. In Buddhist Emptiness there is no time, no space, no becoming, no-thingness; it is what makes all these things possible, it is a void of inexhaustible contents. (Suzuki 1957/[1969]: 28)

That which can be grasped from the preceding is what Suzuki calls the 'Isness' or 'Suchness' (*tathatā*) of reality. That is, one does not accumulate a knowledge about it, one gets to see. It is this seeing that leads to a sense of knowing (*jñāna*). What one gets to see and know is that the Suchness of ultimate reality is Emptiness, but not understood as something which just is, but rather as something which bears with it what Suzuki calls 'self-identity'. "Self-identity is to be distinguished from mere identity. In an identity we have two objects for identification; in self-identity there is just one object or subject, one only, and this one identifies by going out of itself. Self-identity thus involves a movement"; "This is where lies "the mystery of being," which is "the inexhaustibility of the Emptiness"" (*op. cit.*, 30; 32). Thus, Suchness leads to Self-identity and this self-identity is upheld in Emptiness. Everything is held and accounted for. Suzuki sees all three expressions as indicating one and the same thing in Buddhist philosophy (see Suzuki 1957/[1969]: 56).

From Eckhart's perspective, the term 'Isness' is fundamentally linked to the nature and reality of God. 'Isness' is the Isness of God. Most importantly, the application of the term

is towards the realization that the Isness of the 'Soul' is the Isness of God. According to Eckhart, God gives and what he gives is not anything but rather himself. Without a grasping of this essential claim, all searching is to no avail. Indeed, to live life without an exploration of this understanding is to be lost from God, an expression of primeval sin, the attempt to live without an acknowledgement of the 'Godness' that is central to being Human. Everything turns for Eckhart, on the relationship between the Soul and God. The intricacies of the relationship between the Soul and God are worked out or are rather clarified, in the ambiguous notion of what Eckhart describes as 'a little turning point';

The union of the soul with God is far more inward than that of the soul and body. . . how stands it with the soul that is lost in God? Does the soul find herself or not? To this I will answer as it appears to me, that the soul finds herself in the point where every rational being understands itself with itself. Although it sinks in the eternity of the divine essence, yet it can never reach the ground. Therefore God has left a little point wherein the soul turns back upon itself and finds itself, and knows itself to be creature. (as quoted by Suzuki 1957/[1969]: 61)

There are essentially two ways of viewing what Eckhart is expressing by his term 'a little point', or more closely 'a little turning point'. According to Suzuki, one explanation is to see the expression as pointing to the fact that the soul can never reach the reality of God, that it is forced to turn back and recognize that it is only a creature. This explanation would mean that there is an unsurpassable gap between God and the soul. The other explanation, which Suzuki favours and sees as acknowledged in other Eckhartian writings, would be to see the expression as signifying a point where the infinite touches the finite, where 'Godness' and 'Creatureness' intercept, an axis around which God and the soul move (see Suzuki 1957/[1969]: 61-3; 68-9). The recognition of the soul's creatureliness is not done away with, rather it becomes the fulcrum around which, at the point of that recognition, it sees the other side or rather sees that God has revealed 'himself'. One thinks here of the symbol of infinity ∞ . The little point would in that symbol, be the centre of the sign that makes possible the notion of infinity. In itself, the point looks like a finite point, a dot, but it is a finiteness that holds together the two dimensions in a ceaseless dynamic movement of

infiniteness. The passage of one into the other bears the intimation of that which is to come, not fully there but promises to be present. As that one comes, the memory of the other passes but is recollected, sought for, reached out for. Without this turning point, there would be no communicability between the dimensions. For Suzuki the 'little point' corresponds to the Zen Buddhist notion of *satori* (see *op. cit.*, 63). To strike the point would be to have a *satori*, to be at the place where one can look in two directions, Godwards and Creaturewards. It is as it were, to see with God's eye. This little point is highly significant and suggestive for Suzuki as he makes very clear here;

Eckhart's "little point," according to my view, is not just a point which stays stationary. It moves or rather revolves and this movement is taking place all the time. That is to say, the point is a living one and not a dead one. Therefore as soon as we come to this point God may make us turn back toward creatureliness but at the same time he does not forget to remind us of the other side of the point. If the point is stationary and points just one way, we cannot even turn back to ourselves and find ourselves to be creatures. The reason we can turn back is because we can move on and see into the ground (*grund*) of the divine nature. (1957/[1969]: 68)

Several key points for the search for an interpretive framework for mysticism east and mysticism west issue from Suzuki's comparative analysis of Eckhart and Zen Buddhism. These are significant in that they highlight aspects of what needs to be present in the search for a theoretical framework that would affirm the distinctive, but in my perspective, conjoined dimensions of mysticism as articulated through mysticism western philosophy and mysticism eastern philosophy. The first of these key aspects would be reflection on the nature of Ultimate Reality, no matter what qualifications need to be made to such a notion. As already pointed out, the two main 'opposed' views see Reality as 'Fullness/Being' on the one hand and as 'Emptiness' on the other. The next key dimension follows from the conjoining of the two aspects into a paradox or an apparent contradiction. A point of note here is that this expression of paradox is not something absent from each of the views of mysticism western philosophy and mysticism eastern philosophy, that is, in the 'Western' view, the expression would be the recognition of both 'Being' and 'Beyond-Being' and in

the Eastern view, as represented by Zen Buddhism, the expression would be the recognition of Śūnyatā (Emptiness) and Saṃsāra (ordinary existence). The theoretical framework therefore needs to recognize this presence of paradox or apparent contradiction in the way reality is understood. The next key aspect would be the articulation of some way, the identification of a way of articulating the apparent contradiction while at the same time affirming it, that is, not eradicating it. Thus an approach needs to be found that tries to get to the root of the paradox, to uncover its source and expose it, even if momentarily. Fourthly, the search for an interpretive framework for mysticism must recognize and identify a key, a crux, a turning point that keeps the whole process kinetic not allowing it to rest on any plane as final. It is these four aspects that are central to the articulation of a holistic interpretive framework for mysticism. Other aspects may be added but these appear to me to be necessary in the articulation of that which affirms what is central to both mysticism east and mysticism west.

A/Negative Apophasis

Apophasis is a Greek term that means 'negation'. It is a negation related to speech, so that apophasis may be described as an 'unspeaking' or a 'speaking away' (Sells 1994: 2-3). What is in view here could therefore be termed 'non-negative negation' or 'non-negative speaking away'. Corollary expressions in related literature that have the same sense are *via negativa* and *negative theology*. 'Via negativa' identifies something achieved through a process of negation. However, the expression by itself, without further specification, does not catch the nuances involved in the specific kind of language approach to be explored here. On the other hand, 'negative theology' while indicating that the main subject of discourse is speech, language or thought about God, of a negative nature, the word *theology* has a restrictive western historical sense that excludes it from the eastern perspective that needs to be in view here. The expressions *via negativa* and *negative theology* are therefore to be laid aside in the search for an articulation of a holistic theoretical framework for mysticism.

These may be recalled, but only with the sense that the articulation being presented is of something that goes beyond the simple negation of affirmations.

Sometimes apophasis is taken as being antithetical to 'kataphasis', which is generally expressed as 'positive speech' or 'affirmation', however this is a simplistic opposition. The arising of apophasis as a mode of discourse, while related to kataphasis, is not simply a corrective application to positive speech. In this sense apophasis is as equally applied to negative speech. Since the word apophasis already refers to negation, something more than simple negation is being referred to here, that is, "Apophasis is a discourse in which any single proposition is acknowledged as falsifying, as reifying. It is a discourse of double propositions, in which meaning is generated through the tension between the saying and unsaying" (Sells 1994: 12). 'A/Negative apophasis' is clearly what Sells has in mind here, that is, something that crystallises in the regions between the simple expressions of 'apophasis' and 'kataphasis' and does not rest on either one as complete.

In the West, the clear delineation of what may be identified as an 'a/negative apophasis' first occurs in the *Enneads* of Plotinus, although Deirdre Carabine has made cogent arguments for its roots as emanating from the Platonic tradition (see Carabine 1995; cf Sells 1994: 5). How does this whole process begin and why is it needed? Plotinus' *Ennead* 5.5.6 catches the movements that make this type of discourse necessary. According to Plotinus;

The First must be without form, and, if without form, then it is no Being; Being must have some definition and therefore be limited; but the First cannot be thought of as having definition and limit, for thus it would be not the Source but the particular item indicated by the definition assigned to it. If all things belong to the produced, which of them can be thought of as the Supreme? Not included among them, this can be described only as transcending them: but they are Being and the Beings; it therefore transcends Being. Note that the phrase 'transcending Being' assigns no character, makes no assertion, allots no name, carries only the denial of particular being; and in this there is no attempt to circumscribe it . . . Its definition, in fact, could be only 'the indefinable': what is not a thing is not some definite thing. We are in agony for a true expression; we are talking of the untellable; we name, only to indicate for our own use as best we may. And this name, The One, contains really no more than the negation of plurality . . . If we are led to think positively of The

One, name and thing, there would be more truth in silence: the designation, a mere aid to inquiry, was never intended for more than a preliminary affirmation of absolute simplicity to be followed by the rejection of even that statement: it was the best that offered, but remains inadequate to express the nature indicated. (Plotinus, *Ennead* 5.5.6; tr. Stephen MacKenna)

There is hardly any need to reiterate what Plotinus so clearly (through MacKenna) expresses here. Something is in view and that 'something', Plotinus has termed the One or that which 'transcends Being', but still, these expressions are seen as inadequate, they are only for the means of discourse. What would be better would be to express silence, but how does one express silence, tell the untellable? (cf. Suzuki 1957/[1969]: 29). One could cease from speaking, but that is not what Plotinus is doing, since he has chosen to speak 'the indefinable'. Of necessity then, everything said has to be unsaid and the result is that "the authentic subject of discourse slips continually back beyond each effort to name it or even to deny its nameability" (Sells 1994: 2). This is the essence of 'a/negative apophasis'. It is no surprise then, that John Scotus Eriugena who stands in this apophatic tradition speaks of the 'Beyond Being' as *nihil* (nothing) and as that out of which all else flows (*creatio ex nihilo*) (see Ducklow 1977:110-11). Eriugena gathers the formulation of this assertion mostly from the pseudo-Dionysius and also from Gregory of Nyssa (see Sells 1994: 36).

It was pseudo-Dionysius, once thought to be a contemporary of St. Paul hence 'pseudo', who through his writings on what he called 'mystical theology' was to have a profound effect on the western mysticism of the Middle Ages. The instrumental person in this transmission was Eriugena through his translations of the Dionysian corpus. What Dionysius had asserted was the dynamic interplay of kataphasis and apophasis in the formulation of the divine mystery. More than in any other text, it is in the short but influential treatise *Mystical Theology* that Dionysius lays down the parameters for an 'a/negative apophasis'. In order to know the divine mystery, Dionysius writes that it is "by not seeing and not knowing we may see him who is beyond all seeing and knowing through this very act of not seeing or knowing" (in *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works* 1978: 212). Knowing

and seeing the divine thus constitutes an unseeing and an unknowing. Like Plotinus', the process involves a non-committal use of words and language, which when used, "we collect them all together and put them away in order to know clearly the 'unknowing' (pseudo-Dionysius, *op. cit.*, 214). Clearly, the recognition of these apophatic mystics is that the divine mystery cannot be captured in words.⁷ Words are thus made redundant and are forced to point beyond themselves to something else, the transcendent. However, even that designation is rejected since it suggests 'these' as against 'that'. Thus stipulations of the divine mystery as indicating 'nothing' already intimated in Plotinus (see for example *Ennead* 5.2.1), are made central by Eriugena and before that are present in Dionysius' struggle to find words to name the unnameable;

And so we who have begun our denial and removals by reaching the 'highest' of the things we can understand say that God is neither soul nor angel; he has no imagination or opinion or reason or understanding; nor is he reason or understanding; nor can he be described or understood. Moreover . . . he has no number, order, greatness, smallness, equality, likeness, unlikeness; he neither stands still nor moves, keeps silence nor speaks. (in *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works* 1978: 217)

While the Western search for an a/negative apophatic language is something that comes through a series of apophatic movements, in the East the ultimate conception of reality is more immediately grasped as 'Emptiness'. Thus in the East, the identification of transcendent reality is *radicalized*, which simply means 'going to the root'. By the very assertion of Emptiness, the eastern conception is an immediate refusal to identify an objective referent. As already indicated in this study, the representative expression of this notion is *Sūnyatā*. The other expression, much quoted, is as stated in the Heart Sutra of the *Prajñā-paramitā*: *Form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form; form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness; whatever is emptiness, that is form* (as quoted by Masao Abe 1990: 27). The effect of this reading is to keep the Buddhist concept of Emptiness from reifying into a static kind of emptiness. According to Abe (*ibid.*), Mahāyāna Buddhism clearly rejects an attachment to the notion

of emptiness as an end in itself. *Sūnyatā* needs to be continually reiterated as a 'fullness' when it is recognised as 'emptiness', and when recognised as 'fullness', it needs to be reiterated as 'emptiness'. In this sense, to translate *Sūnyatā* as simply meaning 'emptiness', while correct as an initial stance, always needs to be recast into the dynamic movement of emptiness and fullness. In another form, as already pointed out above, this Buddhist articulation of ultimate reality is recast into a dialectic of *Nirvāna* and *Samsāra*. The notion of *Sūnyatā* is then restated as follows: *Samsāra-as-it-is is Nirvāna; Nirvāna-as-it-is is Samsāra*. *Nirvāna*, the attainment of ultimate reality through the transcending of *Samsāra*, is therefore also transcended, and what remains is Emptiness. All of these expressions are therefore caught up in a ceaseless process of negation, so that the "negation of negation is no less than the affirmation of affirmation. The transcendence of transcendence is nothing other than the immanence of immanence" (Abe 1969: 19). The struggle is to express not the alternation of one thing and then the other, but rather to force through their very fusion the emergence of Ultimate Reality and 'that' when it is grasped is Enlightenment.

Another Eastern tradition whose philosophical roots lie in the articulation of an ineffable transcendent but immanent reality is Taoism. The very name Taoism recalls what is at the centre of this articulation, 'Tao' or simply 'Way'. The Tao is therefore both referent and way of being. What is of relevance here is the approach that Taoism takes in its exploration of the Tao and as hinted, the very approach is predicated upon the nature of the referent. Thus the famous words of the *Tao Te Ching* begin "The Tao that can be described is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name". By extension, the way of approach to the Tao oscillates around naming and unnamings, signifying and designifying. In the lesser known text of later Taoism the *Xisheng Jing*, the admonition given is to "Use the Tao to question the Tao" (in Kohn 1991: 238). This becomes quite paradoxical when considered in the light of what the Tao represents. For example, this is how Kohn describes the Tao: "It is deep and profound, vague and mysterious, and it cannot be named, grasped, heard or seen. It is emptiness and non-being, the latent state of highest

potential underlying created things, yet always present, never lost" (1991: 218). One can appreciate from Kohn's description what is involved in the *Xisheng Jing's* admonition to 'use the Tao to question the Tao'.

There is some question as to whether Lao Tzu, the purported author of the *Tao Te Ching* actually existed and if so, whether he is the major contributor to the text (see Lau 1963: xi-xiv; cf., Palmer 1996: xiii), nonetheless, what clearly comes through from the reading of the text is the uniformity of a preference for subtlety, elusivity, and the need for an indirect approach in all matters where the Tao is in view, an approach that favours negation. This is a central tenet of Taoism as represented by the *Tao Te Ching*. According to Lau, this also represents the basis upon which the Tao is often referred to in the text as 'Nothing':

. . . the term 'Nothing (*wu*)' is sometimes used for the *tao*, because, if we must characterize the *tao* by one of a pair of opposite terms, the negative is preferable because it is less misleading. It follows that as 'Nothing' is preferable to 'Something' so are other negative terms to their positive opposites. (Lau 1963: xxix)

Thus the *Tao Te Ching* in this vein, indicates that "As a thing the way is / Shadowy, indistinct. / Indistinct and shadowy, / Yet within it is an image; / Shadowy and indistinct, / Yet within it is a substance. / Dim and dark, / Yet within it is an essence" (XXI.49); "This is called subtle discernment: / The submissive and weak will overcome the hard and strong" (XXXVI.79a); "The way never acts yet nothing is left undone" (XXXVII.81); "The superior must have the inferior as root; the high must have the low as base" (XXXIX.86); "Turning back is how the way moves; / Weakness is the means the way employs" (XL.88); "The way conceals itself in being nameless" (XLI.92); "Great fullness seems empty, / Yet use will not drain it; / Great straightness seems bent; / Great skill seems awkward; / Great eloquence seems tongue-tied" (XLV.101); "The way of heaven / Excels in overcoming though it does not contend, / In responding though it does not speak, / In attracting though it does not summon" (LXXXIII.179). Linked to all these realizations is the model of a person who puts it all into 'active inaction' (*wu-wei*) or one who acts according to the way of the Tao. Such

a person is whom the text describes as the sage, one who “knows without having to stir, / Identifies without having to see, / Accomplishes without having to act” (XLVII.107).

