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# Mysticism an Epistemological Problem

BY

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# Mysticism an Epistemological Problem

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Yale University in Candidacy for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

BY

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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER

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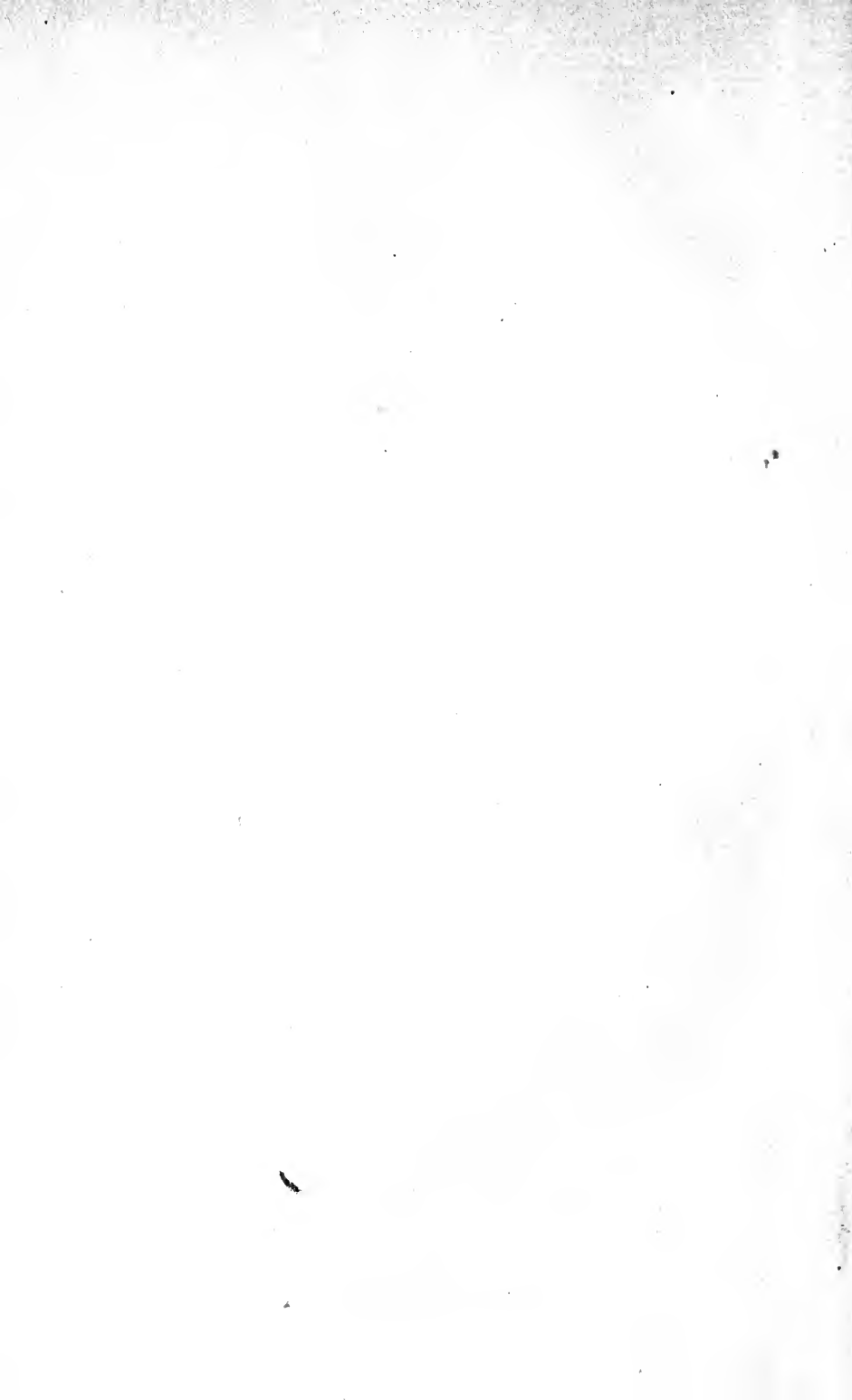
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UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA

# MYSTICISM AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEM.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF MYSTICISM.

Mysticism as a philosophy is a doctrine of the "Abstract Universal."<sup>1</sup> Whenever, from the time of the Indian Upanishads, through Neoplatonism and mediæval catholic mysticism, even in the later days of the Quakers, mysticism has become speculative, has sought to formulate its own inner meaning, it has been marked by a characterless Absolute at the center of it. The "Neti, neti" of the Upanishads, the "Nameless Nothing," the "Abysmal Dark," the "Silent Wilderness of the Godhead where no one is at home," of the Christian mystics, the "One" ( $\tauὸ ἓν$ ) which is beyond ( $ἐπέκεινα$ ) all things both spiritual and sensible, the absolutely unexpressible and unthinkable, are all typical examples of the philosophical self-expression of mysticism. It would be hard, perhaps, to discover a poorer speculative theory.

Not only has the mystic's theory been often and most thoroughly refuted, but it is really incapable of rational statement. For whoever formulates the doctrine, does, by that very act, refute it. The mystic finds no satisfaction in any object of knowledge which is less than absolute, ultimate—yet every object of knowledge is less than ultimate, is somehow defined, does somehow depend for its character on another. Therefore reality must be to the mystic no object of sense or of knowledge at all, nothing defined or definable, nothing even real or imaginable—and in these positings the mystic not only contradicts himself and all principles of rationality, but he also destroys his own doctrine by actually defining his Real, though only indeed as an absolutely unknowable, a zero,—and his ineffable zero he defines in turn as somehow the only Real. For the mystic, having, in his attempt to avoid all limitation of his Real, limited it to absolute nothingness, seeks to give it character by way of contrast.

"Not this ultimate Fact which I have found," he says, "is unreal, nothing, but all the world of sense and feeling and thought with which I contrast it." The unknowable reality of the mystic must receive content; it cannot receive any content by positive definition, but only by contrast. Therefore the mystic says that all that is real it is not, yet it alone is real; hence all that we know is unreal, dream-stuff, a vast illusion. That is, as Prof. Royce has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> the mystic seeks to give character to his ultimate zero by contrasting it with the real world, which must become, however, for that purpose, just another zero, and "no more in metaphysics than in mathematics is the subtraction of one zero from another an intelligible process, giving any real result."<sup>2</sup> Mysticism is a bad philosophy.

This criticism plainly fails, shoots wide of the mark. Just because it is so clear, so obviously valid, it is impossible that the mystic himself should not have recognized it. The historical fact is, that the mystics, for the most part of the keenest of logicians and dialecticians, did recognize this criticism, even hailed it as a manifestation of the truth of their mystery. For mysticism, unlike other bad philosophies, has been historically deathless. It has not fallen to pieces of its own inner failure in logic. All through the history of philosophy runs the mystical motive like a deep undercurrent, now and again sweeping to the surface with unstemmable force. The Indian mystical poems, Plotinus and his followers, Bernard, Hugo and Richard of St. Victor, Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, Nicolaus Cusanus, the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, Spinoza, Schelling, St. Martin, Theresa, St. Francis and Madam Guyon, are names as widely separated in time as in philosophical significance, genius and view-point, yet they all stand as evidences of the fact that the refutation of mysticism is of importance only to those who are not mystics. This is not because the mystic is dull-witted or insincere, but because he himself, the heart of his assurance, has somehow not been touched. For the mystic has, as an actual fact, not found a zero. He acts as if his theory were not true; he places tremendous hypotheses in the world; he declares that he has "a conscious relation to the most Real"; that he sees and knows all things as they truly are through his discovered experience-medium.

The mystic must then intend, not to make a speculative doctrine, but to express some unique and ultimate and anarchical

phase of experience—logical analysis and refutation cannot touch him, for logic cannot destroy facts.

Yet neither can the mystic be ignored. If mysticism is expressive of an actual fact of experience, it must make a difference to philosophy; if not, the problem still remains as to how mysticism, in Prof. Hocking's words, "has created the illusion that his empty, swept and garnished dwelling is the very house of God."

The problem of mysticism is, then, a problem in human experience—the problem of what aspect of experience could have made keen thinkers find the roots of the rational in the non-rational, the ultimate metaphysical certainties on alogical grounds.

In what field is one to look for a solution of this problem? By what norms are the certainties of mysticism to be judged and evaluated, its meaning for an understanding of human truth-seeking and truth-getting to be laid bare?

## CHAPTER II.

### SOME RECENT FORMULATIONS OF THIS PROBLEM

With the sweeping away of the mystic's metaphysics, and yet with the fact of mysticism as strong and persistent as ever, we are led to believe that mysticism is primarily an experience and not a metaphysics, and that the needed attitude toward it, is an attempt to understand it, not to refute it—for an experience can never be refuted. In the words of a mystic poem, "The sun beareth witness of the sun."<sup>3</sup> An experience is, in the last resort, its own warrant.

The obvious point of view from which to understand any phase of human experience is the psychological one. Psychology, if anything can, one thinks, ought to make clear to us just what this peculiar, coercive, ineffable experience of the mystic's is, and why he so persistently ascribes to it ontological certainty. It is with this problem in mind that many recent writers have approached their subject from the point of view of psychology. Delacroix,<sup>4</sup> de Montmorand,<sup>5</sup> Boutroux,<sup>6</sup> Leuba,<sup>7</sup> Picavet,<sup>8</sup> Goix,<sup>9</sup> Probst-Biraben,<sup>10</sup> Godferneaux<sup>11</sup> have all made minute analyses of the mystic consciousness. Approaching the subject as they all do from the psychological point of view, they yet differ from one another in the particular angles of their approach, some seeking the key to the problem in the pathological, some in the psychophysical and some in the introspective way of treating it.

The writers who approach mysticism from what might be called the pathological point of view seem to me to approach mysticism wholly externally, regarding the morbid outward phenomena which are often, though by no means always, present in mysticism, as interchangeable with mysticism itself.<sup>12</sup> They tend to identify magic and mysticism, table-knocking and mysticism, any and every sort of vision-seeing and superstition with mysticism. They attempt to "explain" mysticism by calling it an irruption of the sub-conscious, auto-suggestion, hysteria, annihilation of the will and hypertrophy of the attention, or else annihilation of the attention and hypertrophy of the will, eretheism of the imagination, hypertension of the vital energy, disassociation, or amnesia, or

the coming into control of the lower centers.<sup>13</sup> That is, they regard mysticism as a sort of mental alienation, having a definite type of morbid manifestation. Nordau, for instance, on this basis, regards mysticism as a form of mental degeneration in which the characteristic feature is the unrestricted play of the associative process, accompanied always by a strong feeling element, so that the mystic "imagines he divines unknown and inexplicable relations among phenomena."<sup>14</sup> It is a case of the ordinary mechanism of thought breaking down in a certain definite way, under the influence of strong emotional factors. Cousin,<sup>15</sup> in his definition of mysticism as a substitution of ecstasy for reason, rapture for philosophy, takes substantially this view of mysticism; so do Lea,<sup>16</sup> Jundt,<sup>17</sup> Pfeiderer,<sup>18</sup> and others.

The limitations of this point of view are obvious, and the more recent writers on the psychology of mysticism have pointed out, first, that a treatment of mysticism which presupposes its pathological character brings in a great deal of extraneous matter; second, that the pathological accompaniments of mysticism are accidental, or at most incidental and should not be treated as the whole of mysticism,<sup>19</sup> while finally, they point out that the subconscious is itself more in need of illumination than in a position to give it.<sup>20</sup>

The second way of approaching mysticism within the psychological field is the psycho-physical point of view, which endeavors to see mysticism from the inside as well as from the outside, which considers it a normal manifestation of a certain type of mind and seeks to ascertain its determining characters.

From this second point of view, the answer to the question as to where and how the ontological certainties of mysticism arise, is found generally in their dependence on the formal conditions of mind and body in a trance state. Coe,<sup>21</sup> for instance, in his article on "The Sources of the Mystical Revelation," examines the confessions of mystics in James' collection and others, and comes to the conclusion that the reason why there comes from trance practices, from the psychological effects of drugs, from the recurrent spontaneous obsession of "cosmic consciousness," the common report of the mingling of the individual self in a larger world of spiritual order which is good and in which all mysteries are solved, is due to the fact that these mystic confessions come from a homogeneous group of minds, whose

extremely high degree of suggestibility is sufficient to give to ideas the force of present experience or intuition, and that, further, actual experience in a trance gives material for the peculiar mystical interpretation. That is, the mystics are people so suggestible that they regard interpretations of experience as actual experience; anything can become to them a direct perception of fact—they see the devil with their bodily eyes, etc. Being then, thus highly suggestible and being subject to trances, the actual content of the so-called mystical revelation can be accounted for, according to Coe, by the actual experience content of the trance. There is in a trance, first, absolute muscular relaxation. This brings with it a sense of being out of the body, a loss of the consciousness of the subject-object relation, and so of the sense of personality; and the change from tension to absolute relaxation induces also an agreeable feeling-tone. There is, further, a persistent narrowing and retraction of attention, so that the experience tends to be ineffable, because of this emptiness of mental content. Coe induced trances again and again in normal people, and found always these factors; according to his mind, they would be easily enough translated by the mystic into an immediate intuition of a blessed life in union with the ultimate spiritual being, under the influence of auto-suggestion grown habitual, reflection, tradition and instruction.<sup>22</sup>

Leuba also approaches the problem from the psycho-physiological point of view,<sup>23</sup> and, regarding the trance-state as the essential factor of mysticism, deduces from it the ontological certainty of mysticism in a different way. To him, to say that mystics have trances, and being suggestible people they hypostatize these trances into objects in accordance with previous ideas, is not enough to explain the passion and power of the mystic. On the contrary, the peculiarity of the mystical type is that certain groups of needs are especially intense in them, and these needs, incapable of satisfaction in ordinary ways, either on account of temperament, or environment, or the predominance of religious prejudices, find their satisfaction in the mystic trance. These needs are, first, the need of mental peace. The mystic is a distracted mind, Leuba says; there are for him many competing objects of attention and he can only find unity and peace by elimination, never by discrimination. In the second place, the mystics are people who need effective support from outside—they are, as a

general thing, not self-reliant people. A third need is the need for the universalization of action—the feeling that beautiful things, deeds, ideas ought to belong to everybody. The mystic wishes passionately to be a mere vehicle for the moral law. These are three of the needs or tendencies, according to Leuba, which, being more or less present in all mystics, find their satisfaction in the interpretation the mystic gives to his trance—union with the One, support by the consciousness of the presence of God, renewed impulse to good and universal acts, are their realization. But Leuba finds the most essential and determining need a fourth—the desire of organic enjoyment. This is found, Leuba says, whether consciously or not, in the mystic trance, which becomes for Leuba a love-trance with the idea of God predominant. Other writers have taken up this point of view in regard to mysticism, that it is essentially erotomania,<sup>24</sup> but this point of view is very vigorously opposed by de Montmorand<sup>25</sup> and by Prof. Hocking,<sup>26</sup> on the ground that the mystical experience just is a *total* satisfaction of all the impulses and desires of the man who has it. "In mysticism,"<sup>27</sup> says Prof. Hocking, "*all* needs are understood and satisfied. The aim is to unify in wish and will the whole moral nature of man."

Thus Prof. Hocking,<sup>28</sup> de Montmorand,<sup>29</sup> and Delacroix,<sup>30</sup> believe that the trance-state is not to be treated as a single fact containing the essence of mysticism, which may be analyzed into its satisfaction-elements for various partial needs, but that these mystical experiences must be judged serially, as a process of development, and in connection with the mystic's other states. They use as a category for manipulating this whole of the mystic's consciousness, the principle of alternation. Delacroix, however, accepts it merely as a fact,<sup>31</sup> that, especially at the early stages of a mystic's career, this phenomenon of marked alternation between states of insight and states of ordinary conscious activity do occur—he believes that this alternation is contrary to the ideal of mysticism, that it is something to be overcome.

De Montmorand, however, sees a deeper significance than that in this fact of the mystic's life.<sup>32</sup> There are, he says, alternations whose members are not simply antithetical and successive, but whose members grow out of one another; he instances rest and action. The alternating states in the mystic's life are mutually determining, he would say, each receives its character from

the other—as the mystic raises himself, ascetically and morally, to his mystic experience, so after this experience his active life receives a new moral impetus and fervor.

Prof. Hocking develops this principle of alternation still further,<sup>33</sup> believing that mysticism is a practical attitude, a will to worship, and that the mystical experience is an incident in attaining a new psychical level in conformity with this motive. These experiences which mark new levels, come in a sort of irregular, unperiodic rhythm, in a fundamental kind of growth, so that one stage is assimilated so to speak, and the next experience is added to that. That is, the mystic is somehow a different man practically after his mystic experience of union, and he keeps on being different. To Prof. Hocking, the reason for this psychological alternation is to be found in an epistemological principle of alternation at the basis of it;<sup>34</sup> its criterion is to be found in an ethical evaluation of it.<sup>35</sup>

There remains to consider, in the psychological field, what has been called the introspective approach to mysticism<sup>36</sup>—meaning here by introspection not the examination of one's own mind, but the examination of the mystic's mind wholly from the inside, on the basis of his own introspection, with all physical accompaniments disregarded. From this point of view little more is attempted than an actual simplification of the mystic's account of the road he travels, checked always by reference to the fruits of the mystic experience. Thus Delacroix, writing from this point of view,<sup>37</sup> finds the mystic life a development in three stages—the first the stage in which the mystic, having achieved union, receives "divine favors" from God, is absorbed wholly in the interests and excitements of the new level of life. Delacroix calls this stage the stage of "expansion" or "divine hypnosis." The second stage is that mystically-named the "dark night of the soul," when the soul is felt to be kept from union with God by obstacles; the third stage is that of a serene and powerful activity, in which union with God and ethical activity are both present. Boutroux, also from this point of view, arranges the mystical development in a little fuller order<sup>38</sup>—(1) he says, is the period of longing, of half-unconscious grasp of the God-idea, (2) the stage at which this idea comes into clear consciousness and the demand is put upon the soul for transformation into conformity with this idea, by the means of purification and



asceticism, (3) is the period of ecstasy, of experienced union, (4) is the reflection of this stage on the active life—there comes a new orientation in both judgment and conduct, and (5) in the final stage, this life is developed and realized in all its fullness—in loving God, the mystic loves the whole creation.

So much for the purely psychological part of the psychology of mysticism. The significant thing is, that the psychologists, once they have got their phenomena before us, immediately desert their psychological point of view in seeking to evaluate it. I have been obliged to give often only the beginnings of so-called psychological discussions, in order to give the purely psychological data. Thus the pathologists dispose of mysticism as of no value, because it is purely auto-suggestion,<sup>39</sup> etc., making some sort of ontological appeal; thus the examiner of mysticism from a psycho-physical point of view appeals frankly to the ethical outcome of mysticism for its evaluation, as Prof. Hocking<sup>40</sup> and Goix<sup>41</sup> do, saying that mysticism cannot be merely of no value at all, since it does as a matter of fact result (in Prof. Hocking's words) in "the shattering of the moral nature and the reshaping of it a little nearer to the heart's desire";<sup>42</sup> especially the psychologists who regard mysticism so to speak from the inside are insistent about a moral criterion for it, saying that if it is monoideism or auto-suggestion, its worth lies in the value of its single idea;<sup>43</sup> or like Goix raising the question of racial suggestion and its tremendous ontological importance for human destiny, as implying a common will.<sup>44</sup>

What then, shall be said of the psychological point of view as a means of understanding mysticism? One must say first, I think, that its accepted positive results—namely, that the mystic experience is a normal experience, taking place in subjects widely removed in intellectual, aesthetic, and moral vigor, and in the healthy or morbid states of their organisms, though all probably higher suggestible to ideas—further, that the mystic experience is cumulative, rythmic, and results in a tremendous incentive to action, that it is noetic, illuminating, and of absolute authority for the subject attaining it,—are of very great importance to an understanding of mysticism;—but that the negative results of a study of this kind are of even greater importance. For on the negative side psychology shows that all these concomitant psychological phenomena are not really mysticism; they

are no more to be confounded with mysticism than the psychical states of a genius are to be confounded with genius—psychology persistently pushes us beyond itself for a true understanding of mysticism, as is evidenced by the facts cited above, that as soon as psychology tries to evaluate mysticism, to show its significance or lack of it, it turns outside of itself, to norms of ontology, or of ethics, or of religion.

That is, psychology seems to give up the problem of the uniqueness of mysticism—it can qualify mysticism and it can describe its genesis, but on its own confession it cannot go further—it cannot tell what meaning mysticism, as having happened, has, from the point of view of human values. In a word, psychology has the right to describe, but not to interpret, its phenomena.

