

Mystics and Their Little Ways

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One Is Nothing,
While Two Is—In Reality—One

Mysticism is really quite simple. It is merely a State of Mind in which all phenomena are regarded as pure illusion. The only reality is what is called by one mystic the *plerōma* by another Ísvara, or Parabrahman, or *pu-ruṣa* by a third, God; by a fourth, the Pure Soul; by a fifth, Being, or the Absolute—and so on, more or less indefinitely.

Mysticism is not a belief. It is a matter of direct experience resulting from interior illumination, now and then—though not often—arising spontaneously. More usually it results from persistence in certain religious practices, such as meditation, for instance.

Mysticism is entirely a matter for each individual, so that mystics rarely form sects, and when they do, the sects are never successful. However, there have been the Gnostics, the Therapeutae, the Cathari, the Essenes, and of course, farther East, the Sufis, the Taoists, and various Indian and Indo-Chinese groups. But this is all a sort of accident. Every mystic of any account is really a solitary who, thinking to bring all men to his own perfection, merely succeeds in founding a new cult, or religion.

Most of the original disciples of such a man have had probably some mystic experience. Then arises some worldly, ambitious person who exploits the crude (and, failing to understand them, glosses over the subtle) elements of the Master's teaching. All "teaching" is cardinally false, as nothing matters so much as teaching each man how to destroy the illusion which is keeping him from perfection.

Many mystics have, of course, realized the fatuity of founding a religion, and so have left themselves to a small circle of disciples. Such were Porphyry, Plotinus, Joachim of Fiora, Hildegard of Bingen, Elizabeth of Schönau, Amalric of Bèna, Meister Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, Van Ruybroeck, Gerhard Groot, Thomas Münzer, Nicholas of Cusa, Sebastian Franck, Paracelsus, Valentine Weigel, Jacob Boehme, St. Teresa, Mme. Guyon, John of the Cross, J. G. Gichtel, Henry More, Poiret, Dr. Dee and Sir E. Kelly, William Blake, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, Novalis, Bonaventura, Éliphas Lévi, Victor Benjamin Neuburg, and our own Emerson. Of many of these men we have little trace. We can only rely upon their occasional treatises and letters. It would be impossible to give any account of the Asiatic mystics. In Asia every man realizes that mysticism is the soul of religion, and seeks a direct mystical experience.

Of mystics who have founded or attempted to found cults we have more famous names: Socrates (and Plato), Zoroaster, Dionysus, Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis of Assisi, Apollonius of Tyana, Issa bin Jusuf, William Law, Claude de St. Martin, George Fox, Swedenborg and H. P. Blavatsky. Perhaps Andreas, and his successors, and many others who have preferred to work through the medium of secret societies, should also be mentioned. Often in such cases their names and deeds are lost, although their work may have secretly revolutionized the spiritual life of whole continents.

The method of a mystic in proclaiming his "Law" is always the same. He takes one single, simple, fundamental, revolutionary remark, and makes the Universe obey it. Thus Mohammed with his "There is one God." The rest is but the harvest of that seed. So also Buddha with his denial of the *ātman*, the cardinal doctrine of the Hindus; he puts his finger on the one essential of the system which he seeks to destroy, and the whole system explodes. A modern instance is the saying "Do what

thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the law,
love under will"

For mysticism at its best may be defined as Genius on a Religious plane. And all genius consists of two parts: one, the capacity to see, hear and feel everything in the world with accuracy; and two, the power to distill this impression to a quintessence, and pour it forth as a perfume. Now the mystic mind can, by definition, do both of these things. It interprets every phenomenon as a direct dealing of God with the soul, and it creates from each phenomenon an image of glory, radiates it and spreads it over the universe.

Shelley has voiced the portrait of a true mystic in a single stanza:

He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!

This is the keynote of all mystics, that their analysis of the Universe ultimates in Deity. The consciousness is no longer human, but divine. Country and language hardly vary the very expression.

Mansūr, the Persian mystic, was stoned for saying "I am The Truth, and within my turban I wrap nothing but God." His blood is said to have traced *ana 'l-hagq*—"I am the Truth"—upon the sand. The usual greeting of the Hindu is almost identical. "Thou art That," he exclaims reverently on meeting a man, and places his hands together as a sign that Two are in reality One.

The Gnostics, the Neoplatonists, the Christians, all possess this same inner consciousness. There is only one further step, and that is to identify this One with Nothing. The Chinese were the first to express this

clearly in words; their conception of the *tao is* still unequaled for clarity on this point. But Indian and Christian have outdone them in detail and in intellectual demonstration. In the famous *Book of Lies*, one of the best modern treatises on mysticism, by Frater Perdurabo, the author fills his first page with a question-mark, and the reverse of it with a mark of exclamation, signifying that the Universe has two phases, scepticism and mysticism, and that these two are equal and opposite, and therefore One. His first chapter he calls "The Chapter which is not a chapter," and begins it with the sign: 0!

He means, by the 0, the infinitely large; by the ⊙ the infinitely small; and by the straight line, the manifested universe, the result of the interplay of the first two. He then descends to our inferior understanding by using mere words, and describes "The Ante Primal Triad which is NOT-GOD" in these simple but elegant terms:

Nothing is.
Nothing becomes.
Nothing is not.

Of course, when Nothing is not, Something is; so we reach "The First Triad, which is GOD," which begins "I AM."

There are many other chapters to excite wonder in this little volume. Here are some additional phrases: "It is not necessary to understand; it is enough to adore." The God may be of clay; adore him and he becomes GOD. We ignore what created us; we adore what *we* create. Let us create nothing but GOD! That which causes us to create is our true father and mother; we create in our own image—which is theirs. Let us therefore create without fear; for we can create nothing that is not GOD.

And this is from the chapter called "Phaeton":

No.
Yes.
Perhaps.
O!
Eye.
Hi!
Y?
No.
Hail!

This chapter needs no explanation; it is evidently a perfect synopsis and solution of the great Philosophical, Mystical and Ethical Problem which has always, and will always, baffle MAN.