Most importantly, although Taoism is often referred to as signifying the union of opposites, the yin and the yang, D. C. Lau points out, and I think correctly, that this is not the emphasis of the *Tao Te Ching*. As evidenced above, there is a distinct pattern of an indirect approach to related issues, that is, rather than the approach of mere opposition between them. According to Lau, presentations of relative oppositions are more central to *The Book of Changes* than to the *Tao Te Ching* (see Lau 1963: xli-xlii). The *Chuang Tzu*, another key Taoist text, though distinctly narrative as opposed to the more proverbial *Tao Te Ching*, confirms this approach of indirection as central to early Taoist philosophy. In the *Chuang Tzu* we find a way of expressing the Tao that I think succinctly captures what is at play here, something that figures in what I have described as ‘a/negative apophasis’; “The Tao does not have an existence, nor does it not have an existence. By using the title “Tao”, we use a limited term. . . *The Tao takes us to the edge and neither words nor silence are able to describe this. No words, no silence, this is the highest form of debate*” (*The Book of Chuang Tzu*: 234; emphasis added).

What does ‘a/negative apophasis’ as presented above suggest? At some level it suggests that something is in view that allows for the common visioning of what has variously been described as ‘Fullness/Emptiness’; ‘Being/Beyond Being’; ‘Nirvāna/Samsāra’. However, deeper than this, there is the suggestion that in each of the instances given, a way of an approach to Ultimate Reality has been chosen which resonates with the others. This conjoining of East and West in the way of ‘final’ approach to transcendent reality lies in the commonality of realization that that which is conceived of as the Ultimate can only be approached in a limitless manner. With this analysis there is therefore a region in the mystical traditions that appears to constitute unmarked territory - the Void. What does this suggest? Perhaps Thomas Merton has said it best; “Only in the Void/Are all ways one” (as quoted by John Teahan 1978: 263). There are no paths here, no assertions, no dogmas,

or in the words of the Apostle Paul; *there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female*. What is fascinating for me, is not so much the assertions we make about the One, about the Divine Mystery or Ultimate Reality, but rather the fact that 'it/he/shim' forces a particular kind of approach if anything resembling the Ultimate can at all be realized. This of itself does not point to the rightness of each or any of the religions, but rather to the rightness of what is truth at the centre of our reality. This truth is something not confined, not bound, is boundless, there to be discovered, as open mystery. Should it be surprising then, that wherever this truth is approached on its own terms, it echoes? I do not think this echo is an echo of what we generally understand as salvation, but rather of affirmation, of an 'aha'. It points to the grounds for further discovery. This also says something, that it is not us who are in charge of or in control of this exploration. The grounds for further discovery lie in and arise from 'it/he/shim'. 'It/he/shim' determines what is 'salvation'. The discovery we have made, if any, is that the grounds for comparability and commonality between the mystical search East and West, lie not in the varied affirmations (kataphasis) that each of the various religions posit. *There*, even a single statement reifies, concretises what is at the centre of reality and therefore distinguishes and separates. Does this recognition take away from the fact that 'it/he/shim' is properly called the One? No. It does however, plunge any 'serious' searcher into the depths of an unresolvable quandary. Caught up in the morass of contradictory facts and factors, perhaps a truth shines through, that all these apparent formulations are empty, and that very realization becomes the grounds of celebration, of a common *unground*, which also immediately stems the free-fall. Does this mean that the kataphatic assertions of the religions are eradicated? By no means; they are rather deepened and grounded into something larger. This sense of endless exploration is the currency of vibrant religion, anything else is stagnation, petrification.

Endnotes

1. This is the third anthology edited by Katz which extends his initial 1978 thesis. *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
2. A late development is the publication by Forman of a follow up anthology to *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (1990). The second anthology published in 1998 is titled *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy*, Robert K C Forman, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press). According to Forman, the "volume began when the several contributors to *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* suggested, either in their articles or in the correspondence leading to it, that, rather than being the product of a cultural and linguistic learning process, mysticism seems to result from some *innate* human capacity" (1998: vii). The anthology is therefore an exploration of the question of this *innate* human capacity for mysticism. In the general dialogue of mysticism studies, this promises to be a very significant development as it represents a return to a much simpler question much overshadowed in the wake of the critical dialogue generated by Steven Katz's *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978). Indeed, this is the most basic question which needs to be considered. There might not be a capacity to develop an adequate answer based on the nature of the question, but it is in my judgement, an exploration in the right direction. Unfortunately it seems that Forman's new anthology will further serve to solidify the lines of demarcation between the 'Katzian' school of thought on mysticism and mystical experience and the contrary approach gathering around the anthologies edited by Forman. The discussion is by no means over.
3. Here I would argue against Rudolf Otto who sees the central role of the mystical quest, for example in Eckhart or Sankara, as soteriological. See Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932 [1970]: ch. 2).
4. Steven Katz's thesis is an example of this frustration. See especially his 1978 article, "Language, Epistemology and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz (London: Sheldon Press), pgs. 51-59.
5. There are many possible examples of this general demarcation. A few examples of those that would be relevant to the subject of this study are among many others; Rudolf Otto *Mysticism East and West* (1932); Daisetz Suzuki *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* (1957); Robert Zaehner *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (1957); Thomas Merton *Mystics and Zen Masters* (1967); Leonard Angel *Enlightenment East and West* (1994); Michael Stoeber *Theo-monistic Mysticism* (1994).
6. Key representatives of such criticism are; Walter Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1960); Ninian Smart, "Interpretation and Mystical Experience", *Religious Studies* 1 (1965): 75-87; William Wainwright, "Interpretation, Description, and Mystical Consciousness", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45.3 (Suppl. 1977): 989-1010; Philip Almond, *Mystical Experience and Religious Doctrine* (New York: Mouton, 1982); John Sahadat, "The Interreligious Study of Mysticism and a Sense of Universality", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 22.2 (1985): 292-311.
7. Examples of other apophatic mystics are Nicholas of Cusa, Gregory of Nyssa, Marguerite Porete, Ibn 'Arabi, Jacob Boehme, Rumi, Hadewijch; see also Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pg. 221.

BEYOND AND WITHIN: MYSTICISM AS TRANSCENDING

Transcending and Integrating

Rather than being contextually bound, the locus of religion suggests that it is a continuum that embraces the reaches of the beyond, the within and the without. The human situation expresses itself as bound, from one perspective, by mystery, by the unseen that is experienced as both other and 'mother', a realm of the sense of the origin of all things, of life itself. On the other hand, there is the concrete reality of sickness, death, health, birth, food or the lack thereof, and a myriad of other things that constitute what we experience as directly impactive and causal to human existence. Human existence is bound or located between these two dimensions of reality. This locus of openness to a larger view and the constrictiveness of the concrete view may, more than anything else, account for what we see as religiousness among the varied expressions of human culture. Religion is the creation of a dynamic that tries to maintain a tensive harmony between these dimensions of the sense of origin and the impeding reality. A way of viewing this dynamic of religion is in the form of a spiral whose most concentric circles lie within the individual but are continually moving in ever larger circles into both the dimensions of what is posited as the transcendent reality and what is experienced as the 'here and now'. The individual then acts as the point of focus through which the process of reconciliation between these dual movements is worked out and brought into a comprehensive

meaningful whole. This is religion in its most pervasive sense.

What the preceding highlights are the two conjoined dimensions of religion understood on the one hand as 'transcendence' and on the other, as the desire for 'sacredness' in life. However, religion as a life process of these two dimensions is better represented by the two terms, *transcending* and *integrating* (see Krüger 1995: 55; cf. Olson and Rouner 1980). Krüger highlights the integrating function of religion as deeply seated in the human desire to create a 'cosmos' out of the 'chaos' of human existence. The need is a constantly present one; present in all the rounds of human experience and existence, along with the advances in scientific knowledge and its application. The need for the integrating function of religion therefore exists along with the human race in some sort of perpetuity expressing as Krüger puts it:

. . . the deep-seated need to experience the eternally shifting world as a coherent whole in which all things great and small, human and nonhuman, past and present, physical and mental, hang together, and thus to find peace. It is the insatiable longing to move beyond banality, evil, suffering, injustice, ugliness, un-truth and half-truth towards an ultimately integrating horizon. (Krüger 1995: 56).

Religion, from this perspective, is an ultimate and dynamic boundary experience. The boundary is sought for as that which integrates the whole of human existence. In other words, this dimension of religion does not settle upon any solution as final in the search for answers to the questions, 'Who am I?' and 'Who are we?' (see Krüger 1995: 56). The questions thus represent the 'subjective/within' and the 'objective/without' poles of the integrative function of religion. While the integrating dimension of religion may be interpreted as a search for "roots", from this sense, the transcending dimension may be seen as a search for "wings" (see Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn 1996: 4-5). It is the constant search for the ultimate depth and height to every human experience, a refusal to see any resolution as ultimate or as final. It is the insistence that there is more that has not been accounted for, than that which has. While integrating is a search for coherence,

transcending is the disintegrating of any and all such resting ground. Transcending is therefore the call to reach further, the insistence that there is more to be discovered, more to be had than has been shown. Together, these two aspects of religion, integrating and transcending, gather comprehensively the totality of human experience and bound them into what we understand and interpret as the religious quest. Neither one by itself is seen as adequate. The two must be seen as intricately in a dynamic movement of one with the other. It is from the sense of this conjoined movement that religion is interpreted as a spiral movement (see Krüger 1995: 57).

To varied extents, all of the historical religions express participation in the pervasive nature of religion described above. What features prominently is the religion's conception of ultimate transcendent reality. It is this which gives shape and voice to the dual modes of transcending and integrating. The 'locus' of the ultimate in the two dimensions therefore constitutes the final question to be asked and the answer that has to be formulated is how that which is understood as ultimate reality achieves the basis upon which the transcending and integrating aspects of religion are carried out. At both levels, there is therefore a search for ultimate ground. That which explains ultimacy is understood as that which gives both the 'roots' and 'wings' of the religious quest.

Theistic religions formulate the preceding mostly through an interpretation of the *transcendence* of God (God as beyond all dependence) and the *immanence* of God (God as present in all of reality). Taking Christianity as an example, the practical dimensions of this understanding are expressed in the form of relationality between the individual and God and between the individual and 'neighbour'. This dual form of relationality is well highlighted by Jesus' interpretation of the 'greatest commandment', first as one's devotional relationship to God and second, but not the less, as the affirming of this relationship with one's neighbour. These two dimensions of religion are affirmed by Jesus' refusal to give only a unidirectional answer to the question 'which is the greatest commandment'. That is, in answer to the question, Jesus gave 'two' commandments but

persisted that they together constituted the answer to the question, that is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39 RSV). According to Jesus' answer, the greatest commandment is therefore no less than the inherent demand within religion itself to account for a transcending dimension and an integrating dimension. It is the exploration of one's personal relationship to the transcendent on the one hand, and the affirmation of such corollary relationships in other humans, that grounds this Christian paradigm. In both dimensions, love is the central motif.

As always, the eastern expression of the western counterpart, represents a struggle for the grasping of immediacy, that is, while the west does a double take, transcendence *and* immanence, the east at its most radical, tries to force these into a space where neither this nor that, is. The most vivid example of this eastern dialectical expression is furnished by the early Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna's formula is a movement in the tacit expression of all reality as an unresolvable and unsolvable emptiness. The formulation is the refusal of any final settling point for reality, instead, reality is cast into the frame of all the possible conceptions: reality is suchness; it is not suchness; it is both suchness and not suchness; it is neither suchness nor not suchness (see Arapura 1981: 94; cf Richards 1978: 254). The four-point formulation, or 'tetralemma' is a way of expressing the middle way (mādhyamika) of Buddhism and is the basis of the conception of reality as Śūnyatā (voidness or emptiness). The result of the conception is that, "The abiding questions of metaphysics, namely, those about ultimate reality and eternity, become the subjects of infinite brooding. . . everything is absorbed into the Void. The Void is the transcendent, the Void is what is ultimately real" (Arapura 1981: 95). What is key here is the radical exhaustion of all the views of conceiving of reality. That is, rather than simply turning interpretation in upon itself in a dual affirmation (transcendence and immanence), reality is forced into a place where it is expressed as

it is. According to Richards (1978: 254), what is removed is the sense of the beyondness of a transcendent reality, so that what is expressed is grasped most immediately as both 'being and non-being'. Transcending and integrating are worked into a space where the whole of reality is affirmed as 'suchness'.

Coming back to mysticism, what the preceding highlights are the broad forms of relating to reality, that is, as that which is ultimate and as that which is suchness. These both represent ways of indicating the religious dimensions of transcending and integrating indicated above. The rest of this study, chapters 3 and 4, will be an exploration of how mysticism, especially in its apophatic form, expresses these pervasive dimensions of religion since, without hesitation, mysticism is religion. It may perhaps not be religion in its most naked form as sometimes argued, it is probably more the search for range, for that which reaches highest, plumbs deepest, and integrates widest. The question is one of scale rather than essence. The argument ensuing is of a common envisioning leading to a common actioning. What is being suggested is that the forms of apophatic mysticism are a reflection of the pervasive religious expression indicated above, and differ only in the sense of extension and range. What has been hinted at already is that mysticism eastern philosophy has a built-in and inherent largeness of range as central to the religious conviction, whereas the western formulations find this range through a series of apophatic movements and which therefore reach the boundary only in the most radical mystics.

Mystics, as will be represented here, are those that search for the greatest range of expression, take to the utmost, that which is held as the ultimate. For the sake of clarity, the religious dynamic of mysticism will be presented in two sections, representing respectively, the transcending dimension and the integrating dimension. However, it must be understood that such a separation is spurious as far as the mystical quest is concerned, especially so with regard to Buddhist philosophy. In the end there is no two step process. One must move to a place where the two aspects are no longer seen or sensed as being in opposition, hence 'integrative transcending'. To reiterate, the west comes by way of

this through the image of a journeying, whereas the east fits more the image of an abrupt but fluxive metamorphosis (Is it or is it not?). However, what is made central and what forces both expressions, is the mystic's conception of ultimate reality. Mysticism is therefore being interpreted here as an enactment of the mystic's conception of ultimate reality or to put it in another sense, mysticism is a dance with, of, and in 'God'.

Prime Directive

Does mysticism have a crux, a point upon which any and all aspects of such a pursuit derive significance and reference? In many ways, the answer to this question rests upon what has been articulated above as the pervasive nature of religion. Mysticism as far as it is religion has to do with the forging of connectivity between the dimensions of transcendence and concrete reality. Like all juxtapositions of absolutes, the articulation of religion as an accounting for transcendence and immanence requires a movement of final resolution. Mysticism, in its bare presentation, is an articulation of such resolution that struggles to reach the highest and deepest possible reaches of such resolution. The mode of resolution identifies the crux, or what may be called the 'prime directive' of mysticism. Such a crux will be something that ties together in simple resolution, the dimensions of the transcendent and the concrete. The simplest resolution present in the major religious traditions may be summarised as the argument that the transcendent is immanently present. At its simplest, it is the argument that all living things partake of transcendent reality, that it is such participation that gives them that which is akin to their peculiar reality, that which allows for a display of their essence. There is a basic recognition that if any living thing ceased to partake of this reality it would cease to be. Various aspects of resonance of this reasoning are present in the conception of Tao, of Brahman in Hinduism and in the Christian understanding of Spirit. For Christianity such understanding is perhaps best captured in the words of Job 34:14-15 (RSV): "If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would

perish together, and man would return to dust” (cf. Psalm 104: 29-30). The spirit/breath of God is seen to be that which sustains and animates all living reality. The *Tao Te Ching* presents a similar kind of reasoning in its presentation of the Tao as that which sustains all created realities, here called ‘the One’ (see Lau 1963: xv-xvi): “The myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive . . . Without what keeps them alive the myriad creatures might perish” (XXXIX, 85, 85a). Hinduism, as represented by the Upanishads, would accord with this conception and present the idea of Brahman as a non-differentiated element that runs through all aspects of reality and so identified as *Nirguna* Brahman, that is, Brahman without qualities or attributes or distinctiveness.

The preceding basic resolutions to the juxtaposition of transcendence and concrete reality represent the backdrop to the mystical quest. Such a mystical quest begins where the basic resolution is extended or rather concentrated to refer more specifically to the human subject. This basically amounts to an accounting of the self-awareness or awareness of consciousness of the human subject and the ramifications of such awareness for the mystical search. That which is seen as Spirit or Tao or Brahman is interpreted in such a manner that the human subject is seen to have immediate access to it while *it* remains sufficiently differentiated to still be realized as a transcendent ultimate reality. That is, Spirit is not reduced to the level of concrete reality but is rather rooted in the human in an immanently present transcendent realm. From a western perspective, perhaps the clearest articulation of such a frame of interpretation is represented by Meister Eckhart (1260?-1327 CE) and his philosophical progeny, Johannes Tauler (1300-1361 CE). What is central to both their articulations of the central purpose and aim of the mystical quest is the accessibility within the human subject of that which they understand as the ultimate reality, in their case the Trinity, God and the Godhead and for Eckhart more centrally, the idea of the birth of the Son within the human subject. What makes these dimensions of interpretation possible is how the human subject is interpreted as ‘soul’ and how the soul is understood to be related to God.

According to Tauler's presentation, the human subject has at least three distinct dimensions of relationality to reality; "Man is in a certain sense three men: an animal man who lives according to his senses, a rational man, and finally the highest man in the form of God, deiform. It is on this highest level that we should turn to God and, prostrate before the divine abyss" (Johannes Tauler 1985: 167 [tr. Shradly]). At some level the human person is seen as a biological specimen subject to all the ramifications of such a construct, but human beings are further differentiated from the animal through their rational capabilities and the extent ability to apply such rational thought. However, these two dimensions though present in such pursuit, are not the central aspect of the mystical quest. Mysticism as interpreted here begins with the realization that there is a level at which the human person is 'deiform', a form that is related to and reflects deity. It is on this level of deiform that the human subject is able to relate to God and to pursue the mystical search, which is essentially, the (re)discovery of the form of God within.