In the further attempt to get at the heart of mysticism, at its fundamental drive, an attempt growing out of the psychological analyses, scholars have turned to the motive of mysticism, and have found that motive to be an ethical one. According to this point of view, mysticism can only be understood and interpreted in the light of its ethics—it is, in its core, the ethical force in man, moral enthusiasm. Picavet<sup>45</sup> takes this point of view, and Récéjac.<sup>46</sup> The latter says “mysticism is without form or support anywhere except in the moral realm.”<sup>47</sup> It is easy enough to maintain this view. Against men like Paul,<sup>48</sup> who point out that ethics is primarily a thing of the phenomenal world and that mysticism, in denying that world denies also the possibility of ethical action, or Nash,<sup>49</sup> who says that mysticism in being unique and individualistic destroys the active and social values, or even against the more specific criticism that the great mystics, in making the virtues means to an end, and the ultimate end transcendent and free from moral necessities, destroy moral values,<sup>50</sup> it is easy from this point of view to point out that the mystics have nevertheless been men of intense ethical activity, and the very fact that, in spite of the quietistic and anti-social features of their doctrine, the mystics have not ignored the phenomenal world, have seen themselves compelled by an inner necessity to go out and make disciples, as was Buddha for instance,<sup>51</sup> shows that there is in mysticism a tremendous ethical drive, so strong that it can break down even its own formal tenets. It is the old point that mysticism is primarily a mode of life rather than a mode of reflection about life; and the

further point is here added that this mode of life is fundamentally one of ethical striving, that mysticism is inextricably connected with ethical presuppositions. This point of view can also be abundantly borne out by illustrations of the moral fervor of the mystics; their stress on character, on social obligation, on individual worth. Eckhart says: "I am just as necessary to God as God is to me"<sup>52</sup>—and the mystic shows that he has found that he is something, not nothing. Tauler says: "One can spin, another can make shoes, and they are all gifts of the Holy Ghost, I tell you"<sup>53</sup>—and emphasizes social activity as a religious duty. An example of the ethical approach to mysticism is seen in Peabody<sup>54</sup> in an article on "Mysticism and Modern Life" in the *Harvard Theological Review*. His point is, that if the mystic does descend from the heights to the task, he brings with him a rare endowment of power, and that he nearly always does so descend. He examines the productivity of the mystical inspiration in the Quakers, and instances the work of George Fox, and the fact that the Quakers of Germantown submitted the first official religious protest against slavery (in 1688); that in 1783 a petition for the abolishment of the slave trade in England was presented to the House of Commons by Quakers; that Quakers were foremost in advancing the cause of free undenominational education of both sexes; that they were first in the work for the negro, Indian, and Oriental in our country, and for the abolishment of war; that Elizabeth Fry, famous for her work in English prisons, was a Quaker; and that the impetus to John Bright's work against the bread-tax, for popular rights and the widening of the franchise, came from this same so-called quietistic Quaker doctrine. Mysticism is not only consistent with action, he concludes, but it gives to it a force, a composure. "To feel one's self an instrument makes one do one's work with a keen edge." Again, Miss Underhill,<sup>55</sup> writing from this point of view, says: "The true mystic quest may as well be fulfilled in the market as in the cloister; by Joan of Arc on the battlefield as by Simon of Stylites on his pillar. The real achievements of Christian mysticism are to be seen in St. Catherine of Sienna regenerating her native city, Joan of Arc leading the armies of France, Ignatius creating the Society of Jesus, or Fox giving life to the Society of Friends."<sup>55</sup>

I think that this point of view is again insufficient to give the total fact of mysticism. It is very true that the mystics for the

most part have been ethically active people, being perhaps the "force that has preserved religion from formalism, social life from entire hypocrisy," in Inge's words, but to seek to know mysticism entirely by its fruits seems to me misleading. For what can such a point of view say really to the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, who flourished so extensively in the 14th and 15th centuries and whose one claim was that, having had their mystical experience, they were henceforth beyond morality<sup>56</sup>—being one with God, whatever they willed to do, moral or not moral, criminal or holy, was God's will? Or to Angèle de Foligno,<sup>57</sup> congratulating herself on the death of her mother, husband and children, since they were but hindrances to her perfect enjoyment of God? Or even to the "diabolical mystics," as James call them,<sup>58</sup> such as Forres, who, having penetrated to the heart of things, brings back the report that it is evil and not good? And even granting that all these examples are aberrations of mysticism, not true mysticism at all, we still have the fact of the strong personal element of the mystic's longing unexplained. The mystic never wants primarily a new order of things in the world, a better civic regulation—these are rather results, which spring from the illumination of his spiritual nature which he has received in what he names direct communion with God—the working out, so to speak, of the surplus energy which he seems to have received in his mystical experience. The ethical activity is the demand that the world be transformed in conformity to the mystic's inner experience, rather than itself the motive of that experience. Any study of mysticism wholly from the ethical point of view, however valuable it may be for exemplifying a certain driving power and energy that seems to spring from the mystic experience, is bound to be a partial, and sometimes, a misleading view—as if implying that all social reformers had to be mystics, or all mystics social reformers. It is this spiritual illumination itself that one wants to get at, and not alone from the point of view of psychology, which is inadequate to interpret it, nor from the point of view of ethics, which leaves it aside as a dim, unessential X in the background, but from some point of view, which, having norms of its own, can understand and interpret what it is that takes place in the mystical experience, and what meaning it has for us.

Such a point of view would seem to be the religious one; and from this point of view much illumination has been thrown on the subject of mysticism. "Mysticism," says Prof. Hocking, "is worship,"<sup>59</sup> and again, "Mysticism is the original, untamed, God-seeking element."<sup>60</sup> For Prof. Hocking, mysticism and religion are almost interchangeable terms;<sup>61</sup> the reality of religion is its mystical element, its felt conscious union with the most Real, while mysticism cannot be understood apart from this intense, personal, religious element. Inge also takes this point of view,<sup>62</sup> though in a somewhat modified form. "Spiritual things," he says, "must be spiritually discerned; the evidence for the truth of religion is the religious experience."<sup>63</sup> This religious experience is to Inge synonymous with mysticism, and from this point of view he discusses the relation of mysticism to institutionalism. The point for us is, that both religion and mysticism if separated from each other would be for him practically devoid of meaning. Thus the study of mysticism from the religious point of view is not devotional nor intended to become so; it is an attempt to get at the meaning of mysticism out of its purest forms, and to examine the ontological messages of mysticism in the light of religious ideas—to find out what "mysticism means and may add to our knowledge of God," "not as a speculative system, but as an existent fact."<sup>64</sup>

Now it seems to me that this approach to mysticism typifies a very true aspect of mysticism—that it is, in its highest unfolding, as well as in its deepest motive, religious. But nevertheless to identify mysticism forthwith with religion, even to seek to see it exclusively from a religious point of view, is at once too wide and too narrow. Too wide; for such a vast ocean of tradition, and instruction, and inherited creeds and age-old God-ideas, come into religion, mingling so inextricably with the mystical experience in it, that it makes the problem of deciding where the unique, coercive mystical experience of communion with the Godhead ends and where the interpretation of this experience, an interpretation necessarily colored and perhaps distorted by the environmental religious ideas, begins, one almost impossible of solution. Too narrow; for there are certainly experiences of sudden insight outside of religious experience,<sup>65</sup> which are not distinguishable from the mystical religious experience by any namable feature, except that they just are not religious—are not concerned

with the Godhead as such for their object. Must one throw out of account all so-called secular mystical experiences? Such as the experience of genius,<sup>66</sup> for instance, or of the logician—Mr. Bertrand Russell says,<sup>67</sup> that in purely logical realms, it is insight or intuition, a sudden illumination, that arrives at what is really new—that the function of reason is to confute or confirm this intuition, which confuting or confirming consists, however, in setting it into agreement or disagreement with other beliefs no less instinctive—must one disregard all such testimony to seek for the meaning of mysticism purely in the religious realm?

It seems to me that one ought to be able to find a point of view, which, while expressing the uniqueness of mysticism, would yet enable one to study with its aid all manifestations of mysticism—whether in the mere germ or in its highest development—and that only from such a point of view could the real meaning of mysticism, its unique contribution to the total meaning of life, be seen—and that all the formulations of the problem considered in this chapter have shown themselves inadequate to this purpose.

## CHAPTER III.

### MYSTICISM AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEM.

The last chapter attempted to show that the study of mysticism from the metaphysical, and psychological, and ethical, and religious view-points, while it has made many contributions of great value to the understanding of the pathological or normal conditions of mysticism, of its ethical results, and of its high fruition in religion, has yet somehow tended to leave mysticism itself aside. The difficulty was that in explaining mysticism from these points of view, either only one aspect of mysticism seemed to be considered, and this consideration was a contradiction to other phases of mysticism, or extraneous elements and attendant features of mysticism were examined as mysticism itself, so that one lost all hint of the unique meaning of mysticism.

What point of view can one find which shall at the same time be broad enough to enable one to study all its manifestations serially, from the germ to its highest development, and narrow enough to present the unique contribution which mysticism makes to the total meaning of life? One wishes to find what is at once uniquely and universally true of mysticism, for only so can one find an inner understanding of mysticism.

James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, gives four "marks" as he calls them, of the mystic state of consciousness, and of these only two seem to him to be essential.<sup>68</sup> These two are the ineffability of mysticism and its peculiar noetic quality of sudden illumination. The first of these characters is not unique; it makes mysticism like all other experience (though to a greater degree) in being ultimately incommunicable. Mysticism is not unique in not being for all—for color and music, for instance, to take obvious examples, must have the same character as long as colorblind people and people with no ear for music, exist.

But James' fourth mark, that of peculiar noetic quality of direct illumination, does give a suggestion of a unique characterization of all states regarded as mystical. Mr. Bertrand Russell's definition of mysticism<sup>69</sup> as "belief in insight as against discursive reason, in a way of wisdom, sudden, penetrating, coer-

cive," bears out this suggestion. So do the majority of the scholars of mysticism, whether directly or indirectly, scornfully or sincerely, whatever else they hold concerning mysticism, acknowledge that it is in some way an assertion of the knowledge of experience as against ideational knowledge. Thus Hinton<sup>70</sup> says, "Mysticism is an assertion of a means of knowing that must not be tried by ordinary rules of evidence; it is the claiming of authority for our own impressions," and Prof. Hocking, after identifying mysticism with worship, says: "True worship will issue in true knowledge, as its essential result and aim,"<sup>71</sup> or to go to the opposite extreme, Pfeleiderer says: "Mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God . . . in this God-intoxication, the subject knows himself to be in possession of the highest and fullest truth; but this truth is only possessed in the quite undeveloped, simple and bare form of monotonous feeling . . ."<sup>72</sup> or finally, Ribot, "The ecstasy presupposes the exaltation of the intelligence; it is the extreme activity of the intelligence concentrated on a unique idea."<sup>73</sup> One might multiply these quotations indefinitely, but even so many seem to indicate that scholars, from whatever angle, for whatever purpose, and to whatever result, they have studied the mystic states of consciousness, have at least recognized, though often considering that recognition as worthless, that mysticism always asserts that one can know as immediate fact what seems to be known only as idea. The suggestion here is, that if you take away this element of direct illumination from any man's doctrine, you have at least nothing mystical left; add it to any man's doctrine and you have evidence of a mystical experience.

The fact that this tremendous central assumption of a transcendent way of knowing is present in all mysticism—alike in degenerate, pathological mysticism, in antinomian mysticism, and in the sublimest religious mysticism, justifies, I think, a study of mysticism from the epistemological point of view.

And if it is objected that mysticism is so much deeper and more fundamental, so much more primitive a thing than the assertion of a cognitive experience, that such a treatment must necessarily falsify its object, we may yet meet this objection. This objection would state that mysticism is deeper than any thought or thinking could possibly be—that it is the assertion, not of the satis-



faction of any one set of needs, but of a total value, the satisfaction of all needs, in short, of God. Now, quite apart from the question as to whether mysticism really is always God-seeking—a question already touched upon—one may question further as to whether the appellation of the mystic's object as a "total value" is one quite narrowly enough accurate to further insight into the nature of mysticism. For the single case of the self-inflicted horrible tortures of Suso,<sup>74</sup> the many cases of mystical asceticism, are surely sufficient to show that what the mystic often finds is not so much satisfaction of all his needs as an irresistible command to repudiate some of those needs at whatever cost. But if it is not the satisfaction of physical needs which has been found, of what sort are the needs satisfied? They must be emotional and cognitive; and primarily cognitive. For a value, not total, but supreme and demanding and shattering of the lesser demands, has been found, and it is most demanding precisely upon those mystics who have most passionately sought for truth-value, for satisfaction in knowing. Could the value be a supreme one, a commanding one—even a total one,—unless it were primarily a cognitive value, for men who through and through were seekers of knowledge—for the early Indian mystics, for Plato, for Plotinus? The great mystics are almost universally brilliant logicians and dialecticians, whose propulsion comes from the puzzles and contradictions of the subject-object relation. The whole of Hindu mysticism, as seen in the Upanishads and the Shankara is an analysis of this relation;<sup>75</sup> it starts with the relation of the knower to the known and seeks the ultimate meaning of that relation. Its outcome is the offering of salvation through knowledge—of salvation from the endless pursuit of things through knowledge which penetrates the illusion of the world. Plato's mysticism is rooted in the epistemological problem;<sup>76</sup> that of Plotinus is bound to a searching and immanent criticism of the knowing process.<sup>77</sup> So of all the greater mystics, whom alone this objection considers—they found indeed a supreme, a demanding value, but this cannot be less than, in some very intimate and peculiar sense, a cognitive one.

A second objection to the justifiability of an epistemological treatment of mysticism would say that, instead of being inadequate in scope, this point of view is too wide. Cognition, it would say, is being used too widely and vaguely—to mean little

more than the assertion of belief in an object as true, or as meaning merely any conscious relation. Knowledge is too specific and definite a term to be applied here, this objection would say; it should be kept to be applied to the realm of ideas—any real experience, say of love, or of hate, could by the use of this terminology be called “knowledge” or “cognition.” Mysticism is primarily a matter of feeling, of emotional value. This objection could bring forward many sayings from the mystics themselves to support its contention. As, for instance, from St. John of the Cross: “Entertain me no more with any knowledge of thee, or with thy communications or impressions of thy grandeur, for these do but increase my longing and the pain of thy absence; for thy presence alone can satisfy my will and desire.”<sup>78</sup> Or from the *Mystica Theologica* of Dionysius: “Do thou, my dear Timothy, diligently give thyself to mystical contemplation, leave the senses and the operations of the intellect and all things sensible and intelligible, and all things that are and things that are not, that thou mayest arise by ways above knowledge to him that is above all knowledge and all being.”<sup>79</sup> From Ruysbroek,<sup>80</sup> from Madame Guyon,<sup>81</sup> even from the more speculative and conscious mystics—one might say from all without exception—it is possible to find passages to support this view—that, in the words of Goethe,<sup>82</sup> mysticism is merely “scholastic of the heart, dialectic of the feelings.”

Further, the asserted inarticulateness of mysticism goes to support this view. We find all mystics declaring their experience not translatable into words and ideas. We find Angèle de Foligno interrupting her amanuensis with the words: “I blaspheme, brother, I blaspheme. All that I have said is nothing—and there is nothing that I can say.”<sup>83</sup> Yet even here have we not the assertion of a vision, of a felt insight into reality, of experienced truth? Must not even here the cognitive value be not only included in the emotional value but given as the basis of it? For as a matter of history, we find the mystics never the people who advocate the will to believe on the ground of emotional desires and experiences, but always we find them impregnable in their “I know.” Just here, even, in their assertion of transcendence over ordinary knowing we find the impregnability of their immediate insight most unassailable—for it is impervious to the attacks of ideational knowledge. Further, one finds just as strong claims,

and more consistent and self-dependent ones, that the object found is of cognitive, as that it is of emotional value. One may compare the passion of Suso<sup>84</sup> or of St. Theresa<sup>85</sup> for the truth, for the objectively sure, which led them to test and even to repudiate some of their own transports—or one may compare such words as these from Meister Eckhart: “The truth is something so noble, that if God himself wished to turn away from it, I would hold to it and leave God; I am a priest of the truth, I am in its employ, I have made myself bound for all time to do and to dare and to suffer everything for it.”<sup>86</sup> Once again one must say that the drive of the mystic is not toward reforming the world, nor toward letting himself go in an ecstasy of emotion, but it is a search for the truth. Further, the search itself it is very hard to differentiate ultimately from other types of thinking, as this objection would have us do. In Prof. Hocking’s words, “Mysticism takes on the aspect of a more intense, deliberate, and purposeful thinking. The mystic, as any thinker, must remove himself from all distracting appearances, check the habitual ideas, for the time being lose himself in his object, and identify its being with his own.”<sup>87</sup> The aim of the mystic is cognitive—toward a recognition of an ultimate truth and reality; his claim is cognitive, that he has absolute intellectual as well as emotional, certainty of this object; his fashion of attaining truth is cognitive, an immediate flash of insight—without, to be sure, palpable roots in other insights. And if the objection to our point of view which we are here considering, says at this point that it is the immediacy of the mystical insight which makes it just not a matter of cognition, for cognition must be kept to mean the acquisition and growth of ideas by means of other ideas—that a broadening of this term to take in the sudden mystical insights, makes it so vague as to deprive it of profitable connotation, and that, whatever may be the purpose and the claim of the mystic, just this fact that the way in which he attains his object is not strictly a cognitive way, is enough to remove it from epistemological problems, our epistemological point of view for an understanding of mysticism may still be justified, and that by granting, for the time, the whole of its position to this objection.

For, if we grant, for the time, that mysticism is not strictly, or at least not narrowly, in the limited sense in which this objec-

tion wishes to use the word, as applying only to ideation, a cognitive matter, still one is forced to treat it from the epistemological standpoint. For the fact of mysticism in the world is the fact of the apparently insolvable paradox which lies at the heart of all ideational knowledge.<sup>88</sup> The logic of the paradox to which the mystic calls attention, is, as we shall see, unassailed when his solution of it, in the form of his philosophical speculation, is rejected. To reject an explanation is not to deny the facts which it was intended to explain, and in this case it is the existence of just the paradox of which the mystic is conscious in its sharpest form, which is the heart of the epistemological problem.

This paradox of the mystic's may be brought out by an exposition of the mystic's logic.<sup>88</sup> I have already said that the mystics are, historically, keen logicians and dialecticians; even dropping for the moment the question as to the right of mysticism as such to be called cognition, one cannot deny that as a matter of fact, a logical path does often lead to it. This path we wish to examine. Starting with the subject-object relation the mystic would say, surely the obvious meaning of that relationship is the search for reality. Reality is the goal of all thinking and knowing, of every conscious process. This is hardly an assumption; it would seem to be as well grounded empirically and rationally as any fact could well be. Whatever definition men may have for reality, it is surely something they are endeavoring all the time to know, to attain, to conform their lives to. The whole point of the age-long struggle for scientific knowledge, for metaphysical certainty, for practical adaptation of means to end, is lost, if one conceives of men in some mad way as desiring what we call unreality, of struggling to build up a dream-world of falsehoods and inconsistencies. We cannot quarrel with the first step in the mystic's imagined argument—that reality, whatever else it is, is at least what men want, what they are struggling to reach in thinking and in every activity. But, continues the mystic, if reality is the satisfaction, the goal, of the knowing process, it itself must be unknowable—and that for the simple reason that everything known or knowable is just therein not satisfaction, but further provocation. The known is always and only finite, a source of further questions and perplexities. And if some one should say: "But we might some day find an object perfectly satisfactory, an

object which would explain everything else," the mystic would show his deeper reason for denying that knowledge can reach to reality. For thought or the knowing process just is the constant working over of something not itself into terms of itself—into words and ideas. You cannot think without thinking of something—the very life of thought thus depends upon its other. To say "the known, or knowable, is reality," would imply to the mystic something else beyond reality which would negate the ultimate character of the first reality. For reality, to the mystic, must be what *is*—must be perfectly immediate.

What I am trying to say is, that it seems to be the very nature of knowledge to be dualistic, to be mediate, to strive forever to bring into harmony the knower and the known. But to mysticism, such a mediation, resting, as it does, on a fundamental distinction between the knower and the known, never can be ultimate, never can reach reality. The process of ideation builds up a screen of unreality, between the knower and the known; the only perfect satisfaction is to be found in the perfectly immediate, the absolutely individual, the pure "this" felt and not translated by ideas into something other than itself. But this purely immediate cannot be found in any sensuous experience—the sense experience, just as the thought experience, is always pointing beyond itself, tending to get translated into words and ideas, to raise questions. The real, the satisfaction of knowing, can only be the quenching of knowing, and that not from any hopelessness of our finite mode of knowing, but logically, from the very nature of knowledge itself. Not because "reality is independent of thinking," not because reality is something "out there" of which I only become aware through sense-data, which never are nor would be things in themselves, no matter how much the senses might be sharpened and increased, is reality to the mystic unknowable. In Royce's words, "Although all known and knowable objects should be present to us in a transparency of light, they could not be reality—there must be at the heart of them an impenetrable mystery—the source of the distinction upon which the world of objects rests. Not omniscience itself could fathom this mystery—because it is logically unfathomable." Then, one might say, there is no use talking about reality—neither you nor I nor any man will ever be able to lay hold on it. The answer is the sudden characteristic turn that mysticism takes: "Ah," it

says, "but I have laid hold on reality. How or why I do not have to tell you, because here at last is a Real Fact—a fact untranslatable into other terms." This, in general terms, is the preliminary position the mystic takes—always he insists on the logical unknowability of reality in idea, just on account of the inner nature of the ideational process—always he insists on its experienceability and the absolute certainty of that experience.

