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43. Miguel de Unamuno

The Tragic Sense of Life

- *"Man is said to be a reasoning animal. I do not know why he has not been defined as an affective or feeling animal. Perhaps that which differentiates him from other animals is feeling rather than reason. More often I have seen a cat reason than laugh or weep. Perhaps it weeps or laughs inwardly—but then perhaps, also inwardly, the crab resolves equations of the second degree." (Hume would agree with this. Direct experience of existence is what is needed, not a futile reasoning through. Philosophy is to envision the consequences of views, not experience or tell you which view is 'right')*
- *"A human soul is worth all the universe, someone—I know not whom—has said and said magnificently. A human soul, mind you ! Not a human life. Not this life. And it happens that the less a man believes in the soul—that is to say in his conscious immortality, personal and concrete—the more he will exaggerate the worth of this poor transitory life."*
- *"If consciousness is, as some inhuman thinker has said, nothing more than a flash of light between two eternities of darkness, then there is nothing more execrable than existence." (Ha!)*
- *"Some may espy a fundamental contradiction in every thing that I am saying, now expressing a longing for unending life, now affirming that this earthly life does not possess the value that is given to it. Contradiction? To be sure! The contradiction of my heart that says Yes and of my head that says No ! Of course there is contradiction. Who does not recollect those words of the Gospel, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief"? Contradiction! Of course! Since we only live in and by contradictions, since life is tragedy and the tragedy is perpetual struggle, without victory or the hope of victory, life is contradiction."*
- *"If a philosopher is not a man, he is anything but a philosopher; he is above all a pedant, and a pedant is a caricature of a man. The cultivation of any branch of science—of chemistry, of physics, of geometry, of philology—may be a work of differentiated specialization, and even so only within very narrow limits and restrictions; but philosophy, like poetry, is a work of integration and synthesis, or else it is merely pseudo-philosophical erudition."*
- *"All knowledge has an ultimate object. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is, say what you will, nothing but a dismal begging of the question...But just as a scientific fact has its finality in the rest of knowledge, so the philosophy that we would make our own has also its extrinsic object—it refers to our whole destiny, to our attitude in face of life and the universe. And the most tragic problem of philosophy is to reconcile intellectual necessities with the necessities of the heart and the will. For it is on this rock that*

every philosophy that pretends to resolve the eternal and tragic contradiction, the basis of our existence, breaks to pieces. But do all men face this contradiction squarely?"

- *"Little can be hoped from a ruler, for example, who has not at some time or other been preoccupied, even if only confusedly, with the first beginning and the ultimate end of all things, and above all of man, with the " why " of his origin and the "wherefore" of his destiny. And this supreme preoccupation cannot be purely rational, it must involve the heart. It is not enough to think about our destiny: it must be felt."* (Direct experience, entheogens, Pascal's disdain for anyone who doesn't recognize ultimate ends nor the importance of them)

- *"All this talk of a man surviving in his children, or in his works, or in the universal consciousness, is but vague verbiage which satisfies only those who suffer from affective stupidity, and who, for the rest, may be persons of a certain cerebral distinction. For it is possible to possess great talent, or what we call great talent, and yet to be stupid as regards the feelings and even morally imbecile."* (so many people say this, cioran, vivekananda, etc. You can be a 'smart person' within the world, yet be a spiritual dunce, this is why most people do not comprehend the 'moral argument', regardless of the arguments validity)

- *"These clever-witted, effectively stupid persons are won't to say that it is useless to seek to delve in the unknowable or to kick against the pricks. It is as if one should say to a man whose leg has had to be amputated that it does not help him at all to think about it. And we all lack something; only some of us feel the lack and others do not. Or they pretend not to feel the lack, and then they are hypocrites."* (Vivekananda, Tolstoy, Participation, Simple Salvation)

- *"And I am convinced that we should solve many things if we all went out into the streets and uncovered our griefs, which perhaps would prove to be but one sole common grief, and joined together in beweeeping them and crying aloud to the heavens and calling upon God."*

- *"Consciousness is a disease."*

- *"Do you want another version of our origin ? Very well then. According to this account, man is, strictly speaking, merely a species of gorilla, orang-outang, chimpanzee, or the like, more or less hydrocephalous. Once on a time an anthropoid monkey had a diseased offspring—diseased from the strictly animal or zoological point of view, really diseased; and this disease, although a source of weakness, resulted in a positive gain in the struggle for survival."* (naturalism)

- *"The gorilla, the chimpanzee, the orang-outang, and their kind, must look upon man as a feeble and infirm animal, whose strange custom it is to store up his dead. Wherefore?"* (Ha!)