What is key in the ensuing interpretation is that God is understood to be within the human subject in what is interpreted as the highest point of human being, the apex of the soul. What is interesting, is the insistence of the mystics being considered here that the fullness of the presence of God, of ultimate reality is present in all souls, in all human subjects, whether they are religious or irreligious, evil or good. Whatever it is that is seen as endemic to the nature of the soul is understood to be something that is of very God, incapable of extraction. According to this interpretation, there is something within the human subject that derives from and is of God. It is this that Eckhart at various points labels as 'temple' or 'tabernacle', as the 'spark' of the soul, as the 'ground' of the soul, as the 'agent' of the soul. However, according to Eckhart, all of these labels are beside the point since these expressions in and of themselves are incapable of signifying what is being spoken about:

I have said that there is one agent alone in the soul that is free. Sometimes I have called it the tabernacle of the Spirit and again, a spark. Now I say that it is neither

this nor that. It is something higher than this or that, as the sky is higher than the earth . . . it disowns my adulation and my name, being far beyond both. It is free of all names and unconscious of any kind of forms. It is at once pure and free, as God himself is, and like him is perfect unity and uniformity, so that there is no possible way to spy it out. (Meister Eckhart 1941: 211 [tr. Blakney])

What is clear is that what Eckhart has in mind can only be described as ultimate reality itself. It is 'neither this nor that'. This 'neither this nor that' is what is present to and within all persons. To be human is therefore to have this dimension of the 'neither this nor that', a dimension of ultimacy immediately present in the midst of the human living experience. So near is this dimension of ultimacy that both Tauler and Eckhart describe it respectively as; "more intimate and closer to us than we are to ourselves"; "as near to me as God is. God is nearer to me than I am to myself" (Tauler 1985: 167 [tr. Shrady]; Eckhart 1941: 129 [tr. Blakney]). The key therefore becomes one of the awareness of this dimension of 'Godness' within, since according to Eckhart, "Man is not blessed because God is in him and so near that he *has* God - but in that he is aware of how near God is, and knowing God, he loves him" (*ibid.*). What makes all the difference is whether the human subject realizes what is present, sees what he or she in essence is, and the action the person takes upon such an awakening. Awareness and response to the region of 'Godness' within the human subject thus defines the mystical quest. It is this which identifies the prime directive of the mystical search. The growth of awareness to one's 'Godness' and the exploration of its ramification for life is what informs and sustains the mystical life. Tauler posits the understanding that the opening of awareness to one's 'deiform' is something that is, as it were, available only in the concrete reality of human life as we know it and is therefore something efficacious only in the present context.

Be always aware of the ground within your soul . . . The heavens are the heavenly heart, for every good man is a heaven of God, and even those we were speaking of are carrying heaven within them, though they do not enter it. This is the greatest torment of the damned: to know of that heaven within them and yet not be able to enter it. (Johannes Tauler 1985: 65 [tr. Shrady]).

This interpretation in general, accords with the Christian doctrine of afterlife. However what is unique here is that Tauler seems to suggest, that the damned, that is, those who according to Christian doctrine die unsaved, still retain the 'spark' of the soul. The difference is that whereas they might not have been aware of its presence during this life, they become painfully aware of its presence in afterlife but no longer have the means or capability of entering into the meeting ground between God and human being. This understanding concurs with the picturing of the ground of the soul as of eternal origin, of very God, whether the person is aware or unaware of its presence and whether that person acts or does not act on that knowledge. The torture of the damned is therefore to finally be aware or to have been aware and not have acted and then to find that this awareness has been heightened but that one can no longer become what he or she had all along had it within to be, that is, according to Eckhart, the Son of God. The depth of the sorrow of damned is further heightened in that according to Tauler, "to separate God from this inmost ground would be as impossible as separating Him from Himself. This is God's eternal decree; He has ordained that He cannot and will not separate Himself" (1985: 105 [tr. Shrady]). Thus the 'spark' of the soul will continue to be a reminder of the promise of 'Godness', yet for the damned, unfulfillable; an unfathomable eternal 'so near and yet so far away'.

For Eckhart, the birth of the Son of God in the soul represents the eternal procreativity of God in which the soul is called to participate. It might appear on the surface that what Eckhart is presenting is the idea of the begetting by God of sons, that is, of the realization by as many souls as are capable, that they are 'sons' of God. At some level there is some truth to this assertion, but what Eckhart seeks to emphasize is not so much multiple participations but rather the notion of an eternally enacted singular event that lies at the very centre of the divine reality.

The Father gives birth to his Son in eternity, equal to himself. "The Word was with God, and God was the Word" (Jn. 1:1); it was the same in the same nature. Yet

I say more: He has given birth to him in my soul. Not only is the soul with him, and he equal with it, but he is in it, and the Father gives his Son birth in the soul in the same way as he gives him birth in eternity, and not otherwise. He must do it whether he likes it or not. The Father gives birth to his Son without ceasing; and I say more: He gives me birth, me, his Son and the same Son. I say more: He gives birth not only to me, his Son, but he gives birth to me as himself and himself as me and to me as his being and nature. (Meister Eckhart 1981: 187 [tr. Colledge and McGinn])

The result of Eckhart's assertion of the birth of the Son of God in the soul represents a very radical resolution of the inner tension between transcendence and immanence where the transcendent is made vulnerable and dependant upon the interrelationship between God and the divine enactment within humanity, that is, "the deity depends upon the deity's self-birth, but that self-birth is the same as the birth of the son in the soul. If the soul doesn't receive the divine emanation, if it doesn't let go, if it cannot give birth to the divine act, not only the happiness but the being of divinity is threatened" (Sells 1994: 177). God and humanity, transcendence and immanence, therefore meet on equal ground, and are caught up in an endless dance of life and birth constantly under the threat of death. The one does not stand apart from the other anymore. Transcendence and immanence have been utmostly reconciled.

From an eastern perspective, the preceding interpretation of Eckhart and Tauler, may be understood to be summarised by the words 'Thou art That'. The simple assertion of this statement, present in both Buddhism and Hinduism, is the insistence that what the human subject is seeking or seeks in the mystical quest, one is already that thing. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the insistence would be represented by the argument that one already possesses the Buddha-nature. This simply means that one is already an enlightened being if only he or she could see or realize it. The goal or prime directive, of Buddhist mysticism, to use that term, is therefore simply towards an awakening to the realization of one's already present consciousness as expressed by Thomas Merton here in reference to Zen Buddhism;

What Zen communicates is an awareness that is potentially already there but is not conscious of itself. Zen is then not Kerygma but realization, not revelation but consciousness, not news from the Father who sends His Son into this world, but awareness of the ontological ground of our own being here and now, right in the midst of the world. (Merton 1968: 47)

In comparison to what Tauler and Eckhart argue as displayed above, the nuanced difference with Buddhism is that Buddhism dispenses with the centrality of 'God' in the endeavour. This might sound misinformed, but it needs to be reiterated again, that what is in view for the Buddhist mystic and as for the Christian mystic is their understanding and interpretation of what is ultimate reality. So where Tauler and Eckhart highlight the Trinity and the birth of the Son in the soul, the Buddhist mystic would have in view the nature of ultimate reality as Emptiness. With that backdrop, there is therefore no conceivable need for one to strive through the ramifications of 'relationship'. All one can do is simply realize and enact what one ultimately and already is. Buddhism, and especially Zen, therefore stresses immediacy, indeed according to D. T. Suzuki, the whole incidence of Zen Buddhism is as a result of the insistence that Buddhism is quintessentially enlightenment oriented.

According to Suzuki (1961: 20), at the time of the introduction of Zen, Buddhism was focused on following Buddhist precepts and answering highly metaphysical questions, prompting Bodhidharma and his successors to stress the 'four great statements' of Zen as catching the original spirit of Buddhism, that is; "A special transmission outside the Scriptures; No dependence upon words and letters; Direct pointing to the soul of man; Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood". The struggle of Zen, according to Suzuki (see 1961: 18-19), is to grasp first-hand and not through any intermediary, whatever it is that is there to be grasped. It is the intellect that for its own purposes constructs systems of absolute juxtaposition, such as the one between finite and infinite. What needs to be insisted is that these intellectual distinctions are in the end fictitious. The stumbling block is to take them with finality so that the vehicle usurps

the goal, which is simply the realization of what is there. Suzuki insists therefore that, "the ultimate standpoint of Zen . . . is that we have been led astray through ignorance to find a split in our own being, that there was from the very beginning no need for a struggle between the finite and the infinite, that the peace we are seeking so eagerly after has been there all the time" (1961: 24).

By comparison, the approach at resolution as represented by Tauler and Eckhart, requires an inner movement, a willingness to keep searching for that which in its turn, Buddhism insists on grasping immediately. There is good reason, however, to think that Eckhart arrives at this point of grasping immediately, as evidenced by his attractiveness to eastern thinkers. In being appreciative of Eckhart, one cannot overlook the radicality of spirit that is required for a mystic who follows the western approach to the mystical quest to be appreciated by the east. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the west has so many levels of representation in terms of the varied approaches of those identified as mystics in the tradition. These levels of representation represent more, different stages of journeying rather than the outer limits of the mystical quest which a tradition such as Buddhism, seeks stark and immediate entrance into.

Whatever the distinctions in the approaches, in the end, they reflect that it is the mystic's immediate sense of ultimate reality that shapes the approach of the mystical quest and that which the mystic views as of paramount significance, and that, whatever it is, the argument is that it is something that the human subject is already privy to. Mysticism more than anything else, is therefore a search for the realization of such knowledge or participation. As represented by Eckhart and Tauler, the insistence is that the human subject (soul) has a 'spark', an 'agent', which is a crux between the transcendent and the immanent, between God and human. Buddhism on the other hand, simply seeks to erase such distinctions, to designify them and then grasp reality in its simplicity, as for example in the Zen koan, 'What was your original face before you were born?'

'Self-Transcending

Fundamental to the mystical traditions is the recognition that denial and detachment are necessary if any progress is to be made. On the surface it may appear as if what the mystical traditions call for is simply an asceticism that is self-focused and world-denying, that is, simply the cultivation of mind concentration. Asceticism with this perspective, is therefore often interpreted as simply a means that allows for the realization of a goal, usually some sort of ecstatic experience. It is on this basis that mysticism is at times criticised as a form of religious life that takes flight from the world. Whatever its merits, this form of interpretation and criticism of mysticism only takes issue with the surface appearances and fails to grasp the central matter that lies behind the ascetical practices ancillary to the mystical quest and why they are *sometimes* viewed as necessary. Gathering what has been indicated above as the prime directive of mysticism, the ascetical and transcending practices of mysticism are really a way of affirming the primary focus of mysticism. That is, the issue is to highlight and emphasize what Tauler and Eckhart note as the 'spark' or 'apex' of the soul, or from a Buddhist perspective, one's Buddha-nature. It is the focus on this view of the nature of humanness that when contrasted with the ego-centred and empirically derived ways of viewing the self, gives rise to the need for transcending and ascetical practices. The issue then becomes one of differentiating between an illusory self and the true self, what Thomas Merton interprets here as a distinction between *person* and *ego*:

It is a great mistake to confuse the *person* (the spiritual and hidden self, united with God) and the *ego*, the exterior, empirical self, the psychological individuality who forms a kind of mask for the inner and hidden self. This outer self is nothing but an evanescent shadow. Its biography and its existence both end together at death. Of the inmost self, there is neither biography nor end. (Merton 1961: 279-280)

Further, according to Merton, the ego or outer self must not be equated to the body or the inner self to the soul, since the body and the soul belong together and make one

harmonious whole, the true person. The problem is that the ego distorts this real person united to transcendent reality (God) and acts as a "self-constructed illusion that "has" our body and part of our soul at its disposal because it has "taken over" the functions of the inner self, as a result of what we call man's "fall." That is precisely one of the main effects of the fall: that man has become alienated from his inner self which is the image of God" (Merton 1961: 280). Thus central to this demarcation between the ego and the self, is the recognition that the human scenario or situation in the world has an inherent falsifying flaw, something that is askew and does not allow for a true perception of reality. The ensuing recognition is that there needs to be an adjustment to our way of being if we are to see and point accurately to the truth that lies at the centre of reality. This assertion is found not only in Christianity but also in Hinduism and Buddhism. At base, all represent a need to recognize the illusory nature of human existence when contrasted to the nature of ultimate reality. Merton catches succinctly how this fundamental assertion about the status of human existence comes to play in both Buddhism and Christianity:

Buddhism and Biblical Christianity agree in their view of man's present condition. Both are aware that man is somehow not in right relation to the world and to things in it, or rather, to be more exact, they see that man bears in himself a mysterious tendency to *falsify* that relation, and to spend a great deal of energy in justifying the false view he takes of his world and of his place in it. This falsification is what Buddhists call *Avidya*. *Avidya*, usually translated "ignorance," is the root of all evil and suffering because it places man in an equivocal, in fact impossible position. It is an invincible error concerning the very nature of reality and man himself. It is a disposition to treat the ego as an absolute and central reality and to refer all things to it as objects of desire or of repulsion. Christianity attributes this view of man and of reality to "original sin." (Merton 1968: 82)

'Self-transcending is therefore grounded in the recognition that one needs to adjust the 'normal' ego-grounded view of the world if one is to realize oneself as grounded in ultimate reality, rather than, deliberately or negligently, existing apart from that ground. The key issue is therefore not one of escape from the world but rather of an escape from

a false sense of self that alienates us from who we really are. 'Self'-transcending is therefore an intrepid removal of the ego as the fundamental driving force and orienting locus of the human life. It is a recognition of the something-larger-than-the ego that lies at the centre of reality. In other words, the insistence is that the self, separated from a realization and a conjoining to transcendent reality, is a 'self' that is adrift and therefore illusory. That is, it represents a denial of the 'Godness' of human nature, of the realization of the "Absolute Ground of Being . . . "from within" - realized from within "Himself" and from within "myself," though "myself" is now lost and "found" "in Him"" (Merton 1968: 71). The assertion is for the recognition of the transcendent self of the human subject that is more true to who the person is than what presents itself. This is the basis on which 'self'-transcending operates, as a transcending from a false 'self' to the true self that is masked by the ego-derived view of the world, that is, a view of the world that denies that which is central to the human being, the presence of a fulcrum or a crux within the human subject that is a locus for both transcendent and immanent reality.

The solution however, is not so simple. The central problem in this whole endeavour is what Merton describes as the "spiritual elasticity" of the ego. This elasticity of the ego lies in that the ego constantly asserts the statements "I", "I am" or "I have experiences therefore I am" to all aspects of the mystical quest (see Merton 1968: 73). Thus, any sort of spiritual movement predicated upon a direction that may be called 'progress' is latched onto by the ego which then identifies itself as the basis and reason for such spiritual progress. The 'self'-transcending process is therefore constantly in danger of being subverted since;

. . . the ego trains itself to be so completely elastic that it can stretch almost to the vanishing point and still come back and chalk up another experience on the score card. In this case, however, there is no real self-transcendence. The "trip" that is taken is ultimately a release for and an intensification of ego-consciousness. (Merton 1968: 73)

Basically, this means that nothing can be trusted, because even a state of 'nothingness' that one may achieve may be masked by an ego so thinly stretched that it is hardly noticeable. Such an ego is one able to make itself of non-consequence, only to rebound once the constraining circumstances have been removed. Something more pervasive other than mere recognition of the predicament is therefore required to arrive at a solution to the problem of the elastic ego.

Buddhism's answer to the problem of the elastic ego acts as an 'Occam's razor' removing all signification for any self-acting, self-subsisting entity, that is, anything which may seek or have some form of continuance. The basic argument is formulated into what Buddhism interprets as 'the three marks of existence', non-permanence (*anicca/anitya*), non-substance (*anatta/anātman*) and non-satisfactoriness (*dukkha/duhkha*). Interpreted, these three principles assert that there is nothing which is not subject to change. All is in a state of flux, which in turn means that there is nothing substantive and imperishable, a something that may be termed eternal. According to Buddhism, to deny these facets is to crave for the permanence and substantiveness of existence and constitutes the basis of all unsatisfactoriness simply because such a state can never be reached (see Krüger, Lubbe & Steyn 1996: 111-112). In a way then, Buddhism cuts down the tree to which the viny ego seeks to latch itself to so that there is nothing to possess, nothing that the ego may take hold of, nothing to be attained. Merton interprets this as a complete closing of the door to the ego for entrance into a transcendent realm:

Buddhism endeavours to exclude every possible trick or device by which ego-desire can have its way and salvage itself by its power from the realm of delusion and pain. Buddhism refuses to countenance any self-cultivation or beautification or of salvation that seeks merely the glorification of the ego and the satisfaction of its desires in a transcendent realm. It is not that this is "wrong" or "immoral" but that it is simply impossible. Ego-desire can never culminate in happiness, fulfilment and peace, because it is a fracture which cuts us off from the ground of reality in which truth and peace are found. (1968: 85-86)

So rather than seeking distinction, Buddhism eradicates the tension between the ego (false self) and the person (true self). The grounds for the realization of this erasure lie in the nature of ultimate reality itself. Thus to cease to be in a state of non-satisfactoriness, which is related to the non-permanence and non-substantiveness of all things, is the realization of Sunyata, which is what Buddhism understands as Nirvāna. However, this Nirvāna cannot be something desired or attained, because to desire it or to seek to attain it, is to discover that one is still caught in the cycle of *dukkha* which derives from *anicca* and *anatta*. Rather, Nirvāna, "is the extinction of desire and the full awakening that results from this extinction. It is not simply the dissolution of all ego-limits, a quasi-infinite expansion of the ego into an ocean of self-satisfaction and annihilation" (Merton 1968: 87).