This profound dialectical process, whatever its inconsistencies and unsatisfactoriness, has at least analyzed keenly the knowing process and has found as a result that reason, just because it is what it is, is unfitted to reach the ultimately real, the most concrete individual—yet it finds as just the implication of this relation that reality does somehow exist for us.

In making the claim that he has found the utmost reality immediately, the mystic sets a tremendous problem. He repudiates thereby ideational knowledge with irresistible logic. Adequate, his theory certainly is not. Now, although one can throw away the mystic's solution of his paradox, although one may cast all manner of psychological doubts on the extra-subjective character of his experience, one cannot throw away his point of view. He has cast a doubt on the fundamental assumption of philosophy—that thought and life *are* somehow commensurate—and this doubt must stand unassailed so long as mystical insight and mediated knowledge are kept separated. For even though one should assail this doubt with all the tools of logic, one cannot by "logic" in the usual sense, prove that logic transcends logic.

There is, then, at least this negative truth in mysticism, that idea cannot of itself make sure its own position of reaching to reality. So long as ideation is conceived of as a distinction, a separation, a pointing beyond itself, there is truth in the mystic's claim that not thus does one lay hold on reality. But the mystic goes, of course, much further in his own positive estimation of the truth of mysticism—and I think that either he is right in his estimation of its truth, and all knowledge in idea is vain and impossible, or the truth of mysticism is deeper and more universal than the mystic knows, and reality is more concretely and triumphantly knowable than he guesses. The mystic's point of view can only be transcended by being first accepted. Let us, then, grant his position for a time—that only he can and does reach reality—and ask how he actually reaches his results, ask if this

process is so sui generis, so dangerously subjective, so without a criterion of objective truth-value, as it seems to be.

The aim of the remainder of this paper shall be to examine this question in a two-fold way; (1) by inquiring into what the real nature of the mystical knowledge is, what the actual cognitive experience behind the mystic's vague and speculative, or passionate and metaphorical, words, may have been; and (2) by seeking for the relation of this experience to the ordinary cognitive experience which seems so plain and clear in contrast to the mystic's way, but which yet shows itself, as we shall see, even as logically self-contradictory as the mystic has found it to be, when considered merely as an ideational, representative process. For the thesis of this paper is that, while mysticism cannot be understood except as a cognitive achievement, in relation to the general problems of truth-value and validity, no cognitive process, no thinking, can be understood except as, in some profound and organic way, a part of the mystical achievement; further, that without a certain grasp of the meaning of mysticism as a type of cognition it is impossible to make an analysis of thinking as a living process. To make possible to some slight degree this illumination of the nature of thought by an examination of the mystical insight and its function in thinking is the purpose of this paper; to effect that purpose, we shall turn first to a somewhat detailed analysis of instances of mystical illumination, seeking to find what its fundamental nature is, and reserving to a later portion of the paper the question of the relation of this insight to the usual cognitive process.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN MEISTER ECKHART.

One must then, attempt an analysis and interpretation of the cognitive experience of mysticism—not, indeed, of the mystic's theory of knowledge, for it is due to a great extent to the inadequacy of the mystic's theory that we have a problem in mysticism,—but rather, of his knowing experience itself. One must try to find behind the mystic's words what was happening to him—how, in the last analysis he has reached the ontological certainties he asserts, and what meaning, positive or negative, valuable or unvaluable, these assertions and the mystical way of reaching them may have for an understanding of human truth-getting.

I have chosen to try to get behind the mystic's words, at his experience, primarily through the medium of the mystic Meister Eckhart (A. D. 1260-1327) for the following reasons: (1) In Meister Eckhart, mysticism is, as it were, in solution. We find him a scholar and university leader, educated in all the traditions of scholasticism and the church, and remaining firmly fixed in them, a brilliant dialectician and logician, often a worse juggler with abstract concepts than the most hair-splitting of his contemporary scholastics—we find him appealing frequently and dogmatically to the accepted authorities, and writing abstract treatises in Latin as well as popular ones in German. Yet we find him, too, one of the most extreme and powerful of the mystics both in his teaching and in his influence. Even Denifle, to whom Meister Eckhart was primarily a scholastic and an inferior one, says, "Yet he was also a mystic"<sup>89</sup>—and that without allowing him a single unique idea,—while his accepted place in the history of thought is that of the father of German mysticism.<sup>90</sup> Viewing these two aspects of him, the question justifiably arises, "Was Meister Eckhart only a scholastic of exceptional religious zeal and emotional fervor, who translated scholasticism into the paradoxical concepts of the people, or is there something uniquely mystical in him?" It is in the possibility of such a question that the chief value of



Meister Eckhart for a study of this kind lies, for in seeking the characteristics which make Meister Eckhart just not one of the scholastics of his time, one finds a single unique mystical element, which is at the same time the essential element in mysticism, and which, because it is so sharply outlined by contrast to the other elements in Meister Eckhart's thought and teaching, though somehow permeating, and sometimes transmuting them, occurs in an exceptionally clear form for a study of its nature and working force. My first reason, then, for choosing Meister Eckhart is that I have found the experiential cognitive element of mysticism in him very sharply expressed.

My second reason for choosing Meister Eckhart is that he, while presenting this element as a fact, does not bury it under his own interpretation and analysis of it, as does St. Theresa, for instance. Valuable as the introspection of the mystics may be for psychology, for epistemology one may judge better of the knowing process through seeing it actually at work, through seeing the actual results it brings out than through hearing about its thousand concomitants. Meister Eckhart tells us what he knows, and lets us see how he knows it, with the freedom of a total disregard for his own theory.

It is true that Eckhart's ideas are very largely scholastic; his Latin treatises are taken up with the discussion of such questions as the nature of God as *actus purus*;<sup>91</sup> the distinction between the Attributes, the Relations, and the Essence, of God,<sup>92</sup> between God and Godhead,<sup>93</sup> and his German sermons and tracts are full of discussions as to the definitions of the trinity, concerning the priority of God's essence over his fatherhood,<sup>94</sup> etc., where every step is supported by abstract, scholastic, traditional and often trivial, reasons. Yet one continually finds strange flashes of inner certainty expressed,—certainty independent, or even subversive, of logic. In the midst of closely argued passages come often sentences or paragraphs founded on no reasons beyond themselves, sometimes even contradicting the closely-wrought argument, yet advanced as absolutely certain truth.<sup>95</sup> An example of this kind of change in thought and method in Eckhart will make this point clearer. Eckhart has been developing the idea of God as "*actus purus*," as incapable of definition and distinction, and has proved (in scholastic fashion), that since this is the nature or being of God, and since being is the same everywhere, it is also

the true nature of the soul, in so far as it really *is*, to be undifferentiated, free from all particularity.<sup>96</sup> Then, he says with swift change, the soul cries out, "Nothing which is expressible is God for me! And so I flee before God, for God's sake. Alas, then, where is the soul's abiding place? On the wings of the wind!"<sup>96</sup> And Eckhart goes on in explanation, not by giving further scholastic reasons, but by expanding these words in a sort of ecstatic fervor of certainty. "Under the wings of the wind are to be understood," he says, "the choir of Seraphim, as they float in purest knowledge of God. Above them all flies the soul! But this cannot be granted to her until she has left everything that has form and likeness, so that she neither finds any such thing in her, nor seeks rest in it. . . . She must be bare of all that is created, and sink into pure nothing. . . . The seraph with all his knowledge is not able to attain to this pure nothingness; in it the soul dwells, above all Seraphim, above all knowledge."<sup>97</sup> A little further on, we find Eckhart again proving and explaining, saying that God as the highest good is being, that only for the understanding of the "creatures" is he nothingness. "The divine being," he says here, "is reason."<sup>98</sup> Or he calls out in another passage of unmediated certainty, "For this is an unthought truth, that comes straight out of the heart of God, unmediated!"<sup>99</sup> And again, "Had no one been here, I would have had to preach this sermon to this stick of wood."<sup>100</sup> Or finally, after another dialectic passage, "And now I pray you! Grasp this by the eternal and ever-firm truth, and by my own soul—again I will say the never-said. God and the Godhead are as different as heaven and earth."<sup>101</sup> "Be certain of this, for it is true, and truth itself says it."<sup>102</sup> To find the grounds of this certainty would be to find a very ultimate sort of test for this type of knowledge and is an essential part of the problem.

A second characteristic of these same passages of ecstatic certainty, or better, a second aspect of this same characteristic, is the expression in the passages of a certain impatience with discursive reason, with knowledge which can explain, define, predicate. Meister Eckhart says, "So long as the soul has a God, knows God, has knowledge (ideas) about God, so long is she separated from God. . . . The soul feels within itself, that neither this likeness nor that essence is what she seeks; she

knows herself in them to be still imprisoned in difference and manifoldness."<sup>103</sup> "To know God, you must know him as something unknown."<sup>104</sup> "So long as you do not drown yourself in the bottomless sea of the Godhead, so long you cannot learn to know him."<sup>105</sup> One must try to understand, not only the absolute certainty of these passages, but the unmediated way of knowing which they seek to express. Eckhart tries to dismiss any ideas which stand between him, and his supreme object of knowledge; his message is that he has known in experience what would seem to be known, and that imperfectly, only in idea—and because of his attempt to express his experience, he repudiates as of little worth, all knowing in idea. This phase presents an important aspect of the epistemological problem in Meister Eckhart—is it a sort of reversion to the whole of reality which is necessary to analytic knowledge, or is it merely the ecstatic apotheosis of discontent with limitation?

Before we can come to a closer examination of the problem, one more aspect of these distinctly mystical passages in the midst of Meister Eckhart's scholasticism needs to be examined. It is, that they assert continually the finding of a public object. In spite of the non-symbolic character of Meister Eckhart's knowledge, the object of it is far from a private, subjective experience, in Meister Eckhart's estimation. Something has been found which is the surest thing, and the most universal thing, in the world. Meister Eckhart says, "The people often say to me, 'Pray God for us!' Then I think to myself, 'Why do you not go into yourselves? Why do you not abide in yourselves and lay hold on your own treasure? For indeed you bear the essence of all reality in yourselves.' That we may so remain in ourselves, and that we may so possess all reality without mediation and without difference, in true blessedness, God help us to that!"<sup>106</sup> Or again, "Truly! In every one who is faithful, God feels so inexpressibly great joy, that if he should be robbed of it, he would be robbed of his life, his existence, his Godhead itself! . . . Fear not! For this joy is near to you, and is in you. There is no one of you so unready, so unpracticed, so weak in knowledge, or so far from God as not to be able to find this joy in himself, as full reality and as rapture and as knowledge, before he leaves the church—yes, while I still preach;

he can really find it in himself and experience and possess it, as sure as God is God and I am a man."<sup>107</sup> What right had Meister Eckhart to interpret his experience as one possible for all? Does something in the psychological character of his experience account for his so doing, or are we to find something universal, valid, true for all experience, in Meister Eckhart's experience? Again one must defer the problem for a little.

It is back of such passages as I have indicated—passages expressing absolute certainty, unfounded on logic, passages expressing a direct winning to the heart of things, an "immediate conscious relation to the most real," and finally passages claiming for this certain, non-symbolic way of knowing, truth-value, universal validity, that one must seek for Meister Eckhart's experience. Only by an analysis and interpretation of such passages, can one find the cognitive experience of Meister Eckhart's which gave rise to such tremendous claims, can one hope to test and evaluate it, to meet the epistemological problems which such passages suggest: What are the grounds of certainty in Meister Eckhart? (2) Is the relation of mystical knowledge to analytic, discursive reason wholly a negative one—one of denial? (3) In what sense—if any—can the mystical object, the mystical motive, be a universal one?

I turn to a presentation and analysis of this material gathered from Meister Eckhart. In order to make this presentation in clear form, I shall give in Eckhart's own words, a sort of connected story of his cognitive life, bringing out (1) What he desired as object of knowledge, (2) how he attained this object, the actual knowing process, and (3) what the result, as completed knowledge (in his estimation) and also as perfected knowing-process, was. Eckhart's own diction it is necessary to use, at least to some degree, at least sufficiently to make an adequate interpretation of it; for while it is a strange speech that he uses, a diction at once of passionate intimacy and mysterious abstractness, a speech shot through and through with the vivid religious ideas and phraseology of Eckhart's time, the very alienness of the speech indicates and sometimes reveals the alien character of the thought that lies behind it. It is no accident, that Meister Eckhart's speech is full of metaphor and symbol, often unclear, laboring—it is rather organically expressive of the very heart of his thought that it should be so, and not until we see the inner

necessity for the strangeness of Meister Eckhart's speech, have we a knowledge which can be sure of itself, of Meister Eckhart's cognitive experience.

The various phases of Meister Eckhart's cognitive life which I have mentioned—namely, its conscious goal and incentive, its continuance toward that goal, and its culmination in complete knowledge satisfaction, can all be clearly distinguished in Meister Eckhart's German tracts and sermons, and are all expressive of distinct phases in his experience. By presenting them continuously, in a rough sort of time-sequence, which does not, of course, pretend to be historical, I can bring out the main elements of the noetic experience of Meister Eckhart, with the least possible repetition. Since I shall give this account at first chiefly in Meister Eckhart's own words, taken for the most part from his sermons, it may seem rather like an exhortation than like an account of experience, but that is, of course, a merely formal aspect.

To begin with the cognitive desire of Meister Eckhart: "If I were a king,"<sup>108</sup> he says, "and did not know it myself, I would not be a king. But if I had the firm conviction that I were a king, and if all men had this opinion, and I knew certainly that they held this belief, then I would be king and all the king's treasures would be mine. . . . Just so our blessedness is dependent upon this, that we know and are acquainted with (*wissen und kennen*) the highest good, God himself. I have a power in my soul, that is through and through receptive of God. I am as certain as I live, that nothing is so near to me as God; he is nearer to me than I am to myself. My existence depends upon this, that God is near and present to me. But he is also near to a stone, or to a stick of wood; (the difference is) that they do not know it. If the stick of wood knew about God, and became conscious of how near God is to it, as the highest archangel is conscious of God, the wood would possess the same blessedness as the mighty angel. For this reason is man holier than the piece of wood—because he is acquainted with God, and knows how near God is to him. He enjoys just so much the more blessedness the more conscious he is of God's presence, and just so much less, the less he knows him. He is not blessed for this reason, that God is in him, and is near to him and that he has God, but only for this, that he knows God; that he knows how near God is to

him, and that he is near and present to him." Now what does Meister Eckhart mean by this passage and others like it?<sup>109</sup> He is plainly expressing in it the desire, the drive, toward mystical contemplation and attainment which he experienced; and one only falsifies this passage if one looks upon it merely as the expression of the universal religious need. Perhaps it is an aspect of that need; but it is an aspect with so specific a character of its own, that to class it forthwith as a "religious" craving, is to neglect relevant details, to misdescribe the object. For God was to Meister Eckhart primarily, not goodness, nor justice, nor loving kindness, but truth-value, reality. Eckhart specifically denies that the first named attributes can be assigned to God at all,<sup>110</sup> in the strictest sense, and that just for the reason that God is the ultimate, the final reality, the subject of all predication, the basis of all judgment. "Thou shalt worship God as he is," Eckhart says, "as a non-God, a non-spirit, a non-person, a nothing formed,"<sup>111</sup>—and again the meaning of that, and of his tremendous cognitive desire, is, that Meister Eckhart wanted to know the very subject-nature of reality,<sup>112</sup> and that not by guess-work, by inference from other less ultimate objects of knowledge, but in a flash, directly, as, after much piling-up of attributes in the beginning of acquaintanceship with a person,—which piling-up, however, never does go beyond the barest acquaintance,—the flash of knowledge of the real character of the person comes, and unshakable knowledge of him is had. So Eckhart wanted to know his world—wanted to find the supreme truth-value which embraced all lesser truths—and he felt that, just on account of its supreme and ultimate nature, such knowledge was not to be sought in any outer things, in any avenues of sense—it must be back of them all, unlike them all, itself alone, and so never to be known in idea, symbol, but only in experience. But if not in things, where was the final reality, which nothing could invalidate or deny, to be found? The fact that Meister Eckhart did not despair of the finding, that, to use Prof. Hocking's phrase, his "bold intention was to win to some direct conscious relation to the Most Real," his "bold claim was to have done so," is what makes him a mystic. For he knew, however dimly, that because he sought, the most real was already found; and found not in outward things, but in some flash of insight, of direct acquaintance. For this reason was "God," as Meister Eckhart perforce

named the supreme object of his search, "nothingness" to him,—because it was the very core of reality itself, which could not be named except in symbol without the attempt to exhaust it in some attribute—an attempt which would deny it.

Of how he attained to this knowledge, Meister Eckhart shows, by implying behind his direct expression, (1) that some sort of initial partial illuminative experience took place which set him on the quest<sup>113</sup>—that it is in giving up implicitly to this initial, fleeting, half-understood intuition of the inner life that the first step toward mystical knowledge lies. He says, "When one feels himself driven to true inwardness, let him boldly let fall everything outward, even if it be holy practices to which he has bound himself by vows from which neither pope nor bishop could free him! If a man is bound never so strongly to all sorts of outward things and there comes to him that impulse to inward experience, so let him be free of them all! So long as the inner experience lasts, whether a week or a month, or a year, so long must God, by whom one is imprisoned, take his place for him."<sup>114</sup> Or "When it happens that one becomes aware of a better, (than he has ever known before) of which he really knows and feels that it is the best, so are all the earlier goods for him finished and fulfilled."<sup>115</sup> Or finally, "How do you know this? (someone may ask.) See! Your heart feels itself often strangely moved and turned from the world, how could this take place, save by a streaming in of the (divine) light?"<sup>116</sup>

One can only perform the supreme act of concentration (according to Meister Eckhart) which is demanded as obedience to the sudden first partial illumination, to the awakening of desire for the way of knowledge, by a withdrawal of attention from all other objects of interest—hence the central position of "Abgeschiedenheit," and of the "triple death of the soul," in Meister Eckhart's teaching. Eckhart says on this point: "The best and highest virtue is no other than a pure, absolutely freed from everything created, detachment. This detachment stands so near to pure nothingness, that there is nothing which would be fine enough to find room in it except God,—he is so simple and so fine that he easily finds room in a detached heart."<sup>117</sup> "Perfect detachment knows no desire for the creatures, no humiliation and no vainglory; she will be neither above nor below, but will only rest upon herself, hating no one and loving no one. She does

not desire to be this or that, for whoever wants that, wants something—detachment wants only to be nothing.”<sup>118</sup> “Detachment . . . cannot pray at all; for whoever prays desires something of God, . . . but the detached heart neither desires anything of God, nor has anything of which it were gladly free.”<sup>119</sup> . . . The soul must give up everything, God alike and the creatures. That sounds strangely, that the soul must give up God! I affirm, it is to the soul, in order to become perfect, in some sense more important to lose God than to lose the creatures. The soul must go out of the picture of God . . . through a divine death.”<sup>120</sup> Or for a final example, “Oh, how holily must the man live, who will come (to this knowledge of God). He must indeed be dead to all diversity of activity before this happens to him.”<sup>121</sup> “St. John said with right, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!’ For so must you, oh man, be free of all attention to and striving toward this and that—yes, you must even be free of all sensibility, even as God is, if you wish to understand the mystery of the divine secret.”<sup>122</sup>

The positive side of this detachment, as seen—and experienced—by Meister Eckhart, is a sort of living in the stillness of an extreme and ecstatic concentration. He says: “Let the eternal voice cry in you, and be to yourself and to all things a wilderness!”<sup>123</sup> A triumphant spirit must you have, not a downcast one—a burning spirit, in which always an untroubled silent stillness rules. . . . That we may win to this rest, to this inner stillness, so that the word of God can be spoken and heard in us, may the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost help us thereto!”<sup>124</sup>

These elements seem to have been continuously present to Eckhart’s consciousness as strain and attainment, attainment and strain. In nearly every sermon, there is some reference to a spontaneous sort of partial illumination, to the need of inward freedom from outward things, to the need of concentration upon unity.

So far we can say that Meister Eckhart’s experience comprised an intense desire for a sort of whole-knowledge; a knowledge not to be invalidated by any other subsequently to be found items of knowledge—a knowledge sure because all-embracing, and hence necessarily not a knowledge of particulars, which, by its very partial nature, is continually to be invalidated. This



desire found expression in a kind of cognitive vision of the possibility and actuality of a central knowledge—a sort of illuminated knowing of what reality must be like,—a vision which demanded the utmost concentration of attention upon it. It remains to examine the final aspect of noetic mystical experience, that of full attainment.

What does Eckhart report that he knows in this full attainment, and what of experience can we see behind his words? Eckhart says of this: "Here (in this full attainment) is God's ground my ground, and my ground God's ground—here I live out of my own being as God lives out of his own being. Whoever has for only an instant looked into this ground, to him are a thousand ducats of red beaten gold as one false dollar. Perhaps you have seen in a false thought-picture the truth, as in a mirror, but the best you have never possessed" (without the mystical achievement).<sup>125</sup> (You must) "drown yourself in the bottomless sea of the Godhead."<sup>126</sup>

And again: "Yes, the soul is brought so closely (in this achievement) into the body of God, that neither all the angels nor all the cherubim and seraphim know any more the difference between them, nor are able to find it. For where they touch God, there they touch the soul—where the soul, there God."<sup>127</sup>

"The eternal process is a self-revealing of God, in pure knowledge, where the knower *is* that which is known."<sup>128</sup>

Or finally: "Without cessation God bears the son in the soul. . . . Nay, he bears me as his son, as the same son. Yes, he bears me not merely as his son, he bears me as himself, and himself as me; he bears me as his own essence, as his own nature,—out of the deepest fountain I flow forth in the Holy Ghost,—there is only one Life, one Essence, one work."<sup>129</sup>

These passages, so deeply metaphorical, so tensely emotional, seem at first sight scarcely to express a cognitive achievement. They seem rather, one would say, to express some dimly understood disorganizing of the emotional nature, some vague pantheistic conclusion. But the very symbolism of the language, the very vague and paradoxical character of the figures, consciously expresses the fact that the knowledge attained just is not knowledge in idea, is not translatable into other terms, can only be indicated, pointed out. And the fact that this achievement is the assertion of unity of nature between the knower and

the supreme object of his search, is the mystic's declaration that no screen of idea remains between him and the ultimate reality, that reality itself is found in the present moment as a part, and the deepest part, of experience as such, just as sharp, as literal, as the present moment.

What is the outcome of this analysis of the epistemological problem in Meister Eckhart? Perhaps the most striking result is that Meister Eckhart, in spite of the elaborate preparation for his knowing, in spite of his frequent and long descriptions of it, can scarcely be said to be an original thinker in the formation of concepts. By winning to the heart of reality, he did not acquire any novel particular insights, any new assurances of particular truths. Much that seems new and anarchical in him, is but the struggling of his thought to express itself, to form for its concepts, already possessed of a thoroughly established Latin terminology, a suitable German terminology.<sup>131</sup> Again and again, one finds a concept expressed in Meister Eckhart's strange passionate language, which seems without doubt original—only to find it even more definitely and consciously expressed in the Latin of some one of the greater scholastics, usually Thomas or Augustine, or in the words of one of the Greek fathers, or even of Averroes or Avicenna. For example, such a seemingly characteristic conception as "das ewige Nu," used by Eckhart so frequently and forcibly, corresponds exactly to the scholastic "nunc aeternitatis," "nunc indivisibile in aeternitate."<sup>132</sup> Denifle has traced with great elaboration Eckhart's ideas, and has shown how thoroughly scholastic was the ground in which they grew, as well as the form which they took;<sup>133</sup> the one real claim which Eckhart has to originality in thinking, as far as thought content is concerned, is at best the fact that he found a new axis for the scholastic fashion of thought—the axis, that is, of human personality.<sup>134</sup> Eckhart's asserted mystical insight then, did not issue in any particular new truths won; he did not throw down his conceptual tools, give up the tasks of reason. Of what then, are these periods of full illumination significant, since they are not productive of new concepts? In the first place, this period of illumination is felt as a period of identification of the self with the object. That is, the value lies not so much in what is known as in how it is known,—the final goal of knowledge, the penetration of the object by the subject is here achieved. And

it is achieved just by the universal character of the knowledge attained—knowledge not translatable into particulars, but knowledge which somehow changes all knowledge of particulars. For it is significant here that these experiences of full illumination are rhythmic: Eckhart says on this point, "But since the seeing and the experiencing of God are not bearable for a long time, God withdraws himself from the spirit from time to time."<sup>135</sup> That is, Eckhart returns to the world of everyday life and thinking, and finds it somehow a different world from the one he had left.<sup>136</sup> He sees it, we must conclude, in a sort of universal light—as a world whose character, for instance, he so certainly knows, that he can predict of the most Real in it, an almost logical necessity. He says for instance, "When the soul has so gone out after God, and freed herself from everything, how could God get out of it? He must needs pour himself into the soul."<sup>137</sup> . . . "God must become active and pour himself into the soul."<sup>138</sup> Meister Eckhart finds the goal which is to him the final goal of knowledge—the full truth which has somehow been there all along, which he has somehow known all along, possessed in his own being, yet but now fully attained to.

This section has been mainly one of questions. We have seen indeed that the cognitive achievement of Meister Eckhart is an experience of a sort of knowing which is absolutely sure of itself, which is unmediated, which is felt to be of universal as well as of supreme value, and whose final result is the assertion of a directly known substance—a final reality, undefined, inarticulated—yet—and this is perhaps the most significant feature of the whole analysis—abiding in Meister Eckhart's thought, shattering and changing all other knowing, all other values, for him. We have seen this indeed—and the question only comes the more persistently to the fore: "Is there any discoverable truth in mysticism? Has Meister Eckhart described any activity which is actually a part of the knowing process, the search for the truth, or has any analysis of his results merely a curious and biographical value?" This general question includes the three particular problems which came to the front as three separate questions, corresponding to the various points of view from which we looked at mystical knowledge—the questions, namely, "What are the grounds of certainty in Meister Eckhart? (2) Is the relation of this so-called knowledge to ideational knowledge,

wholly a negative one? (3) Has this knowledge any claim to validity?" These questions are really three statements of the one essential problem—the claim of the mystic knowledge to validity, objectivity. For only if we find Meister Eckhart's subjective grounds of certainty to be at the same time objective grounds of validity, can we seek for any relation between this experience and knowledge in idea which shall be, in the last analysis, an other than negative one, an organic one;—for the determining feature of knowledge in idea just is that it is, however inadequate or unclear it may be, always something universal, shareable with others, either valid or not valid. If mystical insight turns out to have no principles of validity within it, to be something *sui generis*, out of the universe of logical thinking, then we can look for no relation other than a negative one between it and ideational knowledge—and we can also seek for no light from it upon the problem as to how thinking can express reality, as to how the paradox which lies at the heart of the reasoning process, is to be solved.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GROUNDS OF CERTAINTY IN MEISTER ECKHART.

What we have in all this mass of statement, however, in its content, paradoxical, or tradition-obeying, or unreasonable, or metaphorical and unclear, is, at the very least, the expression of some ultimate sort of experience, an experience which has touched rock-bottom, arrived at its goal, is infinitely sure of itself. Upon what grounds is it sure of itself? What *are* these ultimate foundations upon which it rests?

One does not ask this question for biographical reasons; one does not ask for an analysis of the private psychological feelings of Meister Eckhart, of what the grounds in his personal character or private experience were, which made him espouse with such enthusiasm just these and these ideas, seemingly abstract, often seemingly trivial and timeworn. Nor is it because of the risk that one runs in examining as knowledge-content what may turn out to be a mere morass of subjectivity and invalidity, that this question comes so immediately and persistently to the fore.

It is rather for the fundamental reason indicated in the last chapter: what we mean by "to know" is primarily, "to be certain"—with the growth of self-consciousness we add "in valid and verifiable ways." Not only the worth of knowledge, but the degree to which it really and truly is knowledge, depends upon its grounds of certainty. So if we examined Meister Eckhart's felt subjective certainties, and found in them no principle which elevated them into grounds of objective validity, we would conclude that mysticism, so far as this mystic is concerned, is not a type of human truth-getting at all, had no positive epistemological significance—its value would lie possibly in the light it, as a part of abnormal psychology, could throw on the normal processes of psychology, or it would have truth-value in tending to support the thesis that religion is primarily a matter of feeling, or what not.

Whatever value for objective knowledge could be grafted upon it, it would have no intrinsic cognitive meaning at all.

These other values, ethical, religious, psychological, or lack of them, have been often enough imputed to mysticism as I have already shown; the questions "What are the grounds of certainty in Meister Eckhart? Can these grounds of certainty rightfully claim to be grounds of validity?"—seem to me to lead directly into the problem of what, if any, epistemological significance such experience as Eckhart's may have.

Is Meister Eckhart's asserted way of reaching truth, then, really a valid way? This question, necessary as it is to a square meeting of the problem, yet brings with it methodological difficulty. For it would seem that one ought to begin by having clearly in mind those conditions which a valid way of reaching knowledge ought to fulfill; yet if mysticism is—as it asserts—a unique way of reaching the most real objective, so to begin would be to beg the question against the mystical way of knowing, to impose a ready-made conception of a valid knowing-process upon mysticism and so to preclude the possibility that mysticism has any new element to add to our theories of human truth-getting—which is nevertheless what we set out to inquire into. This difficulty in method can only be met by a gradual process of comparison, by examining the subjective certainties of Meister Eckhart to see if there are any reasonable claims to validity in them, and at the same time examining our idea of validity, to see upon what it is based, what its real meaning and function is.

In all cognitive experience, that knowledge and that alone, seems sure to us to which we can ascribe objective reference, which comes, in the last analysis, not from our own imaginations and desires, but as a touch of immediacy, a break from without, often scattering and disorganizing. It is precisely this (and more) which such knowledge as Meister Eckhart's claims as its function, and which I have found to be the first reason (subjectively considered) for Meister Eckhart's certainty in his knowledge. He felt that his knowledge was something independent of himself, coercive. As first ground of certainty in Meister Eckhart, I find just this element of coercion, of breaking in from without.

This shows itself first (and most weakly)—in a factor comparatively scantily and vaguely mentioned by Eckhart, as an (already-described)<sup>113, 114</sup>. "impulse to inwardness." In spite of Eckhart's name for it, we must, I think, look upon this initial

experience of mystical cognition as decidedly coercive, as, in some sense, objective. It comes unheralded and with surprise to the mystic—he cannot directly will to achieve it. What Meister Eckhart means by this, is a common enough experience. It is decidedly not a mere impulse to introspection, to taking stock of oneself, setting one's house in order. The "inwardness" seems rather to be used as a metaphor, meaning "upwardness," or "not-outwardness," or any other vague term of direction away from what absorbs us partially, leaving fringes of restlessness and denial, into what we feel, however dimly, should absorb us utterly. It is the experience which many people have, in the presence of death, or of new and sudden love, or of certain aspects of nature—or even, sometimes—and perhaps most definitely—without any contributing outward cause at all—of being gripped in a kind of necessity for an ultimate, and heretofore unrealized, sort of simplicity and sincerity. It is not at all a moral experience; Eckhart, for example, nowhere connects it with a sense of sin—it is rather an intellectual one—as if one saw in a flash some totality of life, some meaning, which in being seen, laid the demand upon one, that one see oneself as a part of that life or meaning, without artificiality, without loneliness, without understanding perhaps.

Some such experience as this must have been Eckhart's initial experience; and no part of his experience lost for him the coercive character which is so powerful a ground of subjective certainty. This is next seen in the immediate result of this experience. The result of it was found, for Eckhart, in a seeming antithesis to its meaning. For it was, somehow, a hint of the possibility of a deeper and more unified individuality through knowledge—yet its result is the most absolute possible self-abandonment, as we have already seen<sup>117, 118, 119</sup>—a self-abandonment, however, whose significance is, that it is and can be an abandonment only of the partial aspects of the self which have found expression in the various aims and interests and activities of the self. And this abandonment takes place as the result, and is the expression of, that coerciveness in the object which we have noted as the first ground of certainty in Eckhart. Undoubtedly, this abandonment can only be accomplished by the sharpest decision of the will; yet this decision is made, because, to his mind, the mystic has caught sight of a demanding object, an

object to which it is impossible to give less than everything, since it is the total reality.

It is like the process, a hundred times intensified, which Goethe has in mind in *Wilhelm Meister*—Wilhelm throws himself into one object after another, yet finds his satisfaction, as he finds his true self, in none—always there is a warning within him which says, "Remember (in all these abstractions) to live." To the mystic the words are, "Remember to find, after all, that which alone is Real."

Yet the outcome of this impulse to inwardness is not directly, and of itself alone, the deepening of the personality, the winning of new insight. The mystic, holding himself in his tense attitude of abandonment of all particularity, of straining receptivity, which is no idle drifting, but an active, straining, ultimate repudiation of the sufficiency of just this self as it is to attain the ultimate reality, and so its own truth, knows himself finally to be gripped in a reality which is larger than he himself, which yet floods and transforms him, in an immediacy of knowledge, unwallled off by idea. It is the moment of consent to the Real and identification with it.

But what, more exactly, is this immediacy? Is it a throwing down of all conceptual tools, an abandonment to subjective feeling and desire? To Eckhart himself it is the reverse side of the coerciveness of the object of his knowledge, and a second ground for the certainty of his knowledge. He feels himself to be gripped indeed in a larger reality, but all the time he is conscious that it is just his own immediate experience, that however coercive and near and absorbing the object may be, it is near and coercive and absorbing as the fulfilment of his own personality, his own meaning. "I am as necessary to God," he says, "as God is necessary to me. The drop of water absorbed in the wine does not thereby become wine."<sup>139</sup>

A third ground of certainty I find to be implied just in the ineffable, non-symbolic, esoteric character of this knowledge. For this knowledge is essentially esoteric. If it were not, it would be translatable knowledge, knowledge in idea; we would have no problem of mystical knowledge at all. To be sure, Eckhart is convinced that he has found a public object: "There is no one of you," he says, "so unready, so unpracticed, so weak in knowledge or so far from God as not to be able to find the joy



(of this knowledge) in himself."<sup>140</sup> He believes indeed, that this knowledge can belong to everyone, but that it is in its nature, esoteric, hidden, not to be communicated. However much he may tell his hearers about it, he can only show it to them "dimly, in a glass of reason"<sup>141</sup>—only those who are "friends of God and at home with him" will understand;<sup>142</sup> "many poor people will go home and say, 'I will sit in my corner and eat my bread and serve God'"<sup>143</sup>—and these must remain in their ignorance and never learn what the others know "who go out after God in poverty and renunciation."<sup>144</sup> Meister Eckhart has found indeed a public object, but one which cannot be grasped in idea; not its publicity is ground of its certainty, but rather its uniqueness. Although it is never completely expressible to any other human soul, the mystic dares "in his loneliness to be infinitely certain."

How can this ineffability be a ground of certainty? One would expect to find it rather a ground of inner self-doubting, of despair of surety, even. Yet when one considers the reason for the inexpressibility of Meister Eckhart's knowledge, one sees that it must indeed be ineffable, that this ineffability is the expression of its very nature. Meister Eckhart has had an experience of utmost reality, and one which is inexpressible—why? Because it is an experience of the fountain-head of all determination, of the subject-character of the whole, of all that really *is*. If this experience were (to Meister Eckhart) a knowledge of less than the totality, it could be readily expressed, readily translated into terms other than itself. But as it is, Meister Eckhart has the experience of a major certainty, which gives the lie to all lesser certainties—it is not this, nor that, the ultimately real—it is just no predicates at all, for no predicates exhaust the meaning of the subject, and all predicates, taken as exhaustive, deny it. To Meister Eckhart, because this vision is ineffable (and absolutely real), it is a vision of the whole—because it is a vision of the whole, it is ineffable. Yet the relationship here is not, to Meister Eckhart, a logical one. His experience comes to him, not as a knowledge of the whole, but as a sort of whole-knowledge, a reality-knowledge; apart from it nothing matters, neither "holy practices" nor "knowledge of the creatures," nor God himself, for apart from it nothing really *is*. Nothing to the mystic can overturn this knowledge or invalidate it, for nothing exists hid-

den from it—the details of life are the unimportant results of the subject-nature of reality. This is Meister Eckhart's major ground of certainty—he has a total knowledge.

These then are the grounds of certainty I have found in Meister Eckhart: his object makes a demand upon him for its own sake, claims all his will and attention in one act of concentration, is essentially not "made-up" to him, but objective, coercive; second, his experience seems to him one of direct perception of fact, one as immediately "there" as sensation; thirdly, this knowledge is somehow an entering into, a taking possession of, that dim sense of the quality of the whole which forms the basis of every judgment. It is no longer a piling together of attributes, but a flash of acquaintance with the subject of those attributes—acquaintance all along implied in the possibility of the piling-together.

Can these grounds of certainty be judged to be grounds of validity? Have they any principle in them which gives them universal truth-value?

The whole question of a valid way of knowing is a difficult one. For the logic books define it as a way of knowing which is coherent; which establishes one judgment by virtue of its consistency with another judgment or other judgments; which "explains" by finding unknown factors which either establish the consistency of one judgment with another, or overthrow one judgment or the other. Validity, the books say, is not the quality of a single judgment, but rather a matter of the relation of judgments between each other. One judgment is judged valid by virtue of its agreement with a second judgment, which again, has no intrinsic validity of its own.<sup>145</sup>

Yet if validity is not to be found in any single judgment, how is it really to be found at all? Where novelty arises in the search for knowledge, is where the old, having been seen together, comprehensively, is found lacking and unsatisfactory—the new, higher truth must be so. And the process which follows, of testing the new judgment, is not so much the making of the judgments agree at whatever price, as often the throwing aside of the old body of judgments entirely, or the transforming of them to accord with the new. The new has been found to be valid—as much by its contradiction of the old, as by agreement with it—

and the old, in receiving truth-value in the light of the new, becomes itself new. Truth-value, if it is to be found at all, is not to be found as a quality of ever wider and more indefinite systems, but at some particular moment, in some particular judgments, which the holder is prepared to defend against the world, consistent or not consistent.<sup>145a</sup> ✕

We find the mystic defending such judgments as these, and the fact that their agreements within or without the mystic experience is not brought forward as a ground of their validity, need not prevent us from nevertheless looking further for other possible principles of truth-value.

Is the fact that the mystic declares his object to be coercive, however powerful it may be as a ground of subjective certainty, likewise a ground of validity? It is sure, that the goal of knowledge is an object which shall be compelling for its own sake. We mean by truth something which, however much we may examine and test and turn it, shall yet force us to acknowledge it, which shall exert control over our reason, our will and feeling. The old theories of validity—inconceivability of the opposite, clear and distinct conception—acknowledged this element of valid knowledge and sought, without deep analysis of it, to make it the only one. Modern logical theories of the universally valid—that which, in being denied, is asserted—make use of the same factor. Yet we cannot assert that we have here found a principle of validity in the mystic knowledge. We have found the mystic's experience to be such that it is absolutely coercive for him. He is indeed invulnerable. And we have found this to be a necessary element in any true object of knowledge. But that such experience ever would or ought to be, coercive for us, is by no means asserted.

How does it stand with the second ground of certainty, that of immediacy? Here the peculiarity is, that in all the compellingness of the object, the mystic can say "I, too." He finds the ultimate object—he finds also, and in it, himself. It was in some such principle of validity as this that Kant rested the final answer ✓ to the question "How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?" They are possible if the mind in knowing is not only receptive but also active—if the objects of its knowledge are conditioned by its own activity. But this again, belongs to the private experi-

ence of the mystic. We have no such experience, we say, "sensational in its epistemological quality,"<sup>146</sup> and yet not of sense-objects, with which to compare and corroborate.

The third point of view under which we found the mystic's knowledge certain, at least for him, was far more fundamental than the other two. For granting for an instant the possibility of such subject-knowledge as the mystic asserts, of knowledge concerned not with the what, but with the ultimate that, we see that it would have to be both coercive and immediate. Coercive: for if reality itself has not the force of compulsion, then no such force exists; immediate—for to admit of mediation would be to destroy the hypothesis we are examining, to posit once again a knowing concerned with the what, the peripheral character of reality. The two factors then, of coercion and immediacy which are merely, however reasonably, factors of subjective certainty, would be derivatives of the central character of whole-knowledge. Is this whole-knowledge a possible, a real experience? Can we find a principle upon which it is valid?

Certainly, one might grant that he who had knowledge of reality in its totality would necessarily be possessed of valid knowledge; but what one ordinarily means by a knowledge of the whole of things, and Eckhart's whole-knowledge, are two very different things. In the first place, this mystical experience, far from being a total one, seems a very partial—an essentially one-sided and incomplete—one. All the ordinary avenues to knowledge—the doors of sense, and of logical reflection—of comparison and analysis and inference—ideally are closed to the mystic, so far as his mystical experience is concerned. The ideal is one of attention to the narrowest possible residue of conscious life,—and though one may believe that the ideal, in its extreme form, never is nor can be achieved, that always some voice of sense, or of inference, must remain, yet the experience remains logically, a narrower and more partial experience than the dullest experience of normal conscious life. What meaning has the mystic when he says that his experience is one of totality, of the whole of reality? Can this meaning be justified?