In contrast to Buddhism, in the western mystical tradition, the elasticity of the ego as highlighted by Merton forms the basis for a series of apophatic movements cast into the form of a mystical ascent. Apophasis is made central as a way of designifying any locus upon which the elastic ego may latch itself onto. Marguerite Porete [1250?-1310 CE] in her treatise *The Mirror of Simple Souls* provides an excellent example of this movement and of how 'self'-transcending works as a process carried out in relation to the elasticity of the ego.

The structure of Porete's book represents as series of apophatic movements seen as necessary in the growth of the soul in spiritual ascent. The first stage occurs as a reception of God's grace resulting in the soul's death to sin ushering in the life of the desire to obey God and his commandments. Those who do not progress and only remain at the first stage are those that "do just what God tells them to do, without being concerned for more. They seek honour in the world, but not excessively, not to the point of sin. They enjoy being rich, and hate being poor - particularly if they have been rich once and lost their money - but not excessively, not if it means going against God's will. They enjoy leisure, but are not slothful. They have died to sin and live the life of grace" (Porete 1981:

102 [tr. Crawford]). Porete calls these people “tradespeople of the spiritual life, its wage slaves, meddling with goods” (*op. cit.*, 103).

Progress from the first stage to the second stage occurs when the soul realizes that what is driving one at the first stage is really one’s nature, identified above as the ego. The soul then considers that “God counsels His special lovers to go beyond what He commands. That one is not a lover who can refrain from accomplishing all that he knows pleases his beloved” (Porete 1993: 189 [tr. Babinsky]). The response of the soul to this challenge is one of the mortification of one’s nature, identified by Porete as the death of nature and the beginning of the life of the spirit. One is therefore no longer concerned with delights, honours or riches but rather seeks to accomplish the perfection of the imitation of Christ. This stage is the first one of two stages that Porete identifies as the stage of the spiritual life, that is, the life of a desire for perfection. This stage also represents the state of those, if they remain at this stage, Porete identifies as the “lost souls”:

There are those who completely mortify the body in doing works of charity; and they possess such great pleasure in their works that they have no understanding that there might be any better being than the being of the works of the virtues and death by martyrdom, in desiring to persevere in this with the aid of an orison filled with prayers, in multiplying good will, always for the purpose of retaining what these folks possess, as if this might be the best of what could be. Such folks are happy, says Love, but they are lost in their works, an account of the sufficiency which they have in their being. (Porete 1993: 132 [tr. Babinsky]; cf. Porete 1981: 95 [tr. Crawford])

The problem identified at this stage is one of desire, those who stay here live in a perpetual state of desire, are held back in the life of the spirit and thereby perish. According to the translation by Crawford, the souls here are lost to the life of the spirit in the sense that ‘perished’ goods are lost to a shop (see Porete 1981: 97 [tr. Crawford]). The movement from stage two to three begins with the soul making a recognition:

She sees her will attached to all good works and spiritual comforts, and then truth is borne in on her that she must detach herself from just the perfections that grace has brought about in her, as these are precisely what she has to sacrifice to love. The sacrifice she is called to make is to abstain from all the good works which had in fact become her greatest pleasure. So she abstains from all these good works that pleased her so much and puts her will which had become attached to the life of perfection to death. She seeks only to do the will of others and refuses all inclination of her will, in order to destroy her own will (Porete 1981: 132 [tr. Crawford])

Life at this stage of the will given up to the other is the second level of the life of the spirit, that is, the life of those that are following the path of perfection. At this stage, the soul attempts to give up its own will seen at stage two as a hinderance in the growth of the life of the spirit. The attempt is to give up the centrality of one's will by giving it up to another. Though the soul does not recognize it, this is really a pseudo-death of the will. The giving up of one's will to another's is a pseudo-death in that the soul is caught up in what Michael Sells calls the "paradox of will", since, "a work is any act carried out through one's own will. . . The harder the soul attempts to transcend will, the more she becomes entrapped in it; the more she works to transcend works, the more she is enslaved to works" (1994: 118). Or as Ellen Babinsky put it; "the desired destruction of the will . . . accomplished by the strength of the soul's will . . . indicates that the soul is still willing her own will" (1993: 28). The soul at this stage is finally exasperated, one, at the hardship of always yielding her will to others, but more at the realization that she has not been able to resolve the dilemma of the will. The souls that remains at this stage are described by Porete as the "sad" souls. They are sad because "they see that there is a better way than the one they are following, but they know that their understanding cannot reach it. Knowing this, they see themselves as 'damaged' [sad] in their understanding, and so they are, compared to the perfect understanding of the free soul. Compared to her, they are enslaved by their continuing desire to know the right way" (Porete 1981: 97 [tr. Crawford]).¹

The fourth movement the mystical ascent begins through the thorough and desperate giving up of the dilemma that the third stage represents. The soul abandons both the desire to work for her own will and the desire to work for another's will. This resolution results in an experience of freedom, an experience of transcending the dilemma and of the sudden infusing of contemplative love, the soul "now reveals the secrets of her heart, all the tenderness and sweetness of her love; she melts into the embrace of union from which she receives all love's delights" (*op. cit.*, 133). However this new understanding presents a problem for the soul:

The soul is now in a highly delicate and even dangerous state, in which all she can bear is the touch of love's sheer delight. This she takes infinite pleasure in, and pride, out of the abundance of her love. . . She is convinced there can be nothing higher than the life she now enjoys; love has given her such pleasure that she cannot believe God has anything higher to offer than this love which Love has spread throughout her being. (Porete 1981: 133 [tr. Crawford])

This fourth stage represents a quasi dark night of the soul. It is a reflection that the soul has begun to make an approach to truth.² It is the beginning of a realization, a decided progress towards truth and love. However the soul faces another problem; "at this stage the soul is blinded by the onset of love, seizing her up into bliss as soon as she makes an approach" (*op. cit.*, 134). The longer the soul tries to approach, the darker the night becomes. However, through divine enlightenment the soul realizes that the thing which is giving her the freedom to approach love is the very thing which is preventing her final approach. And that which is allowing her to have the feeling of contemplative love but also hindering her, is her free will. At the reception of this divine enlightenment:

[S]uch divine goodness is poured into the soul, in a ravishing flash of divine light, that she suddenly sees that she must remove this great gift of free will from anything that is not God, and never again place it where he is not. Her will now sees by the spreading brightness of divine enlightenment, prompting her to put her will once more in God, which she cannot do without this divine enlightenment. Her will has to be detached from her own will so that it is given entirely to God. She now sees clearly her own nothingness, and indeed the wretchedness of her own

nature, and sees, by divine enlightenment, that she has to will what is God's will for her without consciously willing it. (Porete 1981: 134 [tr. Crawford])

This realization constitutes an entrance into the life of the fifth stage. Description of this life is what Porete is most concerned with in her book, hence its full title *The Mirror of the Simple Souls Who Are Annihilated and Remain Only in Will and Desire of Love* (see Michael Sells 1994: 118).³ The fifth stage is thus the beginning of the free life, "the lowest point the soul can reach, and from this lowest point she is able to look up and clearly see the sun of God's goodness through the light of his divine favour" (Porete 1981: 135 [tr. Crawford]). Here the clear meaning is that this is the minimum level from which the soul can have a vantage into the reality of God. This is Enlightenment at its most basic level. Of the sixth and seventh stages in Porete's mystical ascent, nothing can be said about the seventh since according to Porete, it cannot be realized in this life. However, the fifth and sixth stages represent the dynamic movement present in what is the life of the free soul.

What is clear from the preceding is the elastic character of what Marguerite Porete calls "the will". The will continuously masks and reinterprets itself through four stages of spiritual life, reaching even a stage that has the appearance of enlightenment (the fourth stage) where the soul may be easily deceived into thinking that she has reached the heights of love. Indeed, according to Porete, departure from this stage, enacted as the annihilation of the soul's will, does not occur except through the reception of divine light. Compared to the Buddhist approach, one can appreciate just how elaborate the western approach is and certainly through that elaboration, more furtive and fraught with danger. Only the hardest and most aspirative of souls are able to press on. As stated elsewhere in this study, the latter approach represents an apophatic journeying, whereas the former is a presentation of immediacy. In the end however, the process of 'self'-transcending arrives at what seems to be the same approach, the annihilation of the will and the assertion of *anicca* and *anatta*.

Enlightenment

Enlightenment in the context of mysticism and the process of 'self-transcending' described above is a catharsis, the moment of the crystallization of clarity and the resolution of an unsolvable quandary. It is in this sense that D. T. Suzuki makes a clear distinction between enlightenment and the results of meditative practices for example, *dhyana*, where the focus is the realization through the quieting of the mind, of a perfect state of voidness where all mental activity has been removed from consciousness. According to Suzuki, this may be ecstasy or trance but it is not enlightenment. Rather, enlightenment (*satori*), is "a general mental upheaval which destroys the old accumulations of intellectuality and lays down a foundation for a new faith; there must be the awakening of a new sense which will review old things from an angle of perception entirely and most refreshingly new" (Suzuki 1961: 262). In Buddhism the 'general mental upheaval' is represented as a result of the impasse that is created in the constant need for consciousness that creates a distinction between the knower and the known. This is what Buddhism understands as the basis of *avidya* (ignorance). It is an ignorance based on the desire of the human will to separate itself in a desire to know itself, an event which Suzuki represents as being of primordial origin:

In the beginning, which is really no beginning and which has no spiritual meaning except in our finite life, the will wants to know itself, and consciousness is awakened, and with the awakening of consciousness the will is split in two. The one will, whole and complete in itself, is now at once actor and observer. Conflict is inevitable; for the actor now wants to be free from the limitations under which he has been obliged to put himself in his desire for consciousness. He has in one sense been enabled to see, but at the same time there is something which he, as observer, cannot see. (Suzuki 1961: 131)

Suzuki is in general agreement with the approach presented by Marguerite Porete, since for Porete:

Although free will has been placed in the soul by the goodness of God, with the

power of the free will, the soul freely removed her will from the will of God. Having removed the will from God, who properly possesses free will, the soul separated herself from God, willing independently from the divine will. To will the divine will is the proper activity of the human will; to will independently of the divine will is what constitutes the separation of humanity from God. (Babinsky 1993: 32)

Enlightenment more than anything else is the departure from the falsity that had been created by the separation of the human will from its original locus, no matter how that locus is represented. By separating itself, the human will became the cause of the arising of consciousness, but through that very act it also became 'ego' because the act constituted a 'fall', an occasion for 'ignorance'. Thus ignorance/fall and the idea of the ego are the same, and both essentially constitute the separation of the knower from the known (see Suzuki 1961: 128, 154). The ego is thus the human will in a state of ignorance. This is what Buddhism equates to the notion of 'soul', which it then dismisses. The dismissal of the notion of soul (anatta/anātman) is based on its evaluation when seen in contrast to Enlightenment. When so contrasted, the very notion of 'soul', is realized as a no-thing (see Suzuki 1961: 132). Enlightenment, so contrasted, is more than just an event which passes but is rather something which *is*. It is something understood as both event and entrance into a reality which is Enlightenment.

The arising of enlightenment in both Buddhism and the mystical ascent described by Porete, is centred on the human will. As should be clear, the notion of 'will' is being used with a much broader sense than the idea of volition. It is rather the locus of human independence, that which drove it from the original source and also keeps it at bay. However, according to Suzuki, the human being cannot long withstand this state of affairs. In fact, the very moment of the realization of consciousness which the arising of the will brings about, also awakens a desire to return to the source of its origin:

[T]he will as actor is bent on going back to his original abode where there was no dualism, and therefore peace prevailed. This longing for the home, however, cannot be satisfied without a long, hard, trying experience. For the thing once divided in two cannot be restored to its former unity until some struggle is gone through with.

And the restoration is more than a mere going back, the original content is enriched by the division, struggle, and resettlement. (Suzuki 1961: 131)

What Suzuki wants emphasized here is the role of the will in the bringing about of enlightenment. The struggle that has to be gone through is the stretching of the will to the breaking point so that the person is "freed from the very notion of an ego-entity . . . the dark spot where the rays of the intellect fail to penetrate" (Suzuki 1961: 139). This dark spot of the ego is where the will discovers that it cannot go beyond its own principle and discovers that for it to come to know, requires the presence of what Suzuki calls the 'unknown knower'. This sense of ignorance is the frustration in the will's desire to uncover the fundamental nature of its own essence. In Buddhism, it is represented by Gautama's search for the 'builder' or 'designer' of consciousness and reality. This search is represented as an impassable problem that required a tremendous willpower to overcome:

The Buddha had to go over the same ground again and again, because he was in an intellectual *impasse* through which he could not move further on. . . The fact was that he did not know how to escape this endless rotation of ideas; at this end there was birth, there was decay and death, and at the other end was Ignorance. . . But he had an indomitable will; he wanted, with the utmost efforts of his will, to get into the very truth of the matter; he knocked and knocked until the doors of Ignorance gave way: and they burst open to a new vista never before presented to his intellectual vision. (Suzuki 1961: 126)

The will, as represented above, is therefore used against itself in the achieving of enlightenment. It is represented as being stretched until it bursts, which Zen presents as *satori* in its various occurrences. This differs somewhat from the Christian perspective presented by Marguerite Porete. However, it should not escape one that Porete speaks of both the 'annihilation' of the will and of the giving up of the free will in free willingness back to God, signifying that the 'annihilation' is not a destruction of the will, rather its realization in God. Also significant is the understanding by Porete, that the

soul does not reach its destination except by the divine enlightenment of God. Enlightenment for Porete is therefore the realization by the soul of the Enlightenment of God. In Buddhism, this Enlightenment, of course, remains unsignified, it is as it were, the crashing of the door by the will; "a heroic effort to enlighten itself, to redeem itself, without destroying the once-awakened consciousness or rather by working out the principle lying at the basis of consciousness" (Suzuki 1961: 131). However, the question needs to be asked, if one achieves what was before, indeed, what is unachievable, is this not 'grace'? The answer to this question perhaps partly accounts for the arising in Buddhism of Pure Land Buddhism which may easily be translated as the achievement of enlightenment by grace (see Mommaers & Bragt 1995: 207).

The preceding aside, what is key after enlightenment is the affirmation from both perspectives that this event constitutes a reorienting of the person. In Buddhism it is reflected upon as an awakening of the will to its essence, what it is in itself. Thus, the catharsis of enlightenment constitutes a seeing into the true nature of one's own reality. In Suzuki's estimation, "religiously this is a new birth, and, morally, the reevaluation of one's relationship to the world. The latter now appears to be dressed in a different garment which covers all the ugliness of dualism" (1961: 261). From a Christian perspective, it is "a deep experience and a true change of consciousness. It reaches its climax when one's ego is lost to be replaced by that of Christ: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me; when one's consciousness is lost and replaced by that of Christ: "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"" (Johnston 1970: 192).

Perhaps the most central and pivotal transformation of the mystical search is that when enlightenment has been realized, one no longer needs to keep looking behind one's shoulder, so to speak. This is of great significance for Marguerite Porete, and she expresses it, according to her scheme, as the freedom to no longer fall to the fourth stage of the mystical search, the stage of the quasi dark night, of the pseudo-enlightenment:

Such a soul has reached the fifth stage on her way - tranquility - and wants for nothing. From there she is sometimes snatched up to the sixth stage - entering light - which lasts but a moment, open and shut, and is brought about by the Beloved. No one can stay long at this stage, and no mortal being can describe it. . . . When the light is shut off, the soul returns calmly to the fifth stage, without ever falling back to the fourth, which contains the will, which the fifth does not. This call from the fifth to the sixth stage is a blinding flash from heaven, as soon over as begun, and the peace it brings is such as no one who has not experienced it can believe. (Porete 1981: 98 [tr. Crawford])

What Porete is describing here is nothing other than the soul's participation in the divine activity of the life of God. According to Porete, the soul now abides in the enlightened stage, the fifth stage, which is perichoresis, participation in the divine life of the Trinity. However, this perichoresis also involves the true dark night of the soul when the Trinity reveals itself to the soul:

This night is nothing less than the Trinity itself, showing its inner being to the soul. The Trinity opens itself up to the soul and shows her its glory, known to itself alone. Then the soul that receives the gift of this vision of glory has God's own knowledge of God and of herself, and sees everything through God's sight. But the light of this divine knowledge takes all consciousness, of God, of herself and of all things from her. (Porete 1981: 101 [tr. Crawford])

The sixth stage of Porete's mystical ascent thus relates closely to Eckhart's presentation of Godhead, described here as the inner being of the Trinity. Passage into this sixth stage is momentary and involves an unknowing, that is, a knowing past ordinary knowing, a peering into the inner reality of God. This sixth stage involves the departure of all duality for the soul, for "pure and enlightened, it is no longer her seeing God and herself, but God seeing himself in her, through her and outside her, and showing her that there is nothing other than God. . . . She sees this in him and with him, the unmade maker, without going through anything that belongs to her senses. She sees that all is in the being of God, and this sixth stage is seeing the being of God" (Porete, *op. cit.*, 137). One must therefore interpret the annihilated [enlightened] soul not as involved in a static form

of realization, but rather as having entered into the active participation of something at the centre of reality that has movement, mystery and depth. It is not just a knowledge gained, but a life gained, a dance joined. There is movement, not just the realization of a truth which was there to be discovered. Enlightenment is not just reaching the fifth stage, but rather the dynamic movement between the fifth and the sixth stages, that is, between the knowledge of God (the Trinity) and the diving into the mystery of God (the Godhead). This is *ek-stasis* in its quintessential sense. It is participation in a transcendent divine reality that has motion and movement.