To the mystic, the whole is not a thing of quantity—an aggregate of finites, though infinitely great, would never make an infinite to him; the whole is rather, so far as it can be called a category at all, a category of quality. Our idea of totalities

and wholes is based upon our knowledge of the wholes of sense-perception, which we see as composed of many parts, as more or less arbitrarily compoundable into greater wholes, or analyzable into lesser ones, at our own will; and though our minds are staggered at the vast, inconceivable synthesis of the universe on the one hand, and at the elusiveness of the ultimate whole on the other hand, we yet consider that such experiences of quantities are the only experience of the whole that we have, and that our final knowledge of the whole must be built up out of aggregates and syntheses of lesser wholes.

Yet might it not be that our entire life of thought and reason is based on a whole-experience of another sort—a whole-experience essentially like the mystic's, though unanalyzed and unconsidered—and that the process of acquiring knowledge is the process of filling out, of making concrete and real, this idea of the whole, without which we could have no knowledge at all, and to which we continually turn in our work of predication? There are indications enough which point this way; there are puzzles enough which would find their solution in it.

Let us take for instance, this very problem of validity.<sup>147</sup> Let us consider what it means that we always judge, and must judge, our judgments to be either valid or invalid. We imply that we consider them either true or false; and if we make up theories which say that we claim for our judgments not truth-value, but use-value, we nevertheless do claim for these latter judgments validity, truth-value—we imply that other theories of truth are invalid, false. We cannot get away from our notion of, and claim to, truth-value. Yet how is any claim to truth-value ever possible, ever justified? Not only does every judgment go beyond what the facts it is founded upon directly and infallibly warrant, but no facts ever directly warrant a claim to substantiality, truth-value. All the items of our experience are dissolvable into illusion-elements, unreality; our most certain facts are, in the last analysis, but subject-matter for doubt. Yet that this is so, that we continually find ourselves in error, even that we believe, perhaps, that no truth is possible for us, that we must remain continually in error, implies that somehow we are at the heart of truth, do know consciously, though not particularly, in a universal, absolutely sure, way, what truth *is*—otherwise we could never differentiate error from it, never consciously find our judg-

ments wrong, invalid. Thus we find that, in order that our notion of validity may have any objective meaning at all, it must presuppose a direct, non-symbolic, whole-knowledge—a whole-knowledge, not of the items, but of the real nature of truth, essentially like the whole-knowledge which we have seen the mystic make claim to. We have found here, not a principle of validity in mystic knowledge, but a relation at once more intimate, more primitive, and more fundamental, than that, between the mystic knowledge and validity—we have found that without such knowledge as the mystic names, not only is no single claim to validity justified, in the last analysis, but also that without positing it, no consistent meaning for our notion of validity can be found at all. We get here the hint of an intimate and organic relation between mysticism and ordinary thinking, the final justification for the treatment of the problem of mysticism as an epistemological one; but in order that, in tracing out this organic relationship, our results may be as general and as sure as possible, it is desirable at this point to see our results borne out and corroborated by other mystical experience than Meister Eckhart's.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MYSTICAL MOTIVE; AS SEEN IN ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, JOACHIM OF FLORIS, BONAVENTURA.

Our results so far have been gained from a somewhat detailed study of a single mystic, and may be summarized as follows: Mysticism, having, of course, strong emotional factors, is not dissolvable into a feeling relation, nor into a voluntaristic attitude toward life, nor into a combination of the two. Mysticism is essentially a problem for epistemology and that because (1) in its germ, as well as in its highest fruition we find its aim, and its claim, to be always cognitive, the achievement of a truth-value, and because (2) quite apart from the consideration just mentioned, mysticism demands epistemological treatment on more general grounds. These are, that mysticism sets forth in its sharpest form the paradox that really does lie at the center of an ideational conception of reason. For if we consider thinking wholly as a symbolic, ideational process (and if it is ideational, it is necessarily symbolic) then we are confronted with the dilemma that either reality must be completely unknowable, so that the more we know about it the farther we are away from it (for the more completely it is symbolized) or if knowable, reality itself must be symbol, idea-stuff, less sharp and literal, less "real" than the dullest moment of particular conscious experience. When put in such a bare form, the dilemma appears so sharp as to be trivial; but the mystic points out that it is inescapable—that truth can only be gotten in some non-symbolic insight, in some immediate conscious contact with the most Real. Accepting this paradox of the mystic's, we tried to find out just what the mystic means by his asserted immediate contact with the most Real—tried to find out if here the mystic met in any valid sense with an objective Real, if he could really show us a world any more knowable or ascertainable than the (world of idea which he repudiates as illusion.) We found, indeed, an empty world—the house of the mystic swept and garnished, standing empty—yet we found a world vastly fruitful in its contact with the everyday world, vastly significant. For the essential characteristic of the

mystical knowledge was that it was a sort of abiding vision of the whole, in whose light the details of knowledge took on changed value, changed relation. When we examined further the grounds of certainty of this knowledge to discover, if possible, any grounds of objective validity (for the purpose of finding light for the solution of the paradox of thinking), we found that only this same element of being whole-knowledge, could possibly be a principle of validity.

Yet in examining this essential character of mysticism, we found it to be hardly a principle of validity—rather something more primitive and fundamental than that. We found just this direct acquaintance with the nature of reality, truth, to be a pre-supposition of the possibility of validity—that which gives meaning and objective value to our notion of validity, as well as the final source of any claim to validity. Yet we feared to build an analysis of thinking on this basis, slenderly supported by an examination of the work of a single mystic. In order then to make our results more general, and at the same time to clarify further our idea of the nature and working force of the mystic's whole-knowledge, it is necessary at this point to see our results borne out and incorporated, if possible, by an interpretation of other mystical experiences as widely removed from one another in outward circumstances as possible.

For this purpose I have chosen Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), Joachim of Floris (1145-1202), and John Fidanza, or Bonaventura (1221-1274). Bernard of Clairvaux is called by Catholic historians of philosophy the real founder of mysticism in the Middle Ages<sup>148</sup> (dependent of course on Dionysius the Areopagite); Bonaventura is called its greatest mediaeval exponent;<sup>149</sup> these two men were early canonized by the Catholic church, while Joachim of Floris was a heretic, followers of whom were persecuted by Bonaventura.<sup>150</sup> But there are less historical and more critical reasons for the choice of these mystics. They each present, in a peculiarly sharpened form, the problem of the cognitive aspect of mysticism, because the doctrines of Bernard and Bonaventura, when shorn of the scholastic contents, seem so easily and almost inevitably reducible to a pure religious feeling-relation of love and adoration, and because the tremendous verities of Joachim, asserted in his allegorizing prophetic way, have long since turned out to be fantastic dreams. In the works of



these writers, if at all, we ought to find the refutation of our thesis—we ought to find here, if anywhere, that mysticism is sometimes without cognitive content and aim, that it is sometimes merely ennobling emotion, or passionate, fanatical dreaming due to abnormal associative processes.

To state first the problem of St. Bernard as a mystic: His life, as one of intense ethical activity, has been often enough used to show that mysticism is primarily a voluntaristic attitude, a way of life.<sup>151</sup> After only three years in the Cloister of Cîteaux, he was chosen Abbot of the Cloister of Clairvaux; there his energetic and powerful nature so showed itself that in 1130 when an antipope brought forward claims against Innocent II, Bernard was called to avert the threatening schism. Complicated as matters were, Bernard succeeded in bringing about the universal recognition of Innocent and Anaclet's voluntary withdrawal; he was continually engaged in controversy with Abelard and others; when Arnold of Brescia tried to stir up the Romans against the rule of the Pope, only Bernard was able to quell the storm and reestablish peace; the second Crusade, in 1147, was his work; he was responsible for seeking out many heresies, but he always tried to bring the heretics, by kindness and protection, back into the church; moreover, he did not hesitate to speak boldly against the corruptions of the church to the Pope himself, and demand of him that these corruptions be corrected.<sup>151</sup> Such a statement of the ethical activity of Bernard's life shows a man of tremendous convictions and ambitions; one is tempted to wonder, in the face of the steadfast orthodoxy of his mysticism, and his life so occupied with things of this world, whether after all, in his case at least, mysticism was not the emotional rewording of the accepted creed, by a passionate nature which could not believe coldly.

Bernard himself would have said that the final outcome of all mystical striving should be union with God in love; he gives as the ground principle and culmination of the truth that he has to offer this, that the reason why we must love God is God himself, that the measure with which we must love him is to love beyond all measure. (*Causa diligendi Deum Deus est, modus, sine modo diligere*).<sup>152</sup> The reasons Bernard gives for such statements are genuinely scholastic ones;<sup>153</sup> the whole thing seems all unfounded on any mystical insight. It is a natural law,

says the Saint, that we know and love God; it is also a law of reason, since we are indebted to him for all the goods both of body and soul that we enjoy.<sup>154</sup> This love of God is founded on humility and self-knowledge; it proceeds through the four neatly divided steps of love of ourselves, love of God for our own sakes, love of God for his own sake, and finally love of ourselves and everything else only for the sake of God—which final stage is, according to Bernard, the perfection of love to God<sup>155</sup> and the stage which we experience in the instants of mystical ecstasy. Is this ecstasy merely a feeling-relation? Did Bernard in truth experience nothing in it but an emotion of love toward an ideal object?

In spite of the fact that Bernard considers the mystical ecstasy as the final stage in the growing love of God, we find him actually describing it always in cognitive terms.<sup>156</sup> The reason for that, and the explication of St. Bernard's apparently contradictory position, is that to him God was Truth itself. He did not think of God under the forms of Being, or Goodness, or supreme Justice, as his contemporaries did, so much as Truth itself, the supreme cognitive satisfaction. Thus we find him saying, "Oh Truth, thou homeland of exiles and final resting place of the soul! I perceive thee truly indeed, but I shall not enter into thee, held back as I am by my sins, which render me unworthy to enter into thy august presence."<sup>157</sup> God was truth to Bernard, primarily a cognitive value, love of God was full perception of the truth, the life of mystical love was the life of true wisdom, not because of any practical value, but because, in the Saint's own words, "he who possesses this love of God possesses true wisdom in that he discerns all things according to that which they truly are."<sup>158</sup>

It remains to consider this cognitive element, since cognitive element there is, more closely. We find Bernard insisting that he has found an unmediated way of knowledge which proceeds by the utmost concentration. Thus he says of consideration, which is a sort of preliminary to contemplation, that it is "*intensa ad investigandum cogitatio, vel intentio animi investigantis verum*,"<sup>159</sup> while contemplation itself is "*verus certusque intuitus animis de quacunque re, sive apprehensio rei non dubia*."<sup>160</sup> This true and certain and intense intuition of the spirit into the nature of its object, Bernard seems to hold possi-

ble in the case of all objects, though of supreme value only in the case of the supreme object. Thus he says: "The things about us are not in the least grasped by words (discursive reasoning); they are revealed by the spirit. It is necessary that contemplation should search out, that prayer should demand, and that sanctity should obtain (that truth) which the word is unable to attain."<sup>161</sup>

We see in this and in similar quotations, that for Bernard there existed some very intimate relation between the world of mystical insight and the everyday world, not only morally and ethically, but cognitively as well—that the first acted in some sense as a mediator for the second—or, more exactly, that no more in the "natural" than in the "spiritual" realm was truth obtainable without insight. What was the nature of this insight?

An answer to this question can only be given after consideration of a few direct quotations from St. Bernard. He says, for example, in speaking of the contemplative life, the life in which this insight is won: "The child of heaven has always before his eyes the mirror in which he sees all things most clearly. He sees the Word and in the Word that which has been made by the Word; he has no reason for trying to win from the creatures knowledge of the creator. He does not even need, in order to know the creatures, to descend among them; he sees them (directly) in a manner more excellent than they are themselves."<sup>162</sup> This passage expresses partially, of course, what might be called St. Bernard's doctrine of ideas; but applied as it was to human experience, it expresses also in positive form, that same sense of knowing in some way the universal character of reality, which Eckhart expressed so passionately in negative form. Just as Eckhart refused to characterize in any way the most Real, the "Godhead," lest he should make it seem that the knowledge he had achieved was just another instance of the knowledge of description, knowledge about, rather than the direct knowledge of acquaintance with reality, without any medium of idea, so Bernard here expresses the positive side of this same sort of insight, in saying that he who has attained to a vision of the whole, sees and interprets thereafter all things in the light of that vision.

Bernard seems to have a very keen sense, expressing a keen experience, of the difference between "knowledge about" and

“acquaintance” with. Just as a man born blind may have a certain knowledge about the color red, perhaps know all the relations that it stands in according to the physics text-book, perhaps know that “this other object, which I know directly to be of such and such a shape, feel, odor, name, is also, I am told, red,” although the subject of his knowledge will always remain a meaningless X to him, so Bernard would say that a man may have descriptive knowledge about the world, reality, but this knowledge will always remain more or less vague, uncertain, even false, until he has a certain direct acquaintance with the whole, not considered as an aggregate, but considered as a Substance, a Subject. For to Bernard, as to Eckhart, the mystical insight was not an intuition of new truths, so much as a certain abiding knowledge of values, which made possible the knowing of any truth—and whose ultimate aim was the knowledge of the most Real. “The ultimate object with which one must occupy oneself, it is to know the things of God.”<sup>163</sup> In conclusion, one must say that St. Bernard asserts an unmediated knowledge by direct experience, of the genuine character of the world. He somehow knows more and more truly through his mystical insight into what the real *is*, than through all his school-reasoning.

Joachim of Floris, distracted by the evils of the world, the corruptions of the church, and the general demoralization of society, took refuge in a passionate hope in the future.<sup>164</sup> The prophetic and fantastic utterances he gave this hope, pass for his “mysticism” because they are dark and mysterious and hard to understand. But the kernel of mysticism at the heart of Joachim’s teaching is farther to seek than that. Joachim’s doctrines are presented chiefly in four books, three of which are known together as the “Eternal Evangel”—the *Concordia veteris et novi Testamenti*, the *Commentarium de Apocalypse*, the *Psalterium decem chordarum*, the *Divina prorsus in Jeremiam Prophetam Interpretatio*. So far as I have been able to find out, Joachim only once describes a mystical ecstasy. This he does in the Preface to the Psalterium.<sup>165</sup> He had sought for the truth with all possible zeal, he says, and had found it even farther removed from him. But as he once went, with discouragement concerning the true wisdom and yet with yearning for it, to the devotional singing, suddenly much truth was revealed to him that he had not been able to attain to in study and search. But this

revealed truth had again escaped him, busied as he had been about his cloister duties. Several years after, at the Passover feast, in the Cloister Casamare he had started to sing psalms to the honor of the Holy Ghost, when just as he stepped before the altar, a great doubt arose in his mind about the Holy Trinity. How could one God be three persons, and three persons one God, he had asked himself. Terrified, he called upon the Holy Ghost and besought him to make clear this mystery. Then there came before him during the singing the figure of his ten-stringed lute and in it so clear a picture of the trinity that he had broken out into a loud song of praise.<sup>165</sup>

I have related this incident partly to show how far down in the scale of developed mystics Joachim must be placed, partly to show the quality of his mind, and partly to acknowledge that Joachim does nevertheless have a claim on our attention as a mystic—and just because mysticism is so little developed in him, just because he is so unable to think otherwise than in pictures, he affords a good opportunity for testing the generality of our conclusions about mysticism.

For the rest, all of Joachim's ideas, a welter of fantastic numerical allegories, in which the existence of the world is divided into three periods, that of the Old Testament, that of the new, and that of the Everlasting Gospel, to begin in 1260 A. D., the time of perfect knowledge and righteousness,<sup>166</sup> are environmental.

Engelhardt says on this point,<sup>167</sup> "The idea of the Eternal Gospel, a time of perfect righteousness in the church, was in the first centuries of Christianity almost universally accepted. This idea gradually lost its ancient form, but continually reappeared. . . . Among the different forms, under which this idea appeared in the history of the Christian Church, one is especially common, and has already appeared in very early times—that one, namely, which conceives of the development of true knowledge as a progression in three revelations, so that the Old Testament with its time appears as the first, the New with its times as the second, and the time of the Holy Ghost, prepared for by both the other stages, as the third step in the development. Under this form, we meet the idea of a perfect condition of righteousness about to begin, in the works of the Abbot Joachim."<sup>167</sup> Joachim developed this idea, indeed, in a peculiar and personal way—not,

however, as if it had been made his own through a mystical insight, but rather by far-fetched numerical allegories and analogies, by hairsplitting dialectic, as if he had laid hold upon this idea not through insight, but as a support for it—as a proof to himself that something real had been experienced, as a justification for some dim seizure of truth which he somehow could never bring to expression.

One cannot, then, even attempt to look for a mystical insight in the ideas which Joachim expressed, however difficult and mysterious they may be. Were it not for a vehement sort of non-logical certainty expressed—a certainty all the more personal and vigorous for being attendant upon traditional and environmental ideas,—one would be tempted to dismiss Joachim from the ranks of mystics altogether. But the very inarticulateness of this certainty of Joachim's points at least in the direction of mystical insight. Just because he was never satisfied with the form of his thought, so that he continually expressed anew, in a hundred different ingenious ways, what he held for a central truth, one comes to feel more and more strongly that Joachim had somehow grasped the whole-character of truth, reality, but that he was utterly unable to articulate it, even to show the truth "dimly, in a glass of reason," as Meister Eckhart did. Joachim strives continually to express the insight that truth is a matter not of words, but of the spirit, that reality is not to be known discursively but only by direct acquaintance—but even this negative side of his message he can express but fitfully. The substance of his message in the *Liber Concordiae* is, that everywhere the Word, imperfect, symbolic, comes first; with fuller attainment, the Spirit follows—instances of his many examples are Jeremiah following Isaiah, Paul before John, the Holy Ghost after Christ.<sup>168</sup> Joachim knew the reality of the inner life, the value of personality, what the full truth must be like if only he could attain to it, only find satisfaction, only articulate as much as he had experienced. Yet the full attainment never came—and it is significant that the only mystical element in Joachim, which a candid consideration and a consistent connotation of mysticism can find in him, is this dim sense of what the real, the whole must be, which kept him ever dissatisfied, ever groping, ever chaotic, but never uncertain of his aim or of his way.

For Bonaventura, the case is widely different. His *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* tells the story of his mystical experience, in seven stages, and shows, more sharply than either Bernard or Joachim, how the direct acquaintance with the most Real which is the mystic's claim, transforms their knowing of particulars. The first six steps in this "Journey to God" are, curiously enough, the result of the seventh. They are supposed, indeed, to be an account of the progress of the soul to God by ways of mediation,—by descriptive knowing about the Real, by experience of this world, etc. Yet Bonaventura shows us in these six steps a world so shot through and through with God that they show us more plainly even than the seventh, which is a direct description of the mystical ecstasy and attainment, what the nature of the mystical knowledge is. The only meaning which the parts have for Bonaventura at all is their relation to the whole, the fact that they are "*vestigia Dei*."<sup>169</sup> At the last, after the "beauty and goodness" of the world shall have sufficiently exalted the mind, "Do, thou, oh friend, proceed boldly on the way to mystic visions; abandon the senses and the operations of the intellect; abandon things sensible and things invisible, and all non-being and being; and as far as is possible, unknowingly restore thyself to the unity of him who is above all essence and all science."<sup>170</sup> Here again, we have the negative path of renunciation; here again, we have the repudiation of idea, symbol, the assertion of direct, unmediated and penetrating knowledge of the ultimately real. Finally, we have here again the refusal to characterize the finally Real, in the fear lest it should become something less than the wholly real,—yet the assertion just is the assertion of a major certainty which, because it is a certainty of the whole, cannot be invalidated by any to-be-discovered aspect of reality.

Yet in Bonaventura we find still a new, and as it seems to me, a consciously given, aspect of this immediate insight as insight into the whole. In spite of the optimism of Bonaventura in describing the world of nature—there is in him none of the dark depression over the world which we find in Joachim—there is, in his final vision, a certain noble sadness, a certain assertion of supreme value beyond joy. Thus he says, "For in rising, by an immeasurable and pure ecstasy of mind, above thyself and all

things, thou shalt ascend, abandoning all things and freed from all things, to the superessential ray of divine darkness. But if thou wouldst learn how these things are done, ask grace, not learning; desire, not intellect; the groaning of prayer, not the diligence of reading:—darkness, not clearness; not light, but fire totally enflaming and transporting into God by excessive unctions and most ardent affections. . . . a fervor . . . which says, 'My soul hath chosen strangling and my bones death.'"<sup>171</sup> "He who chooseth this death may see God, because it is true beyond doubt: 'Man may not see me and live.' Let us die, therefore, and enter into darkness."<sup>172</sup> Bonaventura has found here a supreme value, which one may not indeed describe in terms of lesser values, but which is, nevertheless, known as inclusive of all reality, even of the sharpness and mystery of evil; and which is, at the same time, known as the abiding-place of the soul. Once it has been discovered, the reality is known as having been always present, always in some sense known, never more to depart, always to be illuminative of all other knowing.