A central image which Porete uses in representing the soul's participation in the divine movement is the image of a sea of love into which the soul has fallen. She compares it to the flowing of a river into the sea. This image might bring about the idea of an assimilation, or in the general parlance of religious language, of the idea of monism, but it is the way in which Porete interprets the image that distinguishes it from an assimilation or monism:

She swims in a sea of joy, not feeling joy, but being joy; she drowns in this sea, enveloped in the joy that has made her joy. Like fire and flame, the will of the lover and the will of the Beloved are united, as the soul is totally drawn into the Beloved. (Porete 1981: 67 [tr. Crawford])

In a later passage, Porete picks up the same image and explains that "what it means is being in God without being oneself" (*op. cit.*, 123). The play on the tenses resulting from this statement causes an intellectual paradox that leads up to the death of Reason, the questioning character in Porete's parody. 'Being in God without being oneself' represents therefore the soul that has returned to the place Porete calls "where she was before she was" (1993: 218 [tr. Babinsky]).⁴ The soul no longer has joy but is joy, she no longer feels love but is love, rather than swimming in the sea of love, she is being swam. The place and identity of the soul within the divine activity is therefore both located and removed, it appears even as it disappears and disappears as it appears.

While the whole focus of Porete's book is taken up with answering the question: what are the characteristics of the annihilated or freed soul, she does at an early stage, give nine concrete features as key to what she will be exploring (see Porete 1981: 33-49 [tr. Crawford]; cf. 1993: 82-93 [tr. Babinsky]). The first of these features is that, "no one can find her," which Porete explains as meaning that "all the soul knows of herself is that she is the root of all evil, sin without number; as sin has no weight or measure, it is nothing and less than nothing. So this soul feels herself to be less than nothing, and there is nothing of her to be found" (*op. cit.*, 1981: 43).⁵ Secondly, this soul is beyond the virtues and is saved by faith alone. This is a significant theme in the book, which winds up being a transposition of the virtues, meaning that rather than the soul being obedient to virtues, the virtues are now obedient to her. The third feature is that this soul "neither begs nor asks anything of any creature . . . for this Soul is alone in Love who alone is satisfied in her" (1993: 89). Fourth, this soul does nothing for God, since she is no longer capable of self-love. Further, as the fifth feature, she does not omit to do anything for God. This sounds like a contradiction of the fourth feature, but with her will annihilated, she cannot will to do anything other than God's will. Sixth, she cannot be taught, for anything taught would be nothing compared to that "which never was understood, is not now, and never will be" (1993:90). The seventh characteristic is that nothing can be taken from this soul. The removal of honours, wealth, friends, heart, body, life, is the removal of nothing, because the most essential thing remains unremoved, God. Further to this, the eighth feature is that she cannot be given anything. There is nothing to be added to what she already has. The ninth and final characteristic which also grounds all the previous ones, is that this soul has no will; "all that this Soul wills in consent is what God wills that she will" (1993: 92).

D. T. Suzuki in his turn, identifies eight characteristics that are key to satori (enlightenment): irrationality; intuitive insight; authoritativeness; affirmation; sense of the Beyond; impersonal tone; feeling of exultation; momentariness (1956: 103-108).

'Irrationality' represents that satori is beyond 'intellectual determination'. 'Intuitive insight', which accords with William James' identification of mystical experience as noetic, shows that enlightenment constitutes a seeing into the nature of ultimate reality. The third characteristic of 'authoritativeness', accords with the sense of finality that enlightenment represents. Fourthly, this authoritativeness is in the affirmative, meaning it has value for existence. The fifth characteristic, 'the sense of the beyond', indicates that "the feeling that follows is that of a complete release or complete rest - the feeling that one has arrived finally at the destination" (*op. cit.*, 105-106). 'Impersonal tone' indicates that the experience is grounded in the ordinary and does not seek to personify the transcendent dimension. The seventh characteristic, the 'feeling of exaltation', is the sense of release that comes from doing away with the principle of opposition central to consciousness. That is, satori constitutes of an expansion in consciousness. Lastly, Suzuki highlights that satori is abrupt, though he does indicate that this is only representative of one school of thought. The other argument is that satori comes about gradually.

Although Porete describes the features of the freed soul as representing the character of the individual having realized enlightenment and Suzuki is describing the actual experience per sé, the characteristics they describe both represent somewhat, the integrative dimension of mysticism and the basis upon which the mystic is to live that life. It is this latter process of integrating the transcending experience into the mystic's life that will be the central theme of the following chapter.

Endnotes

1. Note that Crawford's translation refers to 'damaged' souls rather than 'lost' souls. Again here the allusion is to goods in a shop. Damaged goods are better than perished goods. Compare Babinsky's translation 1993: 134.
2. Michael Sells (1994: 121-122) identifies the fourth stage with the stage of spiritual poverty concerned, not with honours, wealth, comfort, rather with dishonours, poverty, tribulations, etc. This however seems to skew the stages. The latter concern seems to refer more closely to stage two, the *Imitatio Christi* rather than the fourth. The former, the desire for honours, comforts, etc., most definitely refers to the first stage of the life of grace. A further problem with Sells' interpretation is paralleling it with the interpretation of the fourth stage given by Marguerite Porete (see ch. 118, 1993: 190-91 [tr. Babinsky]; cf 1981: 133-34 [tr. Crawford]).
3. Here 'Will' refers not to the soul's will but rather to the Will of God. See the section on 'Enlightenment' for clarification.
4. This is what Zen Buddhism would describe as the discovery of one's original face.
5. Compare this with the Buddhist notion of anātman/anatta.

WITHIN AND WITHOUT: MYSTICISM AS INTEGRATING

From Moral to Transmoral Action

No matter what can be said about mysticism or how far it may be represented as being concerned with matters beyond the concrete reality, what is certain is that it is a subject matter and an exploration taking place in this world. The interpretation, exploration, and ancillary experiences of mysticism all have to be made sense of 'here'; and 'here' means the mystic's context and social reality. Mysticism therefore has an inherent need for an integrative dimension. Indeed, what gives rise to the mystic's transcending quest is a failure to integrate, or rather a search to integrate more successfully, one's experience of reality, to give a comprehensive and meaningful accounting of it all. As argued previously (chapter 3), these two movements, transcending and integrating, are intricately in a dynamic movement with what the mystic conceives of or searches for as ultimate reality. The two movements tie together the transcendent reality, a region of the beyond, the sense of origin, and the concrete, immediate and impending reality, populated by other sentient and non-sentient entities. The latter represents the social and contextual dimension of religion and mysticism.

An immediate question the preceding construction of religion gives rise to is of how mysticism, quintessentially a transcending movement, accounts for and relates itself to

the social dimension of existence. In basic, what is the relationship between the mystic and his or her societal context? What, if any, does the mystic's realization of enlightenment or search for it, bring to the normal living conditions of humanity? Does mysticism have a positive or negative impact on the human experience of society? These questions among others, are related to the need to account for how mysticism, and mystics as a matter of course, re-integrate themselves to that which they have had to dis-integrate themselves from in the mystical quest. Indeed, this re-integration is constantly taking place in the mystical quest because the mystic, even in the movement of a 'self-transcending, does not cease to be, that is, in all of this he or she remains contextually located. Identifying the mystic's mode of re-integration also provides an answer to the question whether mystics and mysticism in general are integrated (re-integrated) to society and most importantly what kind of form that re-integration takes.

The usual entry point in the literature, of how the preceding thesis may be considered, is to explore the ethical and moral congruents between mysticism and society. The reasoning is simple; by articulating the behavioural components of mystics in relation to their social context one may be able to make a judgement on whether mysticism is positively, negatively, or indifferently correlated to social reality. Various modes of such relationality have been suggested. Arthur Danto's well-noted argument is predicated upon the significance created by Plato's imagery of the philosopher who escapes captivity of the shadowy cave, only to return and discover that no matter how hard he tries to explain it, the cave-dwellers do not have the capacity to comprehend what the brilliance of the outside reality is like (see book VII of Plato's *Republic*). According to Danto (1976: 45):

Something like this appears to be true of mystics in general, whatever the content of their experience may be. It seems to involve a transvaluation of values, or a devaluation of all values save those revealed to him at the high moment of insight, and he returns to a phenomenal world so transfigured as virtually to be discontinuous with the one he lived in before.

Danto's basic argument is therefore that mysticism and morality essentially operate in different realms and that there is no possible mode of communicability between the two. The basis of this argument is Danto's interpretation of morality as something that arises precisely because of certain factual conditions presupposed by the application of any moral precept. In other words, morality consists of two components, the moral imperative and the factual conditions undergirding that imperative. The upshot of this interpretation is that since mysticism (according to Danto), presupposes a different world, it creates a whole new set of conditions rendering all other factual constructs irrelevant or illusory. Morality as far as it is understood to be a conception dependent upon this-world conditions, is therefore similarly excluded. One cannot, as it were, speak of mysticism and morality in one breath.

Danto's thesis of exclusivity is challenged by Wayne Proudfoot (1976). Proudfoot makes an initial agreement with Danto's analysis but wants it extended on the basis that there are varieties in the interpretation of mystical experience and not just one.¹ Key to Proudfoot's formulation, is the suggestion that moral judgements require discriminatory 'distance' or 'space' in order to be made. That is, one must be able to judge between an ideal and the actual. If such discrimination is not possible, as in the case where the distance between the ideal and the actual is eliminated, as for example in monistic mystical vision, "then it is impossible to discriminate morally between particular actions. If morality is viewed as a set of action guides, or of rules of conduct, it collapses when no discrimination is possible" (Proudfoot 1976: 10). This preceding interpretation, already highlighted by Danto, leads for Proudfoot, to a second possible implication, namely the possibility of extending the monistic vision towards a comprehensive view of reality. This then creates the necessary distance needed for moral and ethical judgements. Further, according to Proudfoot, the monistic mystical vision, which emphasizes unity and emptiness, is just one of two perspectives of mysticism. The other mystical perspective is what Proudfoot, following Rudolf Otto, labels the 'numinous'. Here, emphasis is on

the otherness of the numinous that creates a sense of claim on the individual. Rather than unity, there is a sharp distinction between the individual and the divine that creates the space for the apprehension of what is seen as divine command. Two possible implications for morality also ensue from this view. First, the sense of immediacy with the numinous may create a view where it is seen as the ultimate reality so that obedience to the divine will, whatever that is understood to be, becomes the all in all. Second, a comprehensive or expansive view of reality may also be sought so that, unlike the sense of immediacy, ethical judgements *are* possible since “the criterion of comprehensiveness serves to remove parochialism by inviting the agent to identify his self-interest with the interest of the full expanse of being” (*op. cit.*, 18). Proudfoot therefore, as it were, paints a door out of Danto’s solid wall through which morality and mysticism may be related. The suggestion is that there is a range of relationality between mysticism and morality, extending from a singular view that eliminates the relationship between the two, to a comprehensive view enjoining them. This is something that occurs, with slightly different results, in the two types of mysticism as identified by Proudfoot, the monistic mystical type and the theistic (numinous) mystical type.

While both Danto and Proudfoot seem to be arguing from the basis of an ‘epistemic or logical connection’ between mysticism and morality, William Wainwright (1976; 1981) posits that such a logical relationship does not exist, only a social or psychological one. That is, there is no basis to suppose that “mysticism teaches any morally relevant truths which are not already available to us apart from mystical experience, or that any moral view collapses if mystical experience should prove to be illusory” (Wainwright 1976: 34). The relationship between mysticism and morality and therefore of mysticism and the social context, is figured to be largely inconsequential, that is, one does not necessarily impact the other and no necessary relationship or predications may be made about the impact of mysticism on society.

A similar kind of argument is presented by James Horne (1983). Though Horne does not

refer to Wainwright's analysis, he argues that the relationship between mysticism and morality is at best a mix between what he calls 'proper-name' (entirely personal) morality and 'social' morality. Proper-name morality refers to the individual's moral life usually grounded in a view that is seen to be of ultimate concern. Social morality refers to the generally accepted norms of consideration for other people. It is from this perspective that one *may* speak, as Horne does, of "the moral mystic" as referring to the individual who;

... displays, along with his quest for personal integrity and integration with the Ultimate, emotional and mental arousal about many problems, moral ones among them. The self-doubt, objectivity, and appreciation of other viewpoints which he may exhibit are correlatives of his interest in real persons and situations and obligations, anxieties, guilts, and fears associated with them. (Horne 1983: 69)

As far as Horne anticipates, there is no major distinction between the mystic and the moral religious person, though he does allow for the distinctive, following Roland Fischer, of the hypoaroused 'pure' mystic (see Horne 1983: 37-40). In that sense, the pure mystic upholds an amoral stance in that the approach to the mystical quest is based on "self-cancelling doctrines, negative theologies, and elaboration of concepts such as emptiness" (*op. cit.*, 38-39). On the other hand, the 'mixed' mystic, like the moral religious person, is someone grounded in a religious tradition and struggles with and seeks to live out its edicts together with the personal perspectives of individual (proper-name) morality. The only qualifying distinction, according to Horne, is that in the solving of moral quandaries, the mystic experiences an illumination, or a visionary ecstatic experience as a result of his or her conscientious tendency to seek for the perfect solution. The moral or 'mixed' mystic is therefore a perfectionist, an intensified version of the normal morally religious person (see Horne 1983: 72-73; 112-113). In this sense, Horne's presentation concurs with Wainwright's since both argue that there is no logical or epistemic connection between morality and mysticism, only a socio-religious one.

One question which begs to be answered from Horne's argument, is just how many ecstatic illuminative experiences the mystic can accommodate in the solving of multitudinous moral and ethical problems. Without a 'modus operandi', this whole approach seems totally furtive. What escapes Horne, as it does, the other authors who label apophatic and 'monistic' mysticism, amoral, is that that type of mysticism is predicated upon just such a search for a 'modus operandi' in relation to moral and ethical issues. In a sense, Proudfoot's identification of a comprehensive criterion accords with this mystical search for a 'modus operandi'. The mystic's 'modus operandi' has to be comprehensive in that it has to cover the whole of reality. The basis upon which the mystic acts has to be seen by the mystic as adequate to account for varied social contexts. This is much more so for the apophatic mystic. The relationship between mysticism and morality is therefore much more nuanced than the direct approach of analysis that the authors in this field have tried to articulate. There is however a degree of correctness to Horne's (1983) and Katz's (1983a) assertions, that the mystic is in some kind of contagion with the socio-religious tradition he or she stands in. Katz's argument is basically that mystics are 'good' citizens of their religious tradition, and in that sense uphold the moral edicts of their religions (cf. Katz 1983). The extension of this argument by Katz is that moral action is necessary to the mystical quest no matter how that quest is conceived to be.²

What is missing from the preceding presentation is the nuanced way in which moral action is seen as both a hinderance to the mystical quest and therefore to be discarded, and as something that is present to the mystical quest and therefore to be restored in that very movement of rejection. The relationship between mysticism and moral action is based on an apophatic movement and not on a simple causation - morality leading to the realization of the mystical quest (Katz 1983a). A good example of how this works is with the *Imitatio Christi*, which Katz highlights (see 1983a: 192-193). There are two ways of conceiving of the imitation of Christ, first there is the outward sense of emulation,

of trying to assimilate the actions, words and decisions of Christ into one's life. This is the surface dimension of the *Imitatio Christi*. The second dimension is to reach for the centre, the fulcrum out of which Jesus was operating, either a sense of the 'Kingdom of God' or 'Love', and seek to place that as the informing and grounding centre of one's life. What happens with the second dimension of imitation, by far the more important, is that the moral exemplars of Jesus are not rejected as such but are rather transcended, so that one is not so much imitating *them* but rather acting out of what is identified as the 'trans-moral' stance out of which Jesus was acting. It is this latter sense that highlights what is taking place in apophatic mysticism. The intent is not to be "paradigms of morality" but rather to be somewhat of a "soteriological, cosmic, and ontological paradigm" (see Katz 1983a: 192). The former is taken and upheld in the latter and indeed, the arising of Christianity might be viewed as a movement away from a moral paradigm to a cosmic (all-embracing) paradigm. This is what 'grace' means and it is not the same as being amoral.

The mystic's quest, as for example in Marguerite Porete, is to arrive at the place where one no longer does good as such, but still accomplishes it. According to Porete, the only way in which the soul (mystic) can accomplish good and still be free from falsification, is to arrive at the place where it is no longer the soul's will accomplishing any moral act but rather God. This is the sense in which Porete asserts that "the soul has moved beyond the virtues as far as doing them is concerned, but the virtues have not departed from the soul; these are always there, but now it is they who are obedient to her. So she has taken leave of them, but they are always with her" (1981: 61 [tr. Crawford]). This transcending of desire is not just a frivolous assertion but is rather the realization that desire, centred in the ego, is the basis upon which falsity in the human situation is maintained, thereby stemming the realization of what is the essence of being human, our 'Godness' or the meeting of person and God in the spark or apex of the soul (see chapter 3). Without this reminder of what the mystical quest is about, one might make

a too easy identification of a causal relationship between mysticism and moral action (Katz 1983a; Horne 1983). On the other hand, an opposite assertion, that mysticism in whatever form, is unconcerned with moral action, is arguably not acceptable (Horne 1983; Danto 1976).³

A good way to capture what is taking place between mysticism and moral action, is through what Taoism describes as 'actionless action' (*wu-wei*). The idea here is not to do Tao, or to desire to be like Tao, but rather to be Tao, to achieve naturalness. This does not mean that one is being passive, actionless action might actually take all the strength that one has, but it is a strength held in ease. It is precisely in this sense that *wu-wei* is distinguished from virtuous activity:

Human activity, even virtuous activity, is not enough to bring one into line with the *Tao*. Virtuous activity tends to be busy and showy, and even with the best intentions in the world it cannot avoid sounding the trumpet before itself in the market place. . . The way of loss is the way of whirlwind activity, of rash endeavour, of ambition, the accumulation of "extraneous growths." It is the way of aggression, of success. The way of virtue is the Confucian way of self-conscious and professional goodness, which is, in fact, a less pure form of virtue. . . But the way of *Tao* is just that: the way of supreme spontaneity, which is virtuous in a transcendent sense because it "does not strive." (Merton 1967: 74)

Wu-wei is effortless action precisely because of its fittedness. The idea is intimated in the imagery of water which though it always seeks the lowest point and is limpid, yet it is able to soften even the hardest and strongest substances (*Tao Te Ching* VIII.20; LXXVIII.186).⁴ Another imagery is the idea of being so taken by a task as to cease being aware of the doing of it, to go beyond mere performance to the essence of being and doing. This is what is expressed by both the *Tao Te Ching* and *The Book of Chuang Tzu*:

One who follows the Tao daily does less and less. As he does less and less, he eventually arrives at actionless action. Having achieved actionless action, there is nothing which is not done. (*The Book of Chuang Tzu* XXII, 1996: 188)

A man of the highest virtue does not keep virtue and that is why he has virtue.
A man of the lowest virtue never strays from virtue and that is why he is without

virtue. The former never acts and yet leaves nothing undone. The latter acts but there are things left undone. (*Tao Te Ching* XXXVIII.82, 1963: 45)

Here the *Tao Te Ching* precisely refers to virtues. What is interesting is that though one is no longer 'doing' anything, that is keeping the virtues, nothing is being left undone. In another sense, this may be interpreted as meaning, one has become Tao. The 'I', the constant actor who usurps every act as doer has dissipated, the only thing that remains is essence, and that, whatever it is, is Tao. So to posit the question again, how does mysticism relate to moral action? The answer has to be, it both pulverises and restores it, precisely because it eradicates the very notion of carrying out a moral or virtuous act as such. To be conscious of a virtuous act, whether in thought or in the process of pursuing it, is to be bound in that very consciousness to 'unvirtuosity'. One must therefore arrive at the place of forgetfulness or of where Marguerite Porete describes the soul as acting 'without herself'; "If she does any exterior thing, it is always without herself. If God does His work in her, it is by Him in her, without herself, for her sake" (1993: 156 [tr. Babinsky]).

In Buddhism, the preceding representation of transmoral action is denoted by the idea of desireless (egoless) action or what Suzuki calls *anābhogacarya*, an "act of no-effort or no-purpose" and "deeds performed with no sense of utility" (1961: 78; 95). Casting the idea into Christian imagery, this is how Suzuki explains it:

This corresponds, if I judge rightly, to the Christian idea of not letting the right hand know what the left hand is doing. When spirit attains to the reality of enlightenment and as a result is thoroughly purified of all defilements, intellectual and affective, it grows so perfect that whatever it does is pure, unselfish, and conducive to the welfare of the world. So long as we are conscious of the efforts we make in trying to overcome our selfish impulses and passions, there is a taint of constraint and artificiality, which interferes with spiritual innocence and freedom. (1961: 78).

Suzuki might as easily have been describing the Taoist conception of *wu-wei*. It is not

surprising, in this sense, that Ray Grigg in his book *The Tao of Zen* (1994), equates the notion of *wu-wei* to the practice of *zazen*. Though the latter is primarily directed at one's inner world, at heart, both are concerned with the 'paradoxical art' of being disciplined in becoming undisciplined (see Grigg 1994: 285).

There is however a further issue with Buddhism in relation to desireless action, that comes into play precisely because of the notion of *Śūnyatā* (emptiness). From that understanding, the primary virtues of Buddhism, friendliness (*maitri*), compassion (*karunā*), joyous sympathy (*muditā*), are meant to culminate in impartiality or indifference (*upeksā*). It is this latter stance that is meant to accord with the apprehension of *Śūnyatā* which is also the realization of *Nirvāna*. This however creates a problem in that just as one cannot desire *Nirvāna*, one cannot desire desirelessness or indifference. Desire has to be emptied of itself so that there is nothing to be achieved, nothing that lies ahead as some sort of reward for the practice of the virtues. This is the *Mahāyāna* solution. To be able to practice that type of desireless action is what constitutes the life of enlightenment (see Mommaers & Van Bragt 1995: 199-204).

The Inner Imperative

A mystic is a person with an inner vision, a sense, an awareness of the ground of reality. It is from this awareness that the mystic grounds his life and extends it into his or her human living experience. The cultivation of this life-enactment is something that is occurring throughout the quest for the mystical life. Enlightenment is what allows for a deepening of the movement from inner to outer, and affords fluidity and ease of articulation of that which the mystic recognises. The challenge is to be so identified with the inner vision of reality that one no longer senses conflict between one's inner reality and one's outward actions. It is in this sense that the mystic's life expression is transmoral, that is, rather than fulfilment of duty, it is a passing beyond the realm

of duty to the realm of oughtness. This enactment of the inner vision does not eradicate conflict, it rather makes it of non-consequence because the mystic is no longer looking at it as such, but past it. The whole life of the mystic is therefore now taken up by the inner vision of ultimacy and becomes the basis upon which all externals are sifted through, made sense of and responded to. Howard Thurman expresses this enactment of the mystic's inner vision as follows:

To be good as God is good becomes the overwhelming desire. This means goodness not in contrast with evil, but goodness in terms of wholeness, for lack of a better term, of integration. Or again perhaps more crucially in terms of creative synthesis. There must be about God an "altogetherness" in which all conflict is resolved and all tensions merge into a single integration. (1972: 76)

Two issues arise from Thurman's analysis. First, the mystic is caught up in a life of enacting his or her vision of ultimate reality [God]. Secondly, the mystic is also in a life-process of 'synthesizing' this vision into one extent vision. The mystic is therefore in a search for the seamless life, where inner and outer realities are made into one 'altogether' whole. The result of this search for integration means that sometimes the mystic appears to be at complete odds with the given order of things. However, the awkwardness of the mystic becomes a barometer, in the mystic's eyes, of how far human expression is close or is distanced from an accurate understanding and response to the ultimate ground of reality. That mystics generally tend to be on the outside of the social human stream perhaps points to the pervasiveness of human ignorance (avidyā) or putting it another way, of the human loss of original understanding and self-knowledge.

The life of Mohandas Gandhi is perhaps the best known twentieth century example of a mystic who searched for total integration with an inner vision of ultimate reality and significance. Mohit Chakrabarti, who explores this dimension of Gandhi's life and calls it 'Gandhian Mysticism', notes that the driving force of Gandhi's social, political and spiritual life was the practicalization of the inner imperative:

God as an embodiment of man, becomes a reality only when an individual proves himself worthy of being a mystic. The inner world of his consciousness, then, craves for the infinite avenues of human fulfilment, a fullness to be an humble partner of the journey of beyonding. For this unparalleled journey of beyonding through mystic vision, Gandhi prescribes the practical strategy of self-purification to hear 'the voice of God' within everyone. (Chakrabarti 1989: 7)

The 'still small voice' of the mystic vision becomes linked to the need for purity and recalls Soren Kierkegaard's thesis: purity of heart is to will one thing. The mystic, in this case Gandhi, is striving for the harmonization of the inner vision and outward being and beyond that, the harmonization of the inner vision with social reality, a theme to be explored in the next section. To will and enact that which constitutes one's centre becomes a reflection of one's purity of heart, or in another sense, clarity of vision, depth of enlightenment. What becomes crucial is just what sort of inner vision is driving the mystic. For Gandhi it was the conviction that the ultimate centre of reality could be described as truth and love: "TRUTH and LOVE have been jointly the guiding principle of my life. If God who is indefinable can be at all defined, then I should say that God is TRUTH. It is impossible to reach him; that is TRUTH except through LOVE" (as quoted by Chakrabarti 1989: 33). In some sense, by representation, Gandhi answers the question posed by Richard Jones, 'Must enlightened mystics be moral?' (see Jones 1993: 187-215). The answer is that they cannot help but be moral. However, this basic answer has to be qualified; it is a morality that is not duty-bound but is rather one that arises in the same sense a plant arises out of the ground, though for the mystic, figuratively, it is out of the ground of reality.

Another twentieth century mystic who concurs with Gandhi as far as what lies at the centre of reality, is Howard Thurman. According to Thurman, what the mystic experiences is realized by the mystic as something "which is vital, total, and absolute" (1961: 10). This reflection, related to the fact that the mystic continues to be a finite existent in a given social context leads to the clue that "what he discovers to be inherent

and fontal in him is also inherent and fontal in Life" (*ibid.*). The world and all of life begin to be seen in new light, become suffused with the same element, presence, reality, experienced within the mystic as 'vital, total and absolute'. This interpretation of the mystic vision is for Thurman, fundamentally an experience of love. It is grounded in the realization that the sense of wholeness and well-being central to the mystic's experience has within it, an insistence to be harmonized with the whole of reality. The mystic;

. . . senses that he is being dealt with at a center in himself that goes beyond all of his virtues and his vices. And it is this which he seeks to experience with his fellows. There is something so deeply satisfying about the quality of emotional security which settles deep within him that he gives to it a universal meaning. What he has experienced meets the deepest need of his life. It gives him a sense of being at home in existence, ultimately untouched by all the vicissitudes of life. (Thurman 1961: 11, emphasis original)

This movement from inner to outer, extends beyond the recognition that what the mystic has experienced is also central in other fellow humans, that is, it is seen to extend to all other forms of sentient life. The discovery is that how the mystic has responded, what the mystic has experienced as a feeling of wholeness, is the same way that other forms of life respond. There is thus something fontal, a common depth to reality that ties all of Life together in a grasp that touches each and every living thing at its centre. This depth of reality bears the self-recognition of every living thing as being fundamentally an experience of Love.

Leonard Angel (1994) argues from a philosophical basis that each individual has within what he describes as a 'hermit principle', which in other terms, means that in the end, each and every person is a solitary. Regardless of context, Angel argues that what each person seeks in their solitariness is a sense of well-being, what he calls 'monadic fulfilment'. In basic, monadic fulfilment is an experience grounded in an awareness of the realness of the present moment or the present activity. This depth awareness, according to Angel, is what brings about the sense that: "This is Real; this is Ultimate"

or “this is real and it is really happening to me” (see Angel 1994: 88). Key to the nature of monadic fulfilment is this sense of connection to ultimacy. It is this that makes the theory of monadic fulfilment, in the end, a mystical theory, though outwardly, the fulfilment of the demand of the principle is more closely cultivated in some than in others. In this regard;

We may say, then, that a person is a mystic to the degree that she or he continuously and directly experiences the wholeness and ultimacy of the current moment grasped under the largest possible frame of reference. . . . Mysticism as an “ism” is the view that the cultivation of this intuition, the incorporation of it into one’s daily life and the stabilization of it is of unique, and in some sense supreme, value to the individual as monadic individual. (Angel 1994: 93)

What sets mysticism apart from other activities that derive monadic pleasure, is its claim for universal availability and applicability. What the mystic aims for is the transference of the sense of whatever grounds his or her sense of wholeness and ultimacy to other varied activities. Angel calls this movement the cultivation of ‘genial mysticism’. It is ‘genial’ on two levels, first in the sense in that it is a “garden variety mysticism” (*op. cit.*, 94). Secondly, in the sense that it is grounded in the monadic experience of well-being. The central thesis is one of the discovery of a basis for continual integration with something that is able to sustain one’s sense of well-being and by extension, something that has within it the capacity for universal applicability.

Getting back to classical religion, the preceding grounding of the mystic’s inner imperative in goodness, or love, truth, or well-being is also reiterated. It may be fruitful at this point to ask why such variously defined religions, mystics from varied backgrounds seem to ground the experience of the inner imperative in something that may be described as ‘the holy’ or ‘the good’. Perhaps it is in the very sense in which Rudolf Otto (*The Idea of The Holy*) describes it, as something that is central to humanity’s sense of existence in the world no matter where that existence is located thus pointing to the idea that this is how the depths of reality present themselves to humanity. It is from this that the

conviction of the mystic is grounded. The conviction of the mystic is not something derived from logical deduction as the best among many alternatives, but rather realized as a depth experience of truth, an inner, unswerveable conviction that 'God' no matter how variously anticipated, is good, and that love, lovingkindness, is 'its/his/hers' 'modus operandi'.

Perhaps the most puzzling case in the classical religions, of the preceding insistence that love, lovingkindness, truth, is what guides the mystic's inner/outer way of being, is the one occurring in Buddhism. It is puzzling in the sense that it begs the question; how can ultimate reality, *Śūnyatā* (Emptiness), be anything but empty? One would expect that the life response of the Buddhist mystic to be one of complete indifference, and yet it is interpreted as an indifference grounded in compassion (*karuṇā*). That this emphasis on compassion as the proper response to enlightenment has surpassed the emphasis on indifference (*upeksā*) in *Māhayanā* Buddhism (see Mommaers & Van Bragt 1995: 199), perhaps points to the centrality of the reality that something pervasive, something that may be interpreted as 'lovingkindness' is endemic to ultimate reality. This basic overview however needs closer interpretation.

According to Christopher Ives (1992), the Buddhist emphasis that ultimate reality is emptiness is actually the basis for a nuanced relationship between *Śūnyatā* and ethics. That *Śūnyatā* signifies a total emptying of dualism, means that a place is cleared for an unfettered engagement with the ethical life. In other words, the apparent 'emptiness' of *Śūnyatā* is an emptiness that actually allows for an emancipation; "the dissolving of entanglement in dualistic subjectivity . . . This dissolution frees one up for compassionate action and releases and redirects the energy that was previously invested in bolstering the fixation in that subjectivity" (Ives 1992: 39-40). What makes compassion arise from *Śūnyatā* is that the metaphysical foundation of the ego is eradicated and with that eradication, the emphasis on self-promotion that is central to the ego also goes. Buddhism argues that it is precisely the metaphysical emphasis on the ego that creates suffering and

other forms of destructive behaviour. According to Ives, this is the negative perspective of Śūnyatā, the positive dimension, which uncovers the foundational place of compassion as universal ground, is that “the realization of *śūnyatā* is simultaneously a realization of no-self in which one discerns that at the deepest level, ‘self’, experience and world converge in each moment. In existential terms, one cannot exist apart from this world and one’s experience of it. In more metaphysical terms, one is constituted by and also influences myriad things other than what one takes oneself to be” (*op. cit.*, 40).

From Ives’ argument, Śūnyatā is a convergence of reality that unmask the unitive locus of the co-arising of all reality and therefore of their co-dependence. This eradicates all dichotomies. The Buddhist mystic is therefore compassionate on the basis that the nature of ultimate reality shows that all things are joined and co-dependant. In a sense, this is the realization of the well-being of what Leonard Angel (1994) identifies as the ‘hermit principle’, except here the Buddhist mystic acts from the basis that there is only one ‘hermit’, namely, the whole of reality intertwined and co-related. That *samsāra* is *nirvāna*, is also an interpretation of the co-arising and conjoining of all reality. Rather than postponement, entrance into the life of *nirvāna* is seen as being ‘here and now’. Participating and working towards its actualization is something that can only be achieved through compassion.

D. T. Suzuki sees the gradual movement towards the centrality of compassion (*karuṇā*) as something that arose and arises directly from the reality of Enlightenment. That is, this movement is something that could not be stemmed but rather is one that reflects the teleological functioning of life itself. Grounding this idea of Enlightenment, is what Suzuki calls a ‘spirit of freedom’; “This spirit of freedom, which is the power impelling Buddhism to break through its monastic shell and bringing forward the idea of Enlightenment ever vigorously before the masses, is the life impulse of the universe - this unhampered activity of spirit, and everything that interferes with it, is destined to be [defeated]” (1961: 75). Compassion is therefore the basis upon which the teleological goal

of life, that is 'salvation', is accomplished. This is the true realization of the significance of enlightenment, a self-principle that it follows. According to Suzuki (*op. cit.*, 78), Enlightenment should therefore be dynamically conceived of, as reflecting both *prajña* (wisdom) and *karunā* (compassion). Together, these two are what is working towards the teleological realization of life. For Buddhism therefore, the inner imperative for compassion is none other than the inner imperative of ultimate reality itself. It shows itself in the Buddhist mystic as the skilful application (*upāya*) of *prajña* and *karunā*.