We have found, indeed, that the experience of these three mystics corroborate the conclusions as to the nature of mystical insight which we had found from an analysis of the problem in Meister Eckhart's works—namely, that the essential character of the mystical insight, is that it is an immediate knowing of the whole, of the subject-character of reality. It remains to seek the relation, at this point, of mystical insight to ordinary thinking, to ask if such experience as the mystic's is possible and actual—if it is, as our analysis of validity would indicate, necessary,—in usual cognitive experience. When this question is answered, it will be seen, not that immediate insight and mediated knowing are fundamentally different, but that the two cognitive functions are organically and necessarily related, and that in this relation lies the solution of the paradox of thinking.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MYSTICAL MOTIVE IN THINKING.

We have seen that what mysticism really is, is a sort of consciousness of the whole-character of reality, a seeing of all finite experience as bathed in a universal light which alone gives value and meaning to the particular items of experience. We have also seen the question become urgent as to whether the mystic's report can have any general contribution to make to an understanding of the knowing process—as to whether this experience-medium of the mystic's belongs only to him, is a peculiar and subjective affair, or whether it contains any principle of validity, objectivity. We have found, in general terms, that some such achievement as the mystic's is much more than a principle of validity—that it is, in some way, a constituent, the very basis, of any possibility of valid judgment. It remains to consider this last broad claim more particularly. All thinking claims to be valid—must all thinking appeal to and be rooted in, a consciousness of the whole of reality?

It is the object of this chapter to show that this is and must be the case—that all consecutive thinking, all thinking, in the stricter sense of the word, presupposes an immediate and ever-attendant knowledge of the whole-character of reality—that this knowledge is essentially like the mystic's, in that it is universal, not particular; and is not founded on any other knowledge, not on any items or aggregates of items, of knowledge about reality. This quality of insight in our thinking gains its only real distinction from typically mystical knowledge in being unattended to, out of the focus of attention, in being used as means and not as end. In the mystic experience this phase of cognition occupies the center of attention to the exclusion, for the time being, of all other activities, and its results are considered of paramount importance.

The first support which one might urge for such a position comes from a consideration of the nature of reflection. It is an ancient puzzle—how can reflection, being, as it is, a sort of self-transcendence, ever begin, and, having begun, how can it go on?

For any initial act of reflection presupposes a previous reflective act, and cannot be initial; to experience the goad, the urge to reflection, the mind must have already accomplished an act of reflection. This is not a verbal puzzle; any dim sense of dissatisfaction, of puzzlement, implies that the self is already beyond itself,—that it has overreached the limits of its knowledge—how? When the child is not contented to take things as things but searches for a meaning behind them, his reflective life is said to have begun—but what save an act of reflection could have engendered intellectual discontent? So we have the puzzle—without discontent, no reflection, without reflection, no discontent—and we are forced to say that unless reflection, as the ability to stand off from oneself, view one's activity, one's knowledge, one's thinking as something apart, is due to a propulsive power without itself of some immediate and direct character, reflection can never begin. In the same way, reflection as reflection cannot continue; each act of reflection must be somehow an initial act—the life of thought must be a series of leaps from wider to wider points of vision, each comprehending all that has gone before it, and yet being other than all that has gone before it—unless the circle of ideas is never to escape from itself, never to truly become reflection, thought, discovery.

So if reflection is to be a real act, it would seem that one must logically say that it is necessarily rooted in and sustained by, a sort of intellectual activity quite other than what it itself, abstractly considered, is—by a sort of unmediated, propelling power of insight.

This indeed, was Plato's solution of the logical difficulty.<sup>173</sup> How is learning, inquiry, possible? he asked. For either we know already what we are after and then we do not learn or inquire, or we do not know, and then we cannot learn or inquire, for we do not know what to look for. Plato's answer was that we have indeed already seen the vision of the truth; we do know what we seek. But we do not know it in its full reality; it abides with us only dimly, like a half-forgotten chord of music which we cannot reproduce, but which, when we hear it, we shall know, as that which we have sought. So it is that the mixture of knowledge and ignorance makes a hunger within us and drives us out on the pathway of the Dialectic; it is by the vision within us that we proceed, rejecting this judgment and accepting that,

testing all things and keeping our course true by its light, until the vision is ours in its fulness, and we both know and know that we know.

Some such solution as Plato's is, I think, necessary, for without it our notion of reflection remains a hopeless contradiction; yet reflection is of the very essence of our thinking.

For to put the case in abstract terms, the problem comes to this: Descriptive knowledge, "knowledge about," is not possible in any true sense, in any sense of personal possession as contrasted with mere rote-learning, the acceptance of a dictum, without at the same time direct acquaintance with the subject of predication. Yet idea is essentially descriptive, predicate-ascribing; knowing, in order to be productive of idea, must be more than idea, must be somehow an immediate experience. This direct acquaintance with reality is not to be found in sense-experience; for not only is sense-experience to perhaps as great an extent as any experience one mediated by ideas,—but even if it were not, it would not be able to explain the immediacy which is necessary to thought, not only as an initial power for it, but also and more especially in the realms of conceptual thinking, where at every instant, in order that the thinking may be progressive, productive of novelty,—and so true thinking,—in order that the circle of ideas may not merely go on perpetuating itself, in an apparently fatalistic equilibrium, it is necessary that wider insight than is warranted by, or expressed in, just these and these ideas, should be present in thought—and not only merely present in it, but present as its vitalizing agency, its life-blood and propulsive power. This is not merely, however necessarily, a logical requirement; it is a matter of actual observation that consecutive and productive thinking is attended by a sense of being already at the goal while striving toward it—a sense which alone is able to set problems and the conditions for their solution. And where novelty does arise in thinking, it actually arises as, in some way, a making explicit of the whole-consciousness, a finding of that which was all along sought and so, to some extent, known. The novel insight is attended by a quality of reminiscence, of having been known all along, of having been, until now, incapable of expression. This is the essence of discovery which is real discovery—that one finds a truth which he recognizes as having been there from the beginning, true for him and for all men,

if he had but been able to see it. For this reason, the greatest scientific discoveries are those which seem the most obvious, once they have been made; this is the secret of creative works which appear to us as essentially "true"—they are able to arouse in us the feeling that the truth of this poem or picture is one which we have always possessed, always known, if we could but have brought it to expression.

The life of thinking it is, then, to be more than mere thinking, in the sense of the acquiring of ideas by means of other ideas. Ideas are necessarily symbols; not because they must needs stand for a reality other than consciousness, but just because they are media of exchange, ways of holding fast, epitomizing, abstracting, aspects of our complex fleeting consciousness for our own and others' inspection. Yet it is the peculiarity of symbols that as soon as they are recognized as symbols, they acquire immediately a wider meaning, become in some sense what they stand for, certainly something more than symbols. So of ideas, and of the ideational process—when we recognize them as symbols, we see that they must be at the same time more than that, that they imply something non-symbolic, not like themselves, some immediate (seeing-into reality, to make the symbols themselves possible and understandable.) Ideas are as necessary to thought as immediate insight is—they make the inarticulate vision of the whole more and more definite, concrete, valuable. But they never replace the vision—without it they are meaningless sounds, or unrelated memory-items—never factors in thinking as such.

To analyze this concrete and organic life of thought is necessarily to become abstract, to symbolize it further, place it under false analogies. Yet a particular analysis of it can yield further, and concrete, supports for our thesis, and might make our idea of thinking clearer and more definite in its final synthesis.

Do we find mystical insight actually at work in thought in such a way that we can isolate and examine it, make its meaning sharp? I think that this is the case.

First, let us consider the more obviously distinguishing features of thinking. One must, of course, consider here only that thinking which aims at knowledge, truth—the loose drift of idle fancies of everything that "goes through our heads" or the more closely articulated imaginative building up of air castles, although the term "thinking" is often applied to them cannot

concern us here, for what we are primarily trying to do is to examine two ways of seeking truth which appear at first sight as utterly different. Activities which do not make claim to this purpose have really no call on our attention. Yet some reference to them is necessary in order to differentiate thinking for our purpose.

What is it, then, that distinguishes thinking in the stricter sense from all other conscious manipulation of words, ideas, symbols? Dewey says on this point,<sup>174</sup> "Now reflective thought is like . . . (any) random coursing of things through the mind in that it consists of a sequence of things thought of; but it is unlike in that a mere chance occurrence of the chance 'something or other' does not suffice. Reflection involves not merely a sequence of ideas but a *consequence*—a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors. The successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another; they do not come and go in a medley. Each phase is a step from something to something—technically speaking, is a term of thought. Each term leaves a deposit which is utilized in the next. The stream becomes a chain."<sup>174</sup> The character of consecutiveness is an obvious enough difference, at first sight, by which to distinguish thinking, from day-dreaming, for instance; but the psychologist would say, "Yes, but every flow of consciousness is likewise a chain—each distinguishable element leaves a deposit which is utilized in the next—each determines the next as its proper, indeed, as its inevitable, outcome, given all the circumstances. The law of association forbids a mere medley as firmly as any ultimate aim at truth." What then becomes of law and order in thinking as a mark by which to distinguish it from any flow of consciousness? One answers, that no matter how strictly determined causally the flow of unpurposive consciousness may be assumed to be within itself, thinking in the strict sense may yet be cut off from it here, for thinking is determined by the principle of relevance—it is bound to those ideas which are relevant to the purpose of its inquiry, and to those only, and it must consider them when and where they are relevant.

Sidgwick has shown the place which relevance has in thinking.<sup>175</sup> After showing that no fact gets its evidential value except

through a principle accepted as true, his argument goes on to examine what, since knowledge means knowledge of the proper application of a rule, such knowledge of proper application may be. This, he says, consists in our knowledge of the exceptions of this general application. We usually assume that "everyone knows" what the exceptions of any given principles are—that is, what differences in the particular cases become relevant to the application of a rule. In applying a rule to a particular case, we tacitly assume that here the differences are not relevant, that the likenesses are—that this case is not one of the exceptions of the rule. But tacit assumption tends to become explicit and the doctrine of probabilities is put forth as a justification for the connection between general rule and particular case—as an attempt to make this connection a mediated one. But this is not a safe ground for inference; the "chance" is only another name for ignorance. The statistical method falls short of being a true scientific method, of yielding verifiable results, because it neglects some of the relevant factors which belong to the particular case or cases in question. So in science in general, apart from the statistical method, we find that all errors and mistakes have been due to clumsiness of observation, to misconception due to misdescription, of facts, to false analogy—in short, to the neglect of relevant differences between sub-classes. And in more strictly syllogistic thinking, that which holds thought to its true course is the—one might almost say, perception—of what is relevant; all fallacies arise from some unjustified use of a middle term. That is, the unavoidable change of meaning in a term which has been used in one context, when it is used in another, has become so great as to be relevant to the purpose of the inquiry—yet this relevant difference is not taken account of, and a fallacy, an invalid chain of reasoning of the type that "has nothing to do with it" results. Hence the only final guarantee of validity which syllogistic thinking—and the major part of scientific and everyday thinking is syllogistic—has, is a knowledge of when and in what direction a change in meaning—and change in meaning is everywhere and necessary—becomes so great as to be relevant.<sup>176</sup>

The outcome of this analysis of the working of the idea of relevance, is, that no thinking, in the true sense, is possible without it; that it is attendant upon, and logically prior to, all

rational insight. This statement, that (the principle of all rational insight is relevance) may, however, seem like a tautology, until its full meaning is found.

What, then, is the meaning of relevance? Sidgwick himself would say that relevance is a subjective thing—that it is a quality which judgments have of harmonizing with, or furthering, our purposes. Yet according to his own account the whole point of relevance is its power to reveal objectivity. It gets its character from its connection with the necessary, its rooting in the objective, in what demands the consent of the mind. Take away this phase of thinking and you have the highly complicated, and perhaps logical, system of a madman, but you have not relevant thinking—thinking bound to its task of building up an objective world. Is this relation to an objective world merely an accidental or apparent one? If not, what is it that makes relevance not merely related-to-our-own-purpose-ness? Once again we must ask, what is relevance?

Relevance is more than mere agreement with our own purposes; we cannot simply think the way we want to, but this very principle of relevance is somehow coercive. Relevance is not merely the appeal to a selected context of our judgments; quite apart from the problem of how such a context could have been selected, comes the further character of relevance that it is a sort of evaluation, a noting of certain intimate connections. Yet how could the conditions of a problem be evaluated, judged important or not important for its solution, how could connections be known and recognized, were there not, in every thought-problem where relevance is recognized (and it is always recognized) a wider insight than can at first be made articulate, an attendant consciousness of being at the goal already to which one is struggling, even as the mystic claims in his knowledge?

An example of the way this consciousness of relevance, which is, on its objective side, the consciousness of implication, works, may be seen in some observations of Charles Peirce, the logician. In attempting to account for the great strides in science made since the days of Galileo, he comes to the conclusion that they must be due to some sort of "pre-established harmony."<sup>177</sup> On the basis of mathematical computations he says that these strides, in these years, could not possibly have been made on hypotheses formed on even comparatively exhaustive inductive analyses;

they have actually been made, he says, by a series of lucky guesses which have time without number hit the mark—how could this be, he asks, unless the mind were somehow attuned to reality? How indeed—unless the mind already knows reality, not in slowly built up aggregate of facts, but in its totality, its subject-nature? For not only the swift strides of science, but any slightest inference, presents this same problem. In the important and mysterious process of forming general laws and hypotheses, one is forced to see the working of some immediate insight. Logically, it is impossible ever to establish a universal from particulars. Not only is a perfect induction (the old ideal of science) impossible, since any such induction would presuppose a previous perfect induction to the effect that these are all the cases that there are or can be, but the establishing of any universal whatever upon observed particulars is impossible.<sup>178</sup> For what a universal really states is, “No such synthesis as S. and P. ever exists”—that is, in whatever form it is stated, its meaning, as universal meaning, is the denial of a certain relation. As an affirmative proposition its intention may be to convey, besides its universal, a particular meaning, to the effect that “Some S’s. do exist,” but taken as a universal judgment its aim is to establish a negation. But a negation, an absence, a something-not-there can never be observed. One may see that a desk is brown, not that it is not-white. Yet we do establish true universals—to deny it is to establish one. And these scientific hypotheses, these universals, which are established in some mysterious way, are not mere lucky guesses; with greater and greater exactness the scientific hypotheses are confirmed with ever increasing absoluteness; more and more are the laws of nature conceived as unbroken and unbreakable laws, absolutely uniform regularities, whose apparent exceptions are to be explained by the incursion of laws from another field, so that an apparent exception to a law of nature becomes but another and firmer example of law in nature. How is inference from observed particulars to absolutely sure universals made, how is it justified, since it cannot be done on the old experimental basis? Russell says on this point, “Implication is the principle upon which inference is justified,”<sup>179</sup> and again, “Inference is the dropping-out of a true premise. It is the dissolution of an implication.”<sup>180</sup> But the consciousness of implication is, as we have seen, but the reverse



side of our idea of relevance, which turned out to be but one aspect of an ever-attendant whole-knowledge making possible rational insight. It would seem that the scientific genius is he who has almost a sense for relevance, who sees at a glance distant and hidden likenesses and differences which he knows to bear upon his problem, because he sees more clearly than the ordinary thinker his problem in the light of the whole—just as the artist is he who, in the aesthetic and moral realms, has the same “seeing eye” for vital and tremendous analogies.

To put the case in more general terms, it amounts to this: it is a necessity that the mind should face real being at some point in a primitive and positive, a non-symbolic, way, if knowledge is to be possible. For I cannot ascribe a predicate to a subject unless I first know what the predicate means (to leave aside for the moment the question of the subject), possess it as something I know. And have I learned what the predicate means only because I have previously known some other predicate? Here I have an infinite regress, with never any ascribing of predicates possible, unless at some point I can stop at something I know directly, immediately, unquestionedly. Knowledge must have a beginning and that beginning must *be* knowledge. Now knowledge is the making of judgments which ascribe something to reality; and which in turn ascribe (or deny, it makes no difference) reality, as something known, to various aspects of experience. This implies, as we have seen, a prior knowledge of what it means to *be* real; for the real as a predicate is not something given in sense-experience; it cannot have been acquired through any process the beginning of which did not contain anything in the way of knowledge. For in order that such knowledge (of what it means to be real) could be derived from experience, that experience would in turn have to be known to be valid, real, and would accordingly require a prior knowledge of what it is to be real. The real does not, as does the experienced, simply announce itself, “I am here.” It must be known as real, and to know it as real, the mind must have a prior knowledge of what to be real means. But to know what to be real means does not imply an intellectual definition or anything of that sort<sup>181</sup>—this knowledge is not a priori knowledge, in the sense of being ready-made symbols, ideas, nor is it framework of knowledge—for it is the very process, the life by which thought

continually overleaps, overspans itself, is forever beyond its own symbolic standpoint, in order to be there at all. That this knowledge of reality, the possession of which by the mind makes possible the whole life of reason, is nothing abstract (save when looked at isolated and apart from its continuous results, ideas), or barren and intellectualistic, that it alone makes experience significant, that it is essentially the mystic's knowledge of the whole, is seen in all the work of science, of creative thinking, of discovery and true learning.

This last consideration may call out an objection. For if one grant that, indeed, a certain sort of immediacy is necessary to all thinking, that insight is an organic part of all ideation, one may still ask "Why add 'of the whole?'" What is the meaning of "the whole" here, and why is it necessary—or legitimate—to assume it here?

If this were knowledge of anything less than the whole, it would become another instance of knowledge about, itself part of the problem of how descriptive knowledge about reality, is possible without direct acquaintance with it. For any knowledge of any aspect of reality, no matter how directly or even instinctively won, just because it was knowledge of part of reality, would have, in order to acquire meaning and validity, to be attributed to reality—to become predicate-knowledge, knowledge impossible and not-actual without at the same time subject-knowledge of some sort. No matter how far back we press the problem—no matter how large a field we allow to instinctive knowledge which yet is not mystical knowledge of the whole—we are forced always to acknowledge that this must be, in some sense, descriptive knowledge, symbolic, implying and demanding this non-descriptive knowledge which cannot be of anything less than of the whole. Our power of seeing relevancies is not a power of having revelations. It is not a question here of what are ordinarily called "intuitions" or "presentiments," but of how the real character of thinking is to be explained, of a necessarily inadequate description of what sort of direct acquaintance is implied by the fact of rational insight.

The difficulty here, perhaps, is that we think in physical analogies; we feel that a person could know directly a part of reality, as he could know by direct sense-experience a part of a rock. But knowledge of any particular aspect of reality, however

immediate and intuitional, could never perform the function this knowledge does perform, of guiding and controlling our thinking, for some other aspect of reality might at any time invalidate it, make it chaotic, false. If this were knowledge of less than the whole, we would not have any conception of truth, as we have tried to show; we could not be in error; neither could we have any coherent bodies of knowledge, groups of knowledge-items acquiring all their meaning from the interrelatedness, from their being referred to the single ultimate subject. Our knowledge of the whole is no conglomerate of the various aspects of our experience; neither is it a sort of composite abstraction from those experiences;—it is that by which we think, that which makes any kind of experience, all unity and continuity, possible.

This fact of an immediate and guiding knowledge of the whole is often enough indirectly acknowledged, in everyday speech and thought. Take for instance such a passage as this from an article on the "Ethics of War" by Russell: (It is often argued in this way) . . . "So and so crossed such and such a frontier, committed such and such technically unfriendly acts, therefore it is permissible by the rules to kill as many of his countrymen as modern armaments make possible.' There is a certain unreality, a certain lack of imaginative grasp, about this way of viewing matters."<sup>182</sup> It is not that one has not plenty of details here, possibly all the details necessary to consider; the "lack of imaginative grasp" is the lack of the clear vision of the whole, the clarity of whose presence distinguishes the thinking of genius, or of the genuinely reflective man, from second-hand thinking, or from mere "logic-chopping." Or Delacroix, speaking of the methods of science, says, "For all the manifestations of life it is necessary to search for cases which shall be truly typical—and a case never can be truly typical unless it can be studied in the totality of its conditions."<sup>183</sup> Delacroix did not mean that the impossible was to be attempted; that one should attempt to get and examine a case in the infinite total context of particular attendant conditions; for to do so, even if it were possible, would be to lose sight of the especial problem, the especial line or field of inquiry, and so to make all progress in thought impossible. What he meant was that thought must know how the particular fact can belong in the relatedness of things, must see it in a universal light.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SOME OBJECTIONS TO AN INTERPRETATION OF THINKING AS INVOLVING A MYSTICAL MOTIVE.