Taoism, always more subtle and evanescent, succinctly links both the inner imperative and the ultimate reality. That is, Tao is understood to be both the reality and the principle. What the Tao is, is figured to be the way of becoming and the way to be. Here the mystic seeks to emulate, mirror and be the inner reality that he sees as the founding and sustaining principle of reality. In Taoism, there is therefore no tension to be resolved between ultimate reality and the way of being. The sixty-seventh chapter of the *Tao Te Ching*, is a central text that highlights the 'three treasures' of Taoist ethics. The first is *t'u* translated variously as 'deep love', 'compassion', 'pity', 'motherly love', 'mercy' (see Chen 1989: 209; Merton 1967: 76-77). The other two treasures are 'frugality' and 'daring not to take the lead'. The chapter is interesting in that it begins with the removal of any sense of utility to the Tao. Since the Tao is vast, it reasons, then it seems useless, without utility. If it had some usefulness or utility, then it would have long been small. This idea points to the three treasures. With the removal of the idea of usefulness to the first treasure, Chen (1989: 209) seems right in pointing out that "primarily *t'u* is the love that protects and nurtures, most characteristic of a mother's love". Thus, the *Tao Te Ching* comments, with this kind of love, one can afford to be courageous. The image of a mother's love in this sense, is of being without utility, being totally altruistic; "The mother instinctively responds with courage to what threatens her young, paying no heed to her own safety. Such an act of courage is not out of defiance of life" (Chen 1989: 209-210). Something of this instinctive movement of love is figured to be present in the Tao, and

in that sense, is something to be emulated by the mystic. The second treasure, frugality, affords generosity, and the third, daring not to take the lead, enables one to lead.⁵ The three treasures appear grounded in *wu-wei*, that is, the accomplishment of something without imposition, but rather 'naturally', without a reason or end; for deep within each living thing is Tao, and Tao reaches instinctively for its own life, just like the mother, who is in the child, reaches instinctively for herself. It is in this sense, that Tao is grounded in compassionate self-recognition and preservation.

Cosmos Awareness

As already intimated above, the mystic is one who is reaching outward for an ever-widening circle of participatory integration with that which he or she senses as the grounding of all life. The mystic is therefore on a scent of something, what Howard Thurman calls, a "scent of the eternal". At heart, it is the indication of a presence in the world, but a presence that is also a fleeting absence or perhaps it is an absence which is also a fleeting presence. In any case, the clue of the mystic is that this is something which is there. It is something that endues, clothes the world and all living things with a sense of awe, of a sacredness that remains hidden beyond the reach of those whose intent is to commodify, separate and systematize. Mysticism, in its integrative dimension, is a response to the sacredness of the world as something that presents itself. It is this that the mystic has been argued as responding to as an inner imperative, a realization that the depth of reality expresses itself as love, or lovingkindness, or compassion. It is also in this sense, that the mystic's awareness is a 'cosmos awareness' rather than a 'cosmic awareness'. The mystic, is one who is woken up not just to him or herself, but also to the essence of the reality of all things. The mystic is one who has become aware of the cosmos in its 'largesse', defined in Webster's dictionary as "an innate generosity of mind or spirit". What the mystic discovers and senses is the movement of the transcendent depth within, beginning to echo without, into and also from the outer

reality. The mystic is earthy in this sense, that the whole world has become a sound box out of which the depths of reality reverberate.

The preceding mystical response to the depth reality of the world contrasts sharply with the influential sociological philosophy that sees the sacredness of the world, of reality, as a sociological construct. Perhaps the best representation of this view is that by Peter Berger. According to Berger (1967: 25; 28); "Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode. . . Religion implies that human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently, religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant." The central idea expressed in the thesis is the religious and social construction of what Berger calls a *sacred canopy*. In other words, religion is the sacralization of the world, a reflection of the deep seated need in humanity to experience reality as meaningful. The problem with Berger's sociological framework is that at heart, religion becomes a self-projected scheme of deception and in that sense mysticism, which searches for greater range and depth, the most pernicious form of this deception. That is, religion or mysticism, with this sense, is the creation of something that is essentially not there but the appearance of which we need in order to sustain the sense of human well-being in the world. Social structures, especially religious one, are seen as buttressing this central human projection. Berger's social philosophy is therefore of the sustenance of that which humans need to survive, a sense of meaning, value and self-worth. It is a conditionalist approach that sees pragmatism as the central thesis of humanity, that is, of doing what it takes to ensure the human viability of being in the world.

Like most influential social theses, Berger's consists of a half truth. It assesses fairly the human contextual situation, but remains impervious to what the mystics judge to be there, something that has prior ascendance and grounds all living realities whether called Brahman, Tao or Spirit. The mystic's assertion is that we do not create the sacredness of the world, but rather that we can discover, or uncover its outer reality and see its

depth as grounded in a reality that among many variants, can be described as 'good'. Not only that, this depth ground of reality is realized as having an inner movement, a principle, a teleological urge towards the transfusion of goodness to all aspects of reality. The mystic's awakening is to a reality of the working of this urge within him or her, so that to remain still would be to work against that which the mystic has been enlightened to and by. This therefore creates an urge within the mystic, expressed by Howard Thurman as follows:

Unless the individual is able constantly to identify himself with his fellows in the presence of God, he will vitiate his insights so that what is a good in him at last becomes evil in its very uniqueness. But if he maintains his sense of identity with his fellows, then what he is experiencing or experiences, all men everywhere stand in immediate or indirect candidacy to experience, and a part of his response to God is the shared knowledge of God's availability to all. (1972: 59)

What remains to be articulated is just how the mystics go about responding and acting upon the urge to be aware of the other in what Thurman describes as 'the presence of God'. The central response, which grounds all the others, is the recognition of the other's candidacy to that which the mystic has encountered and awakened to. It is this sense of candidacy that perhaps accounts for the paradoxical nature of mysticism and mystical experience in that though the mystics proclaim the inadequacy of words in giving expression to the depth of reality, yet mystics have produced an abundant amount of written texts and testimonials on just that ineffable reality. Perhaps the fuel for this paradoxical nature of mystical writing, is just this sense of impelling that emanates from what the mystic senses as a teleological movement at the centre of ultimate reality, of a mystery that is ever moving towards open space. Mystical texts are therefore, a form of summons for humanity to discover the open secret that lies at the centre of reality. They are a way of introducing and also testifying to what is there. For the mystic to not do so, or to claim that the sublimity of the subject matter entails complete silence, is as Thurman point out, a movement towards undermining that which is central to the

mystic's recognition of what grounds his or her life, a position that would turn towards the 'ungood'.

Because of the sense of immediacy and recognition, it is understandable that the mystic speaks first to peers in his or her community. Chief, among the reasons to do so, is what the other begins to represent for the mystic. Not only is the other in direct candidacy to awakening to ultimate reality, that individual is recognised as a potential image of the illuminating of transcendent reality. The other, according to Schillebeeckx, is a 'transcendent' other: "The appearance or epiphany of 'the other' breaks the claims of my totality and my I-relatedness: the other is really other, transcendent. . . It is in fact to encounter the other as an originally unique transcendent other to whom I am related in an asymmetrical relationship" (1987: 56). This, by extension, is the real basis of the demand of 'the other' that the mystic senses. It is an absolute demand based on the other person's transcendent otherness (*op. cit.*, 56-57). In the word made central by Martin Buber (1958), the other is a 'Thou', not a 'He' or 'She' or an 'It'. On the basis of reciprocal relationship alone, that is, as a 'He' or 'She', "what the other person can demand of me is not a consequence of what I can demand of him or her" (Schillebeeckx 1987: 57). However, on a transcendent plane, the other person imposes an immediate claim on the mystic's experience and expression of transcendent reality. It is a claim that lies beyond the other person's context, position and societal reality. This however, does not mean that the person's contextual reality is ignored, rather as Thurman expresses it, it should be something recognised as part of the process of taking the other person's total fact into account. That is;

A person's *fact* includes more than his plight, predicament, or need at a particular moment in time. It is something total which must include awareness of the person's potential. This, too, is part of the person's fact. This is why love always sees more than is in evidence at any moment of viewing. (Thurman 1961: 14)

The mystic's recognition of the other therefore includes two aspects, the intended fact

of the person and the present fact. Both aspects are key. Perhaps more importantly, mysticism cannot afford to be separated from the present contextual reality of the other, but must, as Thurman puts it, constantly feed on the details of the other person's fact, details of which are always in transition. There is only one arena in which the mystic's witness counts, this world reality and because of this, "there is no substitute for hard understanding of more and more and more of another's fact. This serves as a corrective against doing violence to those for whom we have a sense of caring because of great gaps in our knowledge of their fact. This is generally the weakness in so much lateral good will in the world. It is uninformed, ignorant, sincere goodwill" (Thurman 1961: 15).

Mysticism, to the extent that it is an integrating movement, achieves that goal to the extent that it remains grounded in the simplicity of the message and in that sense, remains adaptive. Perhaps, the best representation of this is in Zen Buddhism, quintessentially an enlightenment or mystical religion, which by its own confession, aims to go to the heart of what Buddhism is about. Unfortunately, Christianity has tended to be less forgiving of this kind of an approach. For example, the missionary enterprise has tended to present the gospel within the larger backdrop of European and more recently American culture, with the implication that these form a whole. This, in a sense undermines the experiential grounding of the gospel as a gospel of a new birth towards a new relationship with Christ, the God-Man. Christian mysticism in a sense, is the attempt to peel off the cultural and varied religious garb that encrust themselves to the simple nature of the gospel as, in a word, the call to become God-Sons. This is the message beyond the context, and if it can be delivered, communally exulted in, experienced and explored, all else becomes secondary. This brief pointer, the ramifications of which cannot be fully explored here, only begins to show the integrative challenge that faces the Christian mystic in order to be able to maintain the simplicity of his or her realization.

As far as Buddhism is concerned, the 'transcendent' other is represented by the

Mahayāna doctrine of the Bodhisattva. 'Bodhisattva', essentially a combination of two words, 'bodhi' and 'sattva' together meaning, 'awakened being', or more precise to the doctrine, 'Buddha to be' or 'Buddha in waiting'. According to Peter Slater (1981: 1), "essential to the concept is the state of being enlightened. . . More particularly, one is called a bodhisattva whose existence is permeated with the power of ultimate truth, but who postpones the freedom from suffering that this entails, in order to help others to realize the same state of unqualified joy". Two things are at play here, first, enlightenment and secondly, the sense of identification, or extension of candidacy to other people for that which the mystic has awakened to. The bodhisattva is therefore the ultimate crux of the teleological goal of the Buddhist alleviation of human suffering, something made clear in the expression of the bodhisattva vows: "However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them; However inexhaustible the binding passions are, I vow to extinguish them; However immeasurable the Dharma-teachings are, I vow to learn them; However unsurpassable the Buddha-Way is, I vow to attain it" (in Ives 1992: 30). This represents an ultimate identification, so that the Buddhist teleological goal is signified as not achieved until all beings have become awakened. This also ties in with the doctrine of the 'interdependent co-origination' of all things which has been explained as follows:

In the broadest sense, this doctrine teaches that all things are mutually related and interdependent in a vast network of causes and effects. One thing presupposes and leads to other things, not only in a chronological order (that is, after one another), but also in a synchronic sense (that is, at one time). What is more, every "thing", large or small, is a network of interdependent factors, and so on and so on. (Krüger, Lubbe & Steyn 1996: 113-114)

In this light, the bodhisattva's response, from the Buddha down, is a representation of the enlightened mystic's recognition of the conjoinness of all things in ultimate reality, even though Buddhism clearly extends this conjoinness to phenomenological reality. That is, not only is there conjoinness in a spiritual sense, there is also conjoinness in the way human beings, animals and the whole cosmological world is. The bodhisattva, from this

sense, is a 'saint' who strives not only to model but also to work towards the restoration of harmonious ways of living that enhance every living thing's sense of well-being. However, the ultimate goal is one of the total alleviation of ignorance and suffering, through everyone's awakening to Enlightenment. From this sense, it is the human being who is out of joint and is the cause of the suffering of living reality. The awakening of the human subject to whatever extent, signals at least a movement towards restoration. Mysticism, in this sense, does not look askance at the ways in which human beings situate themselves in the world and how they relate themselves to other living creatures. Mysticism has, or should have, an inbuilt ecological sensor. Continuing with Buddhism, this also expresses itself in the stance of 'ahimsā' (non-injury), so forcefully demonstrated to the modern consciousness by Gandhi. Although in some aspects of Buddhism it generated into a stance of vegetarianism, the central basis of this understanding is one of the conjoinness of all things and of not doing anything to harm others and thus oneself. This is something not just achieved linearly but involves the complex but compassionate working together of all things.

From a western perspective, St. Francis of Assisi is perhaps the best embodiment of a recognition of the conjoinness of all living things. Although his life has been much parodied as that of a 'holy fool', he remains the patron saint of all animals and of their precarious relationship with humanity. Although St. Francis is noted to have called the animals his brothers and sisters, it is not clear whether this was out of reverence or the recognition of something deeper. G. K. Chesterton seems to point to the latter view in writing of St. Francis; "The whole point of his point of view was that it looked out freshly upon a fresh world, that might have been made that morning. Save for the great primal things, the Creation and the Story of Eden, the first Christmas and the first Easter, the world had no history . . . his appearance marked the moment when men could be reconciled not only to God but to nature and, most difficult of all, to themselves" (1957: 151-152). This, according to Chesterton, suggests something more than being a nature

lover. That is, St. Francis seemed to see the world in its primalness, without backdrop, with the sense of immediacy with which God had called the creatures out of the divine dark (see Chesterton 1957: 86-90). Chesterton's point, well-made, is that it takes more than nature-loving to realize the sense of rapport with the *earth*, that Francis displayed. Rather than that sentimental version, St. Francis' vision requires a depth of seeing, that is, seeing into the depth of things. Although St. Francis of Assisi is by far the most important representative, there are many other lesser St. Francises that represent a vivid and sorely missed chapter in Christian mysticism showing how the Earth and all that it is can be seen and lived in in new light (see McGinley 1969: 67-78).

If a word can tie together that which the mystic is seeking to articulate, mould, and realize in his or her 'cosmos awareness' then one might say, with accord, that it is a search for the 'beloved community'. Here community certainly refers to more than human beings in societal relationship, but rather to the full extent way of being human in the world. Indeed, in a sense, it is the realization of the communal nature of the cosmos, a goal that seems so totally out of reach of our times. Mystics, or in other words, saints, bodhisattvas; are paragons of reality of what is possible, what can be realized, not in the future in some other reality, but here on earth, now, showing the possibility of some other way of entering into reality, one that is no longer of separateness, of you against I, but rather of 'all of us together', bound in some inextricable dance of life and death. According to Sisirkumar Ghose, "ultimately, it is the continuing theme of human history, perhaps the development of a species of society higher than civilization, a spiritual society or the civilization of consciousness" (1968: xiv). This if anything, will not be achieved by any institutional means, but can only come about, as the mystics insist, only when everyone has seen the light, so to speak. Things have come full circle and this is a good place to tie together the dynamic movement of mysticism explored so far in the study as the two movements of transcending and integrating.

Integrative Transcending

What is it that the mystic is after? The whole emphasis of this study has been that what the mystic is after is not an ecstatic mystical experience as such, but rather the discovery of something more, of a way of life that is intricately related to what the mystic conceives of as ultimate reality. Mysticism, in this sense, has been articulated as a search for roots, for home, a return to the original block. It is a life that begins with the recognition of the 'out-of-jointedness' of human life, which recognition is also a rediscovery of the essential nature of humanness, covered over and masked by the falsifying nature of human pretences for independence and the eluding of the something larger, the all-embracing. The mystic is therefore, more than anything else, a seeker. Mysticism in this sense, is much more endemic to human life and awareness than the general recognition of the mystic as someone who has had a mystical experience. However, what sets the mystic apart, what distinguishes the mystic, is the intensity present in his or her search. The mystic is someone whose quest for answers, for final resolution, is an ongoing movement of dynamic harmonization, that is, the mystic never wants to arrive. What is impressive is that there is movement in the mystic's search, there is even resolution, but this resolution is something that always points to the more, to the recognition that this form or dimension of life is inadequate to accommodate all the answers, to provide for that final resolution.⁶

The mystic's vision, whether realized or still being sought, insists that there is a locus where the divine and the human can be reconciled and brought into one harmonious expression. Whatever sense of awe or admiration the mystic provides, it is as Robert Ellwood points out, something that "derives not so much from episodic mystical experiences he has had as from his ability to symbolize the seamless union of the human and the transcendent" (1980: 146). It is this that the mystic symbolizes for us, the image of someone who has brought into our focus the harmonization of the human and the divine. In that sense, the mystic is a witness of the nearness of the divine to human

reality, so near indeed that it can be seen, touched, tasted. Jesus, for the Christian mystic, is forever such an image of man. What sets him apart is the complete sense of fluidity between a realm of the transcendent and the human locus. Jesus was as at ease with God as with a prostitute. What one does not find in him is the sense of separation from the other, no matter how much an outside person that individual is. What attracts further, is his ability to move from moments of transcendent experience to the normal, everyday, hum-drum activity of human existence and his doing it without representing one as being opposed, or as not belonging to the other. Jesus' sense of transcendent or ultimate reality was therefore total and all-embracing. This is what the mystic is after, a comprehensive and total apprehension of ultimate reality that begins to cast all human activity into a new frame.

The way that Marguerite Porete represents the life of the enlightened mystic may be described as one of *ekstasis*. According to Porete, once the mystic has apprehended the vision of divine reality in his or her mystical search, one is transformed and reneges old patterns of thinking and being. Porete represents this as the release from the fear of falling back to the fourth stage of the mystical ascent, of the pseudo-enlightenment. Rather, the soul begins an existence that represents a dynamic movement between the fifth and sixth stages of the mystical ascent. The latter represents the divine dark, where God reveals the inner nature of divine reality while the former represents the attainment of tranquility where the soul is "back where she was before she had being" (Porete 1981: 153 [tr. Crawford]). Rather than simply being, the soul is now a 'becoming'. The mystic (enlightened soul) has become part of the divine movement at the centre of reality. It is this image of tranquility, of perfect rest in activity and activity in rest, which is also the image of the Tao described by Merton as "a tranquillity which transcends the division between activity and contemplation by entering into union with the nameless and invisible Tao" (1969: 26).

Another image of the mystic's integrative transcending is that the mystic is involved in

the 'making of a soul'. It is in this sense that the western mystics prefer the word 'soul' to 'spirit'.⁷ 'Soul' is the happening between spirit and matter (flesh, body). It is the moulding of something unique that is neither transcendent nor immanent, but rather something that is one and at the same time, both. Soul is therefore the category of humanness. To integrate fully is to realize one's essence as a human being. It is to put one's distinctive mark on something that is very God, spirit. This picture however, fits more the western approach to mysticism, which makes central this identification through the apophatic movements of its mystical questing.

The mystic who has an ease of fluidity between the transcendent and the immanent is also distinctive in another sense, namely, in his or her attitude of humility. It is a humility that arises from the sense of the range covered, the distance that one has traversed between the incidental and the primal. As Johannes Tauler puts it, it is the impress of being suspended between Heaven and earth, so that one is both transcendent, above all things and dwelling in God, and yet is "brought low, into the depths of his humility, as if he were a beginner in the spiritual life. He is not above undertaking the simplest devotions that he performed when he was a novice. He despises nothing, no matter how insignificant, and finds peace in all that he does" (Tauler 1985: 77 [tr. Shradly]). This picture, in its image of simplicity, masks the radical repositioning and transformation that has occurred within the mystic. Outwardly, one might therefore see a mystic but not recognize one. There is something of a hiddenness about the mystic who has calmly integrated ultimate reality into his or her everyday existence. It is in this sense that the vision of mysticism being explored here has something of what Bruno Borchert describes as, the 'democratization of mysticism'; "What kind of mysticism can be democratized? Not the brief mystical experience itself - which is something personal that just happens. But everything else can be democratized - the mystical attitude, the mystical life, the mystical culture or devotion, the search and its expression in word and deed, the fruits of mysticism" (Borchert 1994: 317). The realization of this 'democratic

mysticism', is grounded more in the human sense of religiousness, a region that lies beyond each and every one religion. It is this that the religions, in their varied expressions, are trying to answer to. The democratization of mysticism would therefore involve a tapping into the region of the common human sense of religiousness. Contrary to Steven Katz and others, by that very recognition, *human beings* can communicate, inspire and aspire, for that which grounds all of life without any fear that somehow reality is fragmented, that we might after all, belong to different camps. Integrative transcending is in this sense, a search and articulation of the ways of being most human in the earth. The desire and quest is something that can speak to all humans, from different times and ages, indeed as is evidenced by the continual contemporariness of the mystics. We can indeed find a way to deepen each other's way of seeing, and of experiencing transcendent reality.

What this study has not and does not argue for however, is the assimilation of the varied religious expressions into some common freeway of religious identity. Rather, the argument being made, the grounding structure of the study, is that for all the disparities, for all the varied forms of religious arising, there is *no* convincing reason to assume that what may be described as ultimate reality, is plural. Therefore, if ever there has to be any affirmation of understanding between the two predominant (or more) forms of understanding mysticism, understanding has to be formed around the regions of the ways in which the mystics conceive of ultimate reality. The argument is that these conceptions have to somehow be rooted in existence itself. If they have had any staying power, it is because they figure something which is real and present. Thus, around the paragraphs of this study has been an argument that ultimate reality must consist of both fullness and emptiness, something that is precisely affirmed by both mysticism east and mysticism west. The question to be asked is: Is one aspect more important than the other? By the very nature of that which is being conceived of, the answer has to be, no. However, the second question: Does it make a difference from which perspective one begins the search

for ultimate reality? The answer for this question as evidenced in this study, is yes. The west, by beginning from a stance of fullness, is thus involved in a movement of 'unclothing', or of emptying the fullness in order to also embrace the emptiness that is present to ultimate reality. Thomas Merton has an excellent way of describing this emptiness that somehow ties together both the western vision and the eastern vision. He writes (1968: 85): "When we say "fullness" we inevitably tend to imagine a "content" with a limit which defines and bounds it, and so Buddhism prefers to speak of "emptiness," not because it conceives the ultimate as mere nothingness and void, but because it is aware of the nonlimitation and nondefinition of the infinite". That is, the answer to the question, how can we describe ultimate reality [God], is predicated on the realization that nothing we say about the ultimate can be adequate to describe it. Even if we pile up all the things we could say, even these would still not be adequate to who or what God is. This leaves only one solution; the only thing that cannot be filled, or satisfied, or completed, is emptiness. The western mystics that speak of the Godhead, of the Divine Dark, are making this basic recognition.

From the preceding, it seems very reasonable to argue that the central element of mysticism and mysticism studies is not mystical experience as has been focused on throughout most of the twentieth century. The central element to mysticism is, in basic, the search for the ultimate, and the response of the individual upon that discovery. It is also in this sense that the question over gradual or instant enlightenment is spurious.⁸ To begin the search is in some sense to find, since it is a reorienting of oneself to the ground of reality. Mysticism is thus the continual freedom to orient and reorient oneself to ultimate reality. It is a dance that for each and every person, brings to the forefront their own uniqueness. The only condition is that one keeps motion.

Central to the mystical quest as integrative transcending, is the recognition that there has to be a fit between the approach and the reality. This cannot be overstated. To miss this, I assess, is to miss everything that mysticism is about. To recognize that

mysticism is an expression of the religious tradition that one stands in should therefore be to also make a deeper recognition that mysticism demands that one always hold the ultimate answer at bay, that one should not limit even in the very act of signifying. This has been discussed elsewhere in this study as a stance of 'a/negative apophasis' or 'non-negative negation'. Again, this is a recognition of the relationship between emptiness and fullness as pointed out by Thomas Merton above. Any claim for a fullness that can fill ultimate reality is a pseudo-fullness precisely because it has stopped. The ultimate is none other than the endless, the infinite. The approach to mysticism has to affirm this. While Christianity has to have a series of apophatic movements that make this possible, Buddhism because it begins from this very position, has an inbuilt and immediate recognition that the approach to ultimate reality has to encompass negation. The problem comes for the western mystic when this recognition is not made early, or not at all, so that closure is sought at too early a stage. Mysticism from a western perspective has all kinds of ranges of representation. It is not that some mystics are better than others, only a representation of the state of journeying they were at, and in some cases, the only place they could allow themselves to attain because of various religious and social contexts. Mysticism west, is from this sense, more contextually bound since the western mystic, unlike the eastern mystic, has to give an account of the basis for the gradual emptying of 'God' as religiously presented. It is an accounting that the western mystic is not always able to satisfy.⁹ The eastern mystic, in the sense mysticism east has been argued in this study, has the buttressing of his or her tradition already affirming the apophatic stance, and even more interesting, also affirming the movement towards fullness that the mystic may entertain, though certainly it would be within the varied religious tradition that Buddhism has amassed. It is in this sense that Buddhism totally accommodates Pure Land Buddhism, which perhaps represents Buddhism at its most kataphatic form.

What argument, if any, has this study satisfied. It is perhaps the suggestion that we are to look at the boundaries of our common human exploration for God if we are to see

ourselves as grounded in the same reality. Experience can be conditioned, and if anything, that is a question that twentieth century mysticism studies have adequately answered. The one thing that context and concrete human reality cannot totally overcome, is the region of the beyond, the transcendent. It is this that remains a constant, it is and was, before any classic religion made an appearance, though one could argue here that the only classic religion, is precisely this undetermined, undefined prior religion. It is this that apophatic mystics from varied socio-religious contexts are striving to articulate.

Further, for all that we signify to ourselves, all that we feel we are and have accomplished as human beings, the evidence is that we are a very late arrival onto the scene of existence and life. If anything, this should bring some degree of humility, of taking some things as presenting themselves to us in the manner in which they have been, long before we made our appearance. Mysticism from this sense and as already pointed out, is an exercise in humility, a taking of certain things at face value, of not arguing too much how things ought to be. Mysticism, interpreted as a stance of apophasis, of non-negative negation, is a cultivating of tentativeness. Mysticism must, and I think does, leave room for the unsignified, or to put it in another sense, it leaves room for error, for the possibility that, for all of this, we still might be wrong, though the mystic has always recognised the sense that the depth calls to depth, which is a fundamental recognition of witness. This hopefully, is what this study signifies, a calling to depth. Mysticism works in this realm of depth-witness. Only one who hears, recognises the depth, the affirmation of truth. It is something that happens within, and cannot be proved or disproved by logical and cognitive reasoning, though mysticism does not disavow itself of those human skills. Something more is at play; the sense of our humanness as connected to something larger and within that to one another. It is in this region that a true common human mysticism can be sought, and my hope, is that this is the region where this study has moved in and out of, though I doubt that it has been with any degree of consistency and fluidity.

Excursus

God: is an unknown quantity. The subject of the preceding study is nothing other than the human quest to wrestle with that very fact. Mysticism perhaps represents the deepest, widest, broadest attempt to do so. By that very confession, mysticism is an exercise in the efficacy and possibility of a real and affective unknowing. If anything, what I have argued is that without this central concern with the nature of ultimate reality, whatever else it may be religiously, any such excursion is not mysticism. This study is thus some attempt for a return to the nerve issue of mysticism, which is primarily a depth exploration for, in and through God. My suggestion is that such a focus in mysticism studies will, first and foremost, be reflective of the nature of what is being studied. Secondly, it will put into proper light, the other ancillary concerns of the subject, such as mystical experience and ecumenism. The problem which this approach faces however, is the challenge it presents to the investigator. Simply because of the nature of academic training and grounding in discursive practice, it is extremely difficult for one so trained to approach a subject through what mysticism calls an 'unknowing'. This is a major problem, since it does not appear that there is a reconciliation possible. What mysticism has discovered and suggested over thousands of years is that ultimate reality, of necessity, requires a certain and specific kind of an approach if anything at all is to be realised. The emphasis is that this is not something coming from the mystic but from the very nature of ultimate reality itself. I need not reiterate here where the adjustment needs to take place.

Another major hurdle that needs to be overcome and one that this study has partly answered, is that, no matter how varied the human expression is in the world, no matter how varied the arising and signification of religion in diverse human cultures, no matter the differences, the separations, all these do not represent that ultimate reality is thereby diverse. If anything, once we get past the petty elements, there is a pervasive underlying sense that all things are of something that is 'one', the Source. Now, obviously this

presents a problem, for if we account for ultimate reality as one, how do we account for the diversity of religious expression. This is a question that the study has partly tried to answer. What I have suggested, without getting myself too entangled in details here, is that there are suggestively two aspects to ultimate reality, which are in essence one, these are, emptiness (nothingness) and fullness (presence). This relationship is not just a juxtaposition of two ideas, that is, they really are 'altogether'. A way I have tried to describe this is by saying ultimate reality is a 'dynamic non-dialectic absence/presence'. This is only to force the idea that what is being described is not a 'dialectic', normally understood as a juxtaposition of opposed ideas in order to resolve their inner conflict. With our two-way process of understanding, of 'this or that' it is difficult to describe or understand the 'altogetherness', and therefore the lack of conflict, in the 'absence/presence' that is ultimate reality. It is this harmonious 'altogetherness' that accounts for the whole range of reality. Problems, diversities, appear when, whether religiously, socially, scientifically or educationally, we fail to reflect upon, think from, and act upon this 'altogether' nature of ultimate reality. This happens most often when one element is emphasized over the other. Both these aspects of 'emptiness' and 'fullness' need to be celebrated and explored in an 'altogether' kind of way. 'A/negative apophasis' is but an example of how this may be done. However, I think that this is a methodology that can be applied equally as well to science as to religion.

Science and mathematics is one area that lies outside the range of this study but that seems to me to be related somehow to the inner nature of ultimate reality. I only offer these as pointers, as another way of looking that might yield promise for the human quest for God. The first and most fascinating, is the discovery of 'fractal' principles by Dr. Benoit Mandelbrot. What is fascinating here is the manner in which 'presence'/'realness' seems to arise in a never ending movement of happening and unhappening from a centre which is 'nothingness'/'emptiness'. Further, neither is this nothingness/emptiness static, it keeps moving and shifting and creating new centres. It is difficult to put into words

the visual image of what fractal sets represent. I do not want to overstress this fact, but upon my first viewing of the Mandelbrot fractal set, I had an immediate recognition that the shape of the emptiness, the nothingness, had a familiar shape, and of course that shape is very similar to the many representations of the Buddha sitting in meditation, but not the regular slim Buddhas that have amassed in the Buddhist tradition, rather the earlier ones, of the full-of-girth Buddha, with a smile of amusement on his face. To me, it somehow suggested someone who had finally been let in on a secret, only to discover that it is all deceptively simple, so that one cannot help but laugh at the initial fuss that preceded it all. Did the Buddha know something about the nature of reality that we do not know? And that pose, was it something he saw, and without letting anyone know, began to image, but could not help but laugh at what he was trying to point out to people without them knowing he was even doing it? I do not know the answers to these questions, but they are certainly of interest. If anything else, fractal sets seem to point out that the structure of reality is an intricate working of emptiness and presence, it is an appearing disappearance and a disappearing appearance.

Of lesser application, but just as relevant, is the recognition of the endless possibility of binary digitate. Who could have figured that two numbers, zero and one, could give so much appearance, so much reality that is actually grounded in emptiness, just numbers. Perhaps as a human race we have stumbled upon something that we do not fully fathom yet, how the whole of reality is grounded upon an empty simplicity. The easy way of course, is to highlight the immediately present, the immediate as *the* reality, but the unsigned, the emptiness, is just as real and without it, nothing would be. Binary digitate is also interesting in that it points out a clarification and provides a visual representation, namely, that without both emptiness (zero) and presence (one) working together, nothing arises, nothing 'appears' to us, so to speak. It is only when there is an 'altogetherness' about the 'zeros and ones' that fascinating things begin to happen. Anyone is free to pick up the threads of this thought. All I am pointing out is that there seems to be

confirmation from other sources, of what the mystics have so painstakingly and consistently seen as their lives, a movement of: God/Godhead, Being/Beyond Being, Fullness/Emptiness, Form/Emptiness. All of this affirmation was taking place long before humanity had developed a 'scientific mind' as we understand it today, and yet, it seems to me, they were getting it right. What this suggests is that academicians of religion do not need to wait until there is scientific proof before we begin to explore certain things. If we wait until someone, and in our minds we hope the scientist, has proved 'God' to us, then, I am afraid, it will be irretrievably late. I think there somehow needs to be a restoration of an intuitive sense and search for God or ultimate reality that the religious or mystical tradition has been attending to, all these years. For long now, I have argued, we have concerned ourselves with the incidental - mystical experience. I think it is time now, to dive into the depths and explore, the complete reverberance that sounds throughout the universe, when we say: God.



Endnotes

1. Proudfoot accepts and makes use of the arguments developed by Zaehner (1957) and by Smart (1965).
2. For extended arguments of Katz's thesis see his two articles, "Ethics and Mysticism in Eastern Mystical Traditions." *Religious Studies* 28.2 (1993): 69-74; and "Mysticism and Ethics in Western Mystical Traditions." *Religious Studies* 28.3 (1993): 407-423.
3. Danto's 1976 article is, according to the abstract, an extension of the conclusions from his 1972 book *Mysticism and Morality* (New York: Harper & Row) and is in view of criticism by Wayne Proudfoot and William Wainwright.
4. It might interest one to know that high-powered water jets are now surpassing diamond as the strongest cutting tool.
5. There is some controversy about this interpretation of the third treasure of Taoism (see Chen 1989: 210). This seems to be the logical one, especially given what appears to be an application of the third treasure in the chapter following (i.e., chp. 68 of the *Tao Te Ching*).
6. See for example Marguerite Porete's insistence that the seventh and final movement of the mystical ascent remains inaccessible in this life; Porete 1981: 137 [tr. Crawford].
7. See for example, Meister Eckhart 1941: 121 [tr. Blakney].
8. This question, constantly being asked in Zen, is a question that misses the point since the answer can be 'both', as for example in the description of the process in Gautama Buddha. In this sense, it is the achievement rather than the process that counts, though certain processes depending on the intent and context of the individual are detrimental. As always, from a Buddhist perspective, the application of *upāya* (skillful means) is what is called for.
9. Witness for example the brush with the Inquisition that Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart were exposed to. In Porete's case, it resulted in her being burnt at the stake in June 1310 CE.

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