Objections to the interpretation of thinking outlined in the last chapter arise readily. They have grouped themselves in my mind under four heads, which, briefly stated, are as follows:

(1) The "whole-idea" necessary to thought is but the individual's apperceptive mass, his store of previous knowledge, more or less consciously held.

(2) Thought necessarily involves, indeed, elements unfounded on previous knowledge, but these are either

(a) the acquired experience and wisdom of the race in the form of habits of thought, or

(b) prejudices, feelings, emotional rather than intellectual, not to be considered a part of thinking as such.

(3) Far from being a "mystical intuition" our idea of the whole is only our own subjective demand that reality be logical, lawful.

(4) The pragmatic objection would be that this asserted insight into absolute truth, has really nothing to do with any abstraction called "truth," but is only an habitual and immediate consciousness of the previous success or failure of certain ideas.

I shall take up these objections in order. The first objection would explain our knowledge of what and how to seek, by our own already gained and held beliefs. The difference between a child and a scientist, this objection would say, is wholly a difference in apperceptive mass. The child has not so much previous knowledge to guide him. This is Dewey's opinion, for instance.<sup>184</sup> All knowledge is alike reasoned out, mediated. But the more you have, the more you get, because all items of old knowledge form points of contact for new knowledge, tools for the mediation of new concepts. The reason why modern scientists discovered the cause of malaria to be germs carried by a certain kind of mosquito, when the Romans had attributed it merely to the "bad air" of swamps, was that they noticed rele-

vant differences where the Romans had not—but the reason for their noticing lay in the fact that they knew more of science in general than the Romans did—their “apperceptive mass” of previous judgments, ideas, observations, was larger and withal more usable than that of the Romans had been. This type of objection sees the reason for the growth of knowledge in the race as well as in the individual, in the cumulative force of ideas; the question as to the origin of knowledge, of how the acquiring of the first items of the apperceptive mass is possible, is to it not only purely an academic one, but also illegitimate, since in all originating of knowledge which we can observe, in children for example, there are no true first items of knowledge—the sense-perceptions pass gradually into clearer and more definite forms, finally gradually into conceptual knowledge by means of the tradition of the race preserved in imitation, teaching and learning, etc. And to push the question beyond observed facts, to postulate a first inquirer for truth with no guidance of tradition either physiological or psychological, is to leave the realms of fact and observation for those of pure speculation. The postulate of an “idea of the whole” in cognitive processes the growth of which we can observe, is useless, says this objection; in any other case the postulate would be illegitimate.

This objection would substitute for an account of the process of thought, a sort of a mechanics of the product of thought. No aggregate of items of knowledge is itself the knowing process, and theories which make thinking to be the enlarging and clarifying of the apperceptive mass by the continuous accretion of new thought particles, lose sight of the fact that thinking is a living process, and not a dead relation. The question comes to this: To think, we must at every step transcend in opinion what the facts before us immediately and infallibly warrant. Every judgment, however simple, every inference and every general conclusion does this—and if such a process is not a rational process, then the word rational is continuously used without any meaning at all. Yet how is it rational? It must indeed be a mere leap in the dark, a mere mad guess, unless it implies a wider insight than the fact of the moment, a standard to which we appeal even when we confess the possibility of fallibility. That at every step thinking goes beyond itself in an immediacy of appropriation,

that it is the unity in which subject and object are both contained, and which must overspan all that could possibly come in as an object of consciousness, is what the postulate of a mystical motive continuously present in all thinking, tries to make clear. Not to explain the origin of thinking does one postulate the working of an idea of, or rather, immediate insight into, the whole, but rather to try to put into conceptual terms the self-transcendent, ever-moving, nature of reflection. Unless this immediate, intuitive, function of thought is recognized, it is never thought itself that is being presented, but the dead results of thought. One can never explain thinking as the acquisition of ideas by means of other ideas, for no simplest idea is possible independent of immediate factors of knowledge.

It is this truth which objections of the second type would seize upon. Mediated knowledge is not, indeed, possible, this objection would say, without unmediated knowledge, of a type higher than mere sense-data, as Kant long ago pointed out; but these tools by which objects are formed, by which we build a world of coherence and unity, are not the result of a direct insight into the whole of reality, but rather the way our minds work, the acquired habits of the race.

In answer to this objection one might say, first, that the nature of thought is not made any clearer by pushing back the problem to unknown ages; by regarding present thinking as but the mechanical application of rules once discovered by thought. The problem is at hand; it lies in the nature of the thinking process, and is not to be solved either by saying, "Thinking goes on as it does by a process of self-transcendence, because that has become the habit of our minds," nor by positing a regulative ideal of unity, abstract from the actual life of thought, a mere measurement for results. Just as individual experience is impossible without insight into the whole of things, so racial experience is impossible without it.

A third objection is of a different sort. This necessary factor of insight in thinking, this objection would say, is not an insight into the whole—such words have no meaning, since the whole of things can never be an object of knowledge—it is rather, insight into various particular practical concerns. It is plainly necessary and actual that there should be in the cognitive process unmediated factors, but these are prejudices, feelings, of an

emotional rather than of an intellectual nature—far from being a continuously present and guiding principle in all thinking they are its basis, its most particular elements, on a par with sense-data. Thought generalizes these emotional factors, tries to define abstract grounds for them. Call these elements mystical insights if you will, this objection would say—they are, however, rather a point of departure for reasoning than an organic part of thinking as such. Far from being an insight into the whole of things, the only discoverable mystical, in the sense of unmediated, elements in thinking, take the form of particular prejudices, felt convictions of a highly personal, subjective, nature. This objection insists on making a sharp opposition between insight and reason, often elevating immediate insight above reason, as James<sup>185</sup> and Bergson<sup>186</sup> do. In this view, insight is inarticulate, emotional, direct feeling of the nature of things. The reasons found for these felt convictions are inapt afterthoughts, the results of sophistication, of a barren, abstract, valueless process. President Hadley also makes this opposition between insight and the work of reason.<sup>188</sup> Philosophy he defines as a set of working hypotheses which a man adopts, in order to harmonize his prejudices with his experiences; he even takes the tentative position that in time the use of the intellect will be regarded (by all good pragmatists) as a confession of ignorance.

Or this same opposition may be made, with the same objection resulting,—that insight and reason are of vitally different stuff, that one may not make insight of the very nature of reason without being false to a valid distinction—from the side of those who regard prejudice, as indeed basic to thinking, but who take a different view in regard to its intrinsic value. Such a different view Russell takes, when he says: "Insight untested and unsupported is an insufficient guarantee of truth, in spite of the fact that much of the most important truth is first suggested by its means. . . . Instinct, intuition, or insight is what first leads to the beliefs which subsequent reason confirms or confutes; but the confirmation, where it is possible, consists, in the last analysis, of agreement with other beliefs no less instinctive. . . . Reason is a controlling, harmonizing force. . . . Instinct is liable to error, but it is least liable to error in regard to practical matters, where right judgment is a help to survival. In philosophy, it may be wholly mistaken."<sup>187</sup>

The point is, that such views make the life of thought the working over of emotional convictions into abstract terms—a process that is always attended by some necessary loss. But in reality such an account falsifies the actual concrete process. Apart from the emotional factors in thinking, one must yet admit an unmediated intellectual insight. Our attempt to be reasonable is an attempt to get a wider outlook; to see many things at once from more than one side; to have a vision of true relationships and total values. Without this power of seeing unities, coherencies, relationships, totality, we cannot see the woods for the trees—we are incapable of reasoning. Yet it is impossible to explain this power as the mediated result of knowledge, since it is itself essential to all knowledge. One must say that reason is articulated insight into wholes, not fragments; that its true opposite is what makes us narrow in our outlook, the prey of our prejudices, while, on the contrary, our mystical insight is not only the individual's guide to knowledge but that which drives the race from subjective to more and more objective, ways of knowing.

That point is disputed by a further general objection. The point might well be made that in comparing our everyday thinking to the asserted immediate knowing of mysticism, one has been guilty of drawing an irrelevant analogy. This power we have of seeing totality, this objection would say, far from being a mystical insight, is but our own subjective demand that reality be lawful, logical, uniform. Far from showing that we have a direct way of knowing necessary to the processes of abstract knowledge, such a study as we have made, only shows that we cannot know reality directly, but only under the forms of our own subjective demand. I think that this objection refutes itself. It says, "The light of the vision which has been discussed as guide and also goal of all our knowing processes—how can we know that this is an objective light at all? We cannot know what reality is—we can only want it to be so and so, find it impossible to think of it unless it is so and so." But this very objection, in criticizing, in confessing ignorance, is appealing to a wider insight than the mere facts presented justify—it says that it has somehow a vision of absolute truth and all its ideal requirements, by which it tests all theories presented to it. And whether the vision which this point of view presents is complete



or not, matters little—the fact remains that one cannot object to the theory that all thinking involves immediate insight without, by that very objection, establishing the theory. For how otherwise could the objection have had a standard of truth to appeal to, beyond and transcending and making possible, all items of experience, than by an unmediated insight into reality? Pragmatism indeed, would answer—and in doing so it would form the fourth objection to our postulate—that this insight into the whole is mediated knowledge, founded on experience of the success or failure of our ideas, plans of action, expectations. But pragmatism cannot explain this idea of truth which we have except by saying that it is successful and if successful, true. Pragmatism offers always a criterion of truth rather than an insight into the nature of truth itself—which notion becomes, indeed, in its hands, a colossal mistake. Yet how can there be error if there is no truth?

But if we conclude, then, that what mystical knowledge really is, is presupposed in every act of knowing, though we may conclude that mysticism, as far as it can go in the knowledge realm, is a perfectly valid way of knowing—if any knowledge is to be valid at all—have we not, by the very generality of our conclusion, lost sight of any unique and specific cognitive value which mysticism, as the strange and one-sided development of this phase of knowing, may have to offer?

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM OF MYSTICISM AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEM.

The attempt has been made in the course of this paper to formulate, more and more clearly, the problem of mysticism as an epistemological one. The two facts, first, that the mystic experience is always and essentially acclaimed as an illuminative one, in which the subject asserts the achievement of a conscious relation to the most Real, the attainment of an unshakable truth-value, and second, that mysticism, taken on its cognitive side of direct insight, forms a functional and constitutive element of all thinking, is, in fact, in its internal drive, the very life of reflection, makes such a formulation inevitable. For the first fact, that, no matter how much else mysticism is (and mysticism perhaps even less than any other type of human expression is to be forced into a simple formula), it can never be divorced from the assertion of the immediate finding out of what reality *is*, thereby sending into the world some of the most tremendous of human hypotheses, forces the question as to how far mysticism can be said to be rationally grounded, to have objective validity, to really imply anything concerning the Real it claims to have found.

Mysticism is, we have found, an experience; but an experience is not to be lightly thrown out of court as meaningless. Meaning for us, every experience of ours must have, as being essentially our road to that common world of ours and our fellows; the stuff for the interpretation called life; and especially the meaning of an experience like the mystic's must make a difference, in view of the vast ontological certainties he asserts, to life and to philosophy. And the only way in which we can arrive at the meaning of the cognitive claim of mysticism, the only way we can judge this claim is the epistemological way, in the light of its grounds of validity, its truth-value. What claim has mysticism to universality, to validity, we asked, and found that our very notion of validity depended on mystical insight, on a non-symbolic knowing, a wider view than would ever be possible

under the form of idea, into reality. To know and acknowledge the possibility of error, of invalidity, is to know and postulate the nature of absolute truth—a knowledge not ever to be found in the piling up of the details of experience, but a prerequisite to that experience. To be in error consciously, is to be at the heart of truth, so when one asks “Has mysticism, as the assertion of an immediate, non-symbolic way of knowing any grounds of validity,” one must answer, that such insight as it names is the ultimate and true ground, not only of our notion of validity but of any claim to validity. But this consideration forces in its turn the question of the relation of mystical insight to thinking as such, for if mysticism is in some way so fundamental to logical thinking as this statement would seem to imply, both the mystic and the ordinary intellectualist must be wrong in their theory that there are two fundamentally different types of knowing, the one by which we view an object from the outside, continually add the qualifications of different points of view to it, form an increasingly concrete symbol of it which is somehow increasingly true, and the other by means of which we enter into an object, become identified with, know it as we know ourselves, dumbly, inarticulately, but with absolute surety. We have found, on the contrary, that the mystical insight, far from being opposed to ideational thinking, is a functional part of it; and this was our second justification for the formulation of mysticism as an epistemological problem—that without the formulation and solution of such a problem, thinking must remain a half-understood, wholly unphilosophical concept incapable of consistent statement, and in so remaining, our concept of reality itself would have to remain as vague, as self-contradictory, as the concept of thinking. For reality for us is, and must be, reality as constituted by thought; and the conditions of thought are the conditions of reality. One must leave aside wholly the question whether reality in itself can be said to be constituted by thought, one must even leave aside the question as to whether such words have any meaning, and must rest in the fact that reality is reality for us, and as such must be constituted by our way of thinking it.

This consideration brings us to the real subject of this chapter, which is, “What significance, what meaning for an interpretation of life, has the fact that mysticism is a problem in the theory of thought?” Epistemology and ontology cannot be finally

separated; the value of any problem-setting in epistemology is not a value in itself, as if epistemology were a non-philosophical, independent science, but a value which lies wholly in the light it may shed on the nature of reality. Not for the idle curiosity of pulling our own minds to pieces do we ask and try to answer questions about the conditions of thought, but because we feel that only thus can we lay a sure basis for a true and valuable interpretation of life. In the last analysis, only the fact that an epistemological setting of the problem of mysticism is, in this respect, more widely or fundamentally meaningful than the setting of the problem in other contexts, can justify wholly an epistemological formulation of the problem.

What meaning, then, has the epistemological problem-setting of mysticism? The question is only another and more specific way of asking what meaning mysticism has—since mysticism must be met as an epistemological problem.

It means, in the first place, that thought must have some direct, non-symbolic feature, an instant knowing of the Whole. But idea is and must be, always symbolic. Not of course, in the sense of standing for a reality, independent of thought, which is its prototype, but because it epitomizes and holds fast some process of the mind, some insight, to which we can return, or which we can share with another. The idea, by virtue of its very permanence and universality, becomes symbolic, a reference to something other than itself. But the fact that our thinking is not the formation of an aggregate of such ideas, that the ideas themselves are only usable symbols for certain aspects of the living thought-process, brings with it the implication that reality is not to be dissolved in idea—that a part of it must remain forever obstinate to idea, forever incompressible into the forms of logic. Reality for us is constituted by thought; but thought is and must be, by its very nature, not wholly symbolic, ideational—therefore reality cannot be wholly impressed under any category, not even that of Thought, or the Logical. Philosophy is sometimes looked upon as the search for the highest category of all; and when it is so considered, the widest category, the highest and most comprehensive point of view which science no less than empirical consciousness presupposes, though ignoring it in all their judgments, under which all reality (so this search assumes) can be subsumed, is found to be that of consciousness as such. Now per-

haps consciousness is the widest category, but not by applying it as a term to the ultimate reality has reality been categorized. Idealism seems logically impregnable; but idealism, as Prof. Hocking has pointed out, leaves unreconciled two ultimate and opposed factors of experience, and so fails in its task as a philosophy,—the task, that is, of rationalizing the world. These two facts of experience are first, the one which idealism takes up and develops and rests all its great ontological assumptions on, namely that reality for us is and can only be, reality as constituted by thought; but the second fact is just as inescapable, just as uncontroversial, on logical as well as on empirical grounds. It is, that what we mean by reality is “not only that to which the mind consents, but that which demands the consent of the mind.” Ignoring this, the idealist gives us a Reality without the conditions of reality; because reality is constituted by our thought, he makes it somehow dependent upon our thinking, or else a mere hypostatization of the forms of our thought. But these forms of thought are as untrue to actual thinking as they are to reality itself. Reality must be somehow as sharp, as surprising, as literal as the present moment. L. P. Jacks in *The Yale Review*, writing of the conception of reality in the light of the present European war, says, “The Real Thing presents itself not as an object to be studied but as a command to be obeyed. We are touching the imperative side of reality. Hitherto we have treated reality as mainly interesting and in doing so it would seem that we have done some injustice to the innermost nature of the Real. . . . We are beginning to suspect that the world contains elements of which we had not taken account, and that other elements of which we did take account have a narrower range of operations than we had been used to assign to them. What if, after all, something in the world has gone altogether wrong?”<sup>189</sup>—Here is the final obstinacy of the fact, of the particular, the alogical, intruding itself on a large scale, and reminding us that the categorizing of reality, far from exhausting it, even, if taken as complete, falsifies it. But if thought in its inmost nature, just is not a purely categorizing activity, but an immediate and non-symbolic insight, then neither is reality stripped of its coerciveness and individuality, its substantiality, as it is for idealism, nor are we forced to postulate an impossible rapport between thought and reality, as does realism.

For this consequence of our problem-setting is not wholly negative. Though we can never transform reality wholly into idea, our analysis of thinking has shown that, in order that thinking may be possible, we must in thinking be already beyond the idea-relation, beyond the subject-object distinction. Just because reality is always greater than and beyond idea, we can know absolute truth, as we, creatures of time, could not, were our knowledge of the truth to depend on the completeness of our working over of reality into idea. For what remains in reality obstinate to idea is not thereby foreign to it, invalidating it. This is the sum and substance of the meaning of mysticism, of our subject-knowing, and the triumphant ground of the possibility of any knowledge. We know immediately what reality is, else we could not know any slightest part of it in idea—and because we know the goal of our search, true knowledge is possible. This is the message of the mystic insight.

These two facts—that reality can never be wholly permeable to idea, and yet that we do know reality—contain the meaning of the old tenacious idea of reality, as Substance. As historically formulated Substance became merely a supposed-to-be embracing category, and was none too wide at that. But some such idea is necessary,—to coherent theories of knowledge, which do not turn thought into an eternal process of relation in vacuo, with nothing to relate; to a metaphysics which is an interpretation of experience and not a repudiation of it; to a psychology that hopes to grapple with the genuinely psychological problems. The abiding meaning of the substance idea is that Reality is something beyond category, beyond predication, a Subject. That this is historically true, is seen in tracing the roots of the substance concept, which go back to Aristotle's list of the predicables. To Aristotle, the fact that certain classes of concepts could be predicated, implied a subject which could not be predicated—and that not for grammatical reasons, but to take account of the alogical feature of reality, its essential individuality, its literalness. That this must always remain and be reckoned with, not merely as an empirical fact, but as an implication of thinking itself, this paper has tried to show.

Yet in finding the mystic motive to be the life-element of thinking, we have not thereby identified thinking and the mystical achievement. They are to be sharply held apart, that the unique

contribution of each may be had. The distinction is to be seen in just this attitude toward Reality, the Subject. Thinking as such—though not apart from the mystical insight—always is concerned with the endless, though triumphantly possible, task of synthesizing parts into larger and larger coherent wholes, in the light of the ultimate whole. The focus of its attention is always on a part, or a group of parts; it reaches an explicit assurance of the whole only through the low doorway of one of the parts, and this assurance is less than a certainty, always only a postulate, a will to believe. The mystical achievement, on the other hand, is the focusing of attention on the whole, so that for the mystic, with his eyes blinded by the full sunlight, the parts are rather dimmed than made to glow by the light of the vision of the whole. Nevertheless, the mystic not only finds God as an implication of the knowing process, but knows him immediately and that in a way which we must acknowledge to be universal, understandable, vastly significant. Therefore one may build on this examination of how the mystic knows, an examination of what he knows, believing that results for truth will be yielded.

## NOTES.

### CHAPTER I.

1. Cf. Royce, *The World and the Individual*, vol. I, p. 144. Mysticism is "essentially characterized by the meaning it gives to the ontological predicate. . . . For the mystic, according to the genuinely historical account of philosophical mysticism, to be real means to be in such wise immediate, that, in the presence of this immediacy . . . all thoughts and ideas, are quenched."

Rufus M. Jones, in an article on *Mysticism in Present Day Religion*, in the *Harvard Theological Review* for April, 1915, says on p. 162: "The Absolute, by a process of elimination, seemed best conceived of as a 'Nameless Nothing,' 'an undifferentiated One,' an 'abysmal Dark,' the 'silent wilderness of the Godhead where no one is at home.' All Christian mysticism that came under the influence of Neo-platonism,—and this includes pretty much the whole of Roman Catholic mysticism from St. Augustine to Madame Guyon—is profoundly marked by this characterless Absolute at the center—a God who is everything that finite things are not—and is consequently committed to a *via negativa* as the only way up to him."

Yet not only Christian, but also Indian, mysticism, in so far as it becomes speculative, becomes a doctrine of the abstract universal, whether or not this expresses its purpose and meaning.

Cf. *The Upanishads*, Max Müller's translation, esp. vol. II, pp. 17, 334. The "Neti, Neti" of Indian mysticism expresses as clearly as any Christian mystical formulation of the Godhead, the necessity the mystic is under when he becomes speculative, to translate his message into a doctrine of the abstract universal.

2. Royce: *The World and the Individual*, vol. I, pp. 191-2.



## CHAPTER II.

3. Quoted by Royce, *ib.*
4. Delacroix: *Études d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme.*
5. de Montmorand: *Les mystiques en dehors de l'extase*, Revue Philosophique, vol. 58, 1904, p. 102 ff.  
*Ascétisme et mysticisme.* Rev. Phil. vol. 57, 1903, p. 242 ff.  
*L'érotomanie des mystiques chrétiens*, Rev. Philos. vol. 56, 1903, p. 382 ff.  
*Les états mystiques*, Rev. Philos. vol. 60, 1905, p. 1 ff.
6. Boutroux: *The Psychology of Mysticism*, International Journal of Ethics, 1907-8.
7. Leuba: *Les tendances fondamentales des mystiques chrétiens.* Revue Philosophique, vol. 54, 1902, p. 1 ff., and p. 441 ff.  
*On the Psychology of a Group of Christian Mystics.* Mind, vol. 14, 1905, p. 15 ff.
8. Picavet: *Essai de classification des mystiques.* Revue Philosophique, vol. 74, 1912, p. 1 ff.
9. Goix: *La psychologie du jeûne mystique.* Revue de Philosophie XIV, 1909, p. 131 f., 288 f.
10. Probst-Biraben: *L'extase dans la mystique musulmane.* Rev. Phil. vol. 62, 1906, p. 490 ff.  
*Contribution du Sufisme à l'étude du mysticisme universel.* Rev. Phil. vol. 61, 1906, p. 380 ff.
11. Godferneaux: *La psychologie du mysticisme*, Rev. Phil. vol. 55, 1902.
12. Cf. Probst-Biraben: *Mystique, science et magie.* Rev. Philos. vol. 66, 1908, p. 173. "Au fond" mysticism and magic are identified.  
 Cf. also Garnett, *Mysticism and Magic in Turkey.*
13. Cf. Janet, *Une Extatique*, Lecture at the International Institute for Psychology, 25 May, 1901. Mysticism is + "determined by a mental incapacity."  
 Cf. Godferneaux: *La psychologie du mysticisme* (See above.) Mysticism is a hypertension "de l'énergie vitale."

Cf. Murisier: *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*.

Cf. Binet-Sauglé: *Les varieties du type devout*, in *Revue de l'hypnotisme* XIV, p. 161 ff.

Cf. in general on this point, Hocking, *Mysticism as seen through its Psychology*, in *Mind*, vol. 21, 1912, p. 38 footnote.

14. Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 45. Nordau says further, (We see) "in Mysticism a principal character of degeneration—there is scarcely a trace of degeneration in which it does not appear."
15. Cousin: *Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie moderne*, ch. 2.
16. Jundt: *Pantheisme populaire du 16e siècle*, p. 205.
17. Lea: *Religious History of Spain*, pp. 213-215.
18. Legrain: *Du Délire chez les dégénérés*, p. 61. "Mystical thoughts are to be laid to the account of the insanity of the degenerate. There are two states in which they are observed—in epilepsy and in hysterical delirium."
19. Cf. de Montmorand: *Ascétisme et mysticisme*. (See above.)
20. Hocking: *Mysticism as seen through its Psy.* p. 61. (See above.)
21. Coe: *Sources of the Mystical Revelation*.  
Hibbert Journal, January, 1908.
22. With the introduction of the last two factors, Coe consciously enlarges his problem, for he says "All religion is the making real to ourselves of something not perceived,"—and here arises, according to his doctrine, the problem of a racial will.
23. Leuba: *Les tendances fondamentales des mystiques chrétiens*. (See above.)
24. For example Schroeder, in an article on *Die gekreuzigte Heilige von Wildisbuch*, in the *Zentralblatt für psychologische Analyse und Psychotherapie*, vol. 9/10, July 1914, p. 471, says in conclusion after analysis: "Die wirkliche treibende Kraft jedoch, in dieser ganzen Ausführung war die nur schwach oder halb in Bewusstsein getretene Begierde nach erotischem Reiz.—Die direkte Quelle des anscheinend Transzendentalen—der Religion—war der abnorm Geschlechts-drang. Es ist in

diesem Falle ganz klar, dass die eigene Natur der Religion, wie sie sich in den über-natürlichen Kräften äusserte, bloss über-normaler Sensualismus, vergeistigter, transzendentalisierter vergötterter Psychoerotismus war . . . (Und) dieser Fall ist nur einer von vielen eine ähnliche Deutung zulassenden."

25. de Montmorand, *L'érotomanie des mystiques chrétiens*. (See above.)

26. Hocking, *Mys. as seen through its Psy.* p. 59-60.

27. Hocking, *ib.* pp. 48 ff.

28. Hocking, *ib.* p. 51.

29. de Montmorand: *Ascétisme et mysticisme*. (See above.)

30. Delacroix: *Etude d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme*. (See above.)

31. Delacroix, *ibid.*—p. 415.

32. de Montmorand: *Ascétisme et mys.*, esp. p. 261, 262.

33. Hocking: *Mys. as seen through its Psy.* p. 54 ff.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 57-60.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

36. Cf. Boutroux: *The Psychology of Mysticism*, p. 182.

37. Delacroix: *Etude d'histoire et de psy. du mys.* p. 415 ff.

38. Boutroux: *The Psychology of Mysticism*, p. 183-187.

39. Nordau: *Degeneration*, p. 262, 268.

40. Hocking: *Mys. as seen through its Psy.*

41. Goix: *La psychologie du jeûne mystique*, p. 295, 305 et al.

42. Hocking, *ibid.*, p. 61.

43. Ribot: *Psychologie de l'attention*, ch. 3.

44. Goix, *ibid.*

45. Picavet: *Essai de classif. des mystiques* in *Rev. Phil.* vol. 74, 1912, p. 1. Of mysticism the "ideal est perfection sans forme complète en Dieu, aussi élevée que possible dans l'homme."

46. Récéjac: *Essay on the Bases of the Mys. Knowledge*.

Cf. "Mys. is the attempt to draw near to the absolute in moral union," p. 64.

47. Récéjac, *ibid.*, p. 277, 278, 258.

48. Paulsen: *System of Ethics*, p. 109. For instance, philosophy on a mystic basis, esp. Plotinus, becomes a

- “study of death.” The indictment is brought against mediaeval Christianity in general.
49. Nash: *Ethics and Revelation*, pp. 180-184. “Ethics (on the mys. basis) becomes self-destructive.”
  50. DeWulf, *History of Mediaeval Philosophy*, p. 213.
  51. See Garbe, *Buddhist Influence in the Gospels*, Monist, Oct. 1914. Garbe relates from the Mâha-parinibbâna-sutta, Buddha’s temptation to commit suicide after the enlightenment—a temptation presented in the words “May the exalted one, oh Sire, enter now into Nirvâna, may the perfect one now be pleased to expire.” Buddha felt that he could not, that he must obtain monks and disciples enough to assure the continuance of the way, of his doctrine (and that in spite of his doctrine).
  52. Eckhart, *Schriften und Predigten*.  
Also p. 176—“Wäre ich nicht, so wäre auch Gott nicht.”
  53. Tauler, from *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter*, Dörffling and Francke, vol. II, 324.
  54. Peabody, *Mysticism and Modern Life*, Harvard Theological Review, Oct. 1914.
  55. Underhill, *The Mystic Way*, 1913, p. 45 ff.
  56. See Preger, *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik*, p. 207 ff.  
Also appendix, p. 461 ff., Sätze der Brüder des freien Geistes um die Mitte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts.
  57. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 97.
  58. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 426.
  59. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 350.
  60. Hocking, *Mys. as seen through its Psy.* p. 45.
  61. See the whole discussion of mysticism, and the introduction to the *Meaning of God in Human Experience*.
  62. See Inge, *Mysticism and Institutionalism*, in Hibbert Journal, July 1914. See also Delacroix, *Etude d’histoire, etc.*, p. 7.
  63. Inge, *Mys. and Instit.*
  64. Hocking, *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 350.
  65. Cf. Holmes, *Life and Correspondence of Mozart*, p. 317 ff. “When or how my ideas come, I know not, nor can I force them. Those that please me I retain in my

memory, and am accustomed to hum them to myself. If I continue in this way it soon occurs to me how I can turn this or that morsel to account. . . . All this fires my soul, the subject enlarges itself, and the *whole* although it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it like a fine picture or statue. Nor do I hear in my imagery the parts *successively*, but all at once. What a delight this is, I cannot express." Quoted from Mozart.

Or cf. *Kingsley, Life*, vol. I, p. 53 ff. "When I walk the fields I am oppressed now and then with an innate feeling that everything I see has a meaning if I could but express it. And this feeling of being surrounded with truths I cannot understand amounts to inexpressible awe sometimes. Have you not felt at times that your real soul was imperceptible to your mental vision, except at a few hallowed moments? That in everyday life, the mind, looking at itself, sees only the brute intellect grinding and working, not the divine particle which is life and immortality?"

Cf. also James, *Varieties of Religious Exper.* pp. 383-396.

66. Cf. Dwelshauvers, *Du sentiment religieux dans ses rapports avec l'art*, in *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale*, July, 1914.
67. Russell, *Scientific Method in Philosophy*, pp. 20, 21.

### CHAPTER III.

68. James, Chapter II, *Varieties of Relig. Exper.*, p. 380-382.
69. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1914.
70. Hinton, quoted in Inge, *Chr. Mys.*, p. 339.

Cf. Behn, *Über das religiöse Genie*, in *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, 1914, p. 53. "Die Mystiker behaupten eine über-wissenschaftliche Einsicht. In der Wissenschaft gibt es kein Innwerden des Wirklichen, kein Zusammenfallen von Erlebnis und Erkenntnis der Dinge. Die Mystik fesselt uns in der Hauptsache da, wo sie dies Innwerden behaupten muss, wo ihre Einsicht die Erkenntnis der Dinge bereichert, wo sie reine Mystik ist."

71. Hocking: *Meaning of God*, etc., p. 350.
72. Pfeleiderer, quoted in Inge. *Chr. Mys.*, p. 339.
73. Ribot: *La psychologie de l'attention*, ch. 3.
74. *Life of the Blessed Henry Suso*, by Himself, translated by T. F. Knox, pp. 56-80.
75. *Upanishads*, translated by Max Müller, vol. II, 17, 334.  
See also Royce, *World and the Individual*, pp. 156-175.
76. Cf. *esp. Republic*, 7th Book, and Phaedrus. Having shown (in the Theatetus) the impossibility of defining knowledge as immediate possession, Plato demonstrates the possibility and necessity of another order of immediacy in which the mind's knowledge is not acquired experience, but which simply *is*, the life and function of intelligence. Jones says on this point (*Mysticism in Present Day Religion*, p. 164): "This great intellectual movement insisted that that which is, τὸ ὄν, is one, permanent, immutable, and free from all becoming. Mind in order to know Reality must itself be that Reality, and therefore if we human beings can rise from our world of shadows, form our cave-dwelling, and be that which *Is*, it is because there is something in the soul unsundered from that Reality which it seeks."
77. Plotinus, in Bakewell's *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 357-360, 363-368, Enneads V 9 § 11, VI 9 § 1 *esp.*
78. St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 6.
79. Dionysius, *Mystica Theologica*, ch. 1.
80. See Inge, *Light, Life and Love*, p. 96.
81. Madame Guyon, *Spiritual Torrents*, p. 62.
82. Goethe, quoted in Inge, *Chr. Mysticism*, p. 338.
83. Quoted in Hocking, *Mys. as seen through its Psy.*, p. 44.
84. See Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 179.  
Suso calls himself always "Servitor of the Divine Wisdom."
85. See Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 219-220.
86. Eckhart: *Schriften and Predigten*.
87. Cf. Hocking (though he is not supporting precisely this point) *The Meaning of God*, etc., p. 350.

88. Cf. Royce, *Studies in Good and Evil*, pp. 271-273, from whom I have taken the idea of this account of the mystic's logic.

#### CHAPTER IV.

89. Denifle, *Meister Eckhart's Lateinische Schriften*, in *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, vol. II, p. 426.
90. See Windelband, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 249.
91. Denifle, *Meister E's. lateinische Schr.* p. 436.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 454.
93. Eckhart, *Schriften u. Predigten*, vol. I, pp. 84.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
95. *Ibid.* pp. 148-150, 161-162, 178, 179.  
 In some of these places, Eckhart contradicts accepted authorities, as for instance on p. 145, where he says that St. Paul did not speak certain words under inspiration, that his (Eckhart's) truth is higher.
96. *Ib.*, pp. 188 and 189.
97. *Ib.*, p. 190.
98. *Ib.*, p. 193.
99. *Ib.*, p. 177.
100. *Ib.*, p. 148.
101. *Ib.*, p. 147.
102. *Ib.*, 105.
103. Eckhart, *Schr. u. Predigten*, vol. II, pp. 203, 204.
104. Eckhart, *Schr. u. Predigten*, vol. I., pp. 179.  
 Quoted from Dionysius by Meister Eckhart: "Wollt ihr Gott aber in Wahrheit erkennen, so musst ihr einsehen, dass er 'etwas Unbekanntes' ist! Dionysius hat das gesagt."
105. Eckhart, *Schr. u. Predigten*, vol. II, p. 207.
106. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 102.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
108. *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 111.
109. *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 165, 166.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 165. "Sage ich, 'Gott ist gut,' so ist das nicht wahr —ich bin gut, Gott ist nicht gut. Ich bin besser als Gott."

Or, p. 158. "(Ein heidnischer Meister sagt"—but quoted as true) "indem sie Gott liebt, nehme die Seele ihn unter der Hülle der Güte—Die Vernunft, aber, zieht Gott diese Hülle ab, und nimmt den blossen Gott."

Or, p. 156. "In Gott ist weder Gutes noch Besseres, noch das Beste! Wer behauptet, Gott sei gut, der täte ihn ebenso unrecht, als wer die Sonne schwarz nännte."

111. Ibid, p. 168.

112. Cf. Ibid, p. 172. "Darum bitten wir Gott, dass wir uns Gott ledig machen—dass wir die Wahrheit greifen, und machen Gebrauch von unserer Ewigkeit."

Or again, p. 160. "Die eigentliche Bezeichnung, die man Gott beilegen kann, ist Wort und Wahrheit."

113. Ibid, pp. 64, 65.

114. Ibid, p. 64.

115. Ibid, p. 65.

116. Ibid, p. 47.

117. Ibid, p. 10.

118. Ibid, p. 11.

119. Ibid, vol. I, p. 19.

120. Ibid, vol. II, p. 202.

121. Ibid, vol. I, p. 193.

122. Ibid, vol. I, p. 193.

123. Ibid, vol. I, p. 63.

124. Ibid, vol. I, p. 66.

125. Ibid, vol. I, p. 98.

126. Ibid, vol. II, p. 207.

127. Ibid, vol. II, p. 25.

128. Ibid, vol. I, pp. 124-5.

129. Ibid, vol. I, p. 134.

131. Denifle, *Meister E's lat. Schriften*, p. 423.

132. Denifle, *Meister E's lat. Schriften*, p. 450.

133. Denifle, *Meister E's lat. Schriften*, pp. 417 ff.

Cf. also Karl Pearson, *Meister Eckhart the Mystic*, in *Mind*, 1886, p. 20 ff.

Cf. also Royce, *Meister Eckhart* in *Studies in Good and Evil*, p. 261-2.

134. Cf. Büttner's introduction to his edition of *Meister Eckhart's Schriften u. Predigten*, p. 42 ff.

135. Eckhart, *Schr. u. Predigten*, vol. I, p. 55.



136. Ibid, vol. I, p. 133, p. 156, 147, ("Aber mein innerer Mensch schmeckt sie nicht als Kreaturen, sondern als Gabe Gottes") ("Alle Kreaturen haben ein Eilen hin zu ihrer höchsten Vollkommenheit.") p. 148, p. 161. "Wer die Kreaturen recht erkennt, der braucht nicht länger über die Predigt nachzudenken. Alle Dinge sind voll Gottes."
137. Ibid, vol. I, p. 96.
138. Ibid, vol. I, p. 71.

## CHAPTER V.

139. Eckhart, *Schriften und Predigten*, vol. I.
140. Ibid, p. 103.
141. Ibid, p. 98.
142. Ibid, p. 84.
143. Ibid, p. 149.
144. Ibid, p. 149.
145. Cf. Hobhouse, *Theory of Knowledge*.
- 145a. I have found a corroboration of this point in Overstreet, *The Basal Principle of Truth Evaluation*, in University of California Publications, vol. I, p. 236. He says after discussion of the inconceivability test, etc., "The truth of any content whatever is found in the ability of that content to maintain itself completely. What is annulled is false." Validity is not a relative matter.
146. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*.
147. Cf. Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, pp. 384-431.

## CHAPTER VI.

148. Cf. Stöckl, *Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, vol. I, p. 293. Bernard is called "Schöpfer der mittelalterlichen Mystik."
149. Stöckl, *ibid*, vol. II, p. 880.
150. Engelhardt, *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen*, p. 36.
151. Stöckl, *ib.*, vol. I, p. 293-295.
152. Ibid, vol. I, p. 300. Quoted from *De diligendo Deo*. cl, 1.
153. Ibid, vol. I, p. 300.

154. Ibid, vol. I, p. 301.  
 155. Ibid, vol. I, p. 301.  
 156. Stöckl, pp. 302, 300. Stöckl speaks of Bernard's aim as "tiefere Erkenntnis der Wahrheit" p. 302.  
 157. Quoted by Ratisbonne, *Histoire de St. Bernard et de son siècle*, p. 103.  
 158. Ratisbonne, ib., p. 84.  
 159. Quoted from St. Bernard by Stöckl, *Geschichte der Philos. des Mittelalters*, vol. I, p. 302, from *De consideratio* l. 2, C. 2.  
 160. Quoted from St. Bernard, *de Consid.* l. 2, C. 2, by Stöckl, ibid, p. 302.  
 161. Quoted from St. Bernard, *de Consid.* l. V, C. 1, by Ratisbonne, ibid, vol. II, p. 77.  
 162. Quoted from St. Bernard, *de Consid.* l. V, by Ratisbonne, ibid, p. 84.  
 163. Quoted from St. Bernard, *de Consid.*, l. IV, C. 11, by Ratisbonne, ibid, p. 73.  
 164. Cf. Engelhardt, *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen*, p. 44.  
 165. Cf. Engelhardt, ibid, p. 269.  
 166. Cf. Engelhardt, ibid, p. 45 ff.  
 167. Cf. Engelhardt, ibid, pp. 3-6.  
 168. Cf. Engelhardt, ibid, p. 121.  
 169. Bonaventura, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, translated by Davidson, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. XXI, 1887, p. 287.  
 170. Bonaventura, ibid, p. 323.  
     Cf. also p. 315.  
 171. Bonaventura, ibid, p. 323.  
 172. Bonaventura, ibid, p. 324.

## CHAPTER VII.

173. Compare the *Theatetus*.  
 174. Dewey, *How We Think*, p. 2.  
 175. Sidgwick, *Application of Logic*, pp. 64-71, 113-133.  
 176. Sidgwick, ibid, pp. 141, 146, 281 ff.  
 177. Peirce, quoted by Royce in *The Problem of Christianity*, vol. II, p. 395.

See also Peirce, *A Neglected Argument for the Existence of God*, Hibbert Journal, 1908.

178. Cf. Russell, *Scientific Method in Philosophy*, p. 56. Russell says (with proof) "General truths cannot be inferred from particular truths alone—they are either self-evident or inferred from general premises. But all empirical evidence is of particular truths. Hence, if there is any knowledge of general truths at all, there must be some knowledge which is independent of empirical evidence, does not depend on the data of sense."
179. Russell and Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica*, vol. I, p. 9.
180. Russell and Whitehead, *ibid.* p. 9.
181. See, for this whole point, Adams, *The Mind's Knowledge of Reality*, Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Method, Feb. 1913, p. 37.
182. Russell, *The Ethics of War*, in International Journal for Ethics, Jan. 1914.
183. Delacroix, Introduction to *Étude d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme*, p. 7.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

184. Dewey, *How We Think*, p. 2.
185. James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 78-82, 94-96.
186. Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice*, pp. 164-179.
187. Russell, *Scientific Method in Philosophy*, pp. 21-23.
188. Hadley, *Some Influences in Modern Philosophic Thought*, pp. 73, 113.

#### CHAPTER IX.

189. Jacks, *England's Experience with the Real Thing*, in The Yale Review, April 1915.

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