- *"Man has debated at length and will continue to debate at length—the world having been assigned as a theatre for his debates—concerning the origin of knowledge; but, apart from the question as to what the real truth about this origin may be, which we will leave until later, it is a certainly ascertained fact that in the apparential order of things, in the life of beings who are endowed with a certain more or less cloudy faculty of knowing and perceiving, or who at any rate appear to act as if they were so endowed, knowledge is exhibited to us as bound up with the necessity of living and of procuring the wherewithal to maintain life."* (Purely pragmatic, naturalistic concerns, a total spectacle of ego and 'showing off' ones 'intelligence, a complete and utter ignorance, whether intentional or not, of ultimate things. Atheist/theist debates of today, seemingly most academics of today)

- *"...the philosopher is a man before he is a philosopher, he must needs live before he can philosophize, and, in fact, he philosophizes in order to live. And usually he philosophizes either in order to resign himself to life, or to seek some finality in it, or to distract himself and forget his griefs, or for pastime and amusement."* (fancy crosswords for most phillosophers, e.g. the arguments for god's existence and the

'knowing' the arguments of particular position holding to a particular concept, e.g. abstract objects or whether mathematics is invented or discovered)

- "Science exists only in personal consciousness and thanks to it; astronomy, mathematics, have no other reality than that which they possess as knowledge in the minds of those who study and cultivate them.

And if some day all personal consciousness must come to an end on the earth; if some day the human spirit must return to the nothingness—that is to say, to the absolute unconsciousness—from whence it sprang; and *if there shall no more be any spirit that can avail itself of all our accumulated knowledge—then to what end is this knowledge?*" (why pursue knowledge 'for itself' if all knowledge ends in nothingness?)

- "For this is usually the reason why men philosophize- in order to convince themselves, even though they fail in the attempt."

- "Whence do I come and whence comes the world in which and by which I live? Whither do I go and whither goes everything that environs me? What does it all mean ? Such are the questions that man asks as soon as he frees himself from the brutalizing necessity of labouring for his material sustenance." (Aristotle said a society that is not ready for leisure will perish. If one is not ready for the questions of existence, then one will go mad)

- "In each moment of our life we entertain some purpose, and to this purpose the synergy of our actions is directed. Notwithstanding the next moment we may change our purpose." (Heideggerian)

- *"If you look at the universe as closely and as inwardly as you are able to look—that is to say, if you look within yourself; if you not only contemplate but feel all things in your own consciousness, upon which all things have traced their painful impression—you will arrive at the abyss of the tedium, not merely of life, but of something more: at the tedium of existence, at the bottomless pit of the vanity of vanities. And thus you will come to pity all things; you will arrive at universal love."* ('Universal Love, God, Otherness, Nirvana, 'objectivity' as a result of Nihilism, etc. Heidegger says in 'anxiety' the world loses all significance' in 68B)

- "For all consciousness is consciousness of death and of suffering." (well, yes, in a 'symbolic' way, Heidegger's everydayness/the nothings of the world, the 'they' cannot be dismissed as an 'overwhelming' part of human existence)

- "We personalize the All in order to save ourselves from Nothingness; and the only mystery really mysterious is the mystery of suffering. Suffering is the path of consciousness, and by it living beings arrive at the possession of self-consciousness."

- *"And how do we know that we exist if we do not suffer, little or much? How can we turn upon ourselves, acquire reflective consciousness, save by suffering? When we enjoy ourselves we forget ourselves, forget that we exist; we pass over into another, an alien being, we alienate ourselves. And we become centred in ourselves again, we return to ourselves, only by suffering."* (Kierkegaard, Seraphim Rose, Cioran, Vivekananda, etc. We forget our True selves when we are caught up in the world, this is frustrating, divided-self, double-mindedness, Heidegger says this 38. concerning 'alienation')

- *"Although this meditation upon mortality may soon induce in us a sense of anguish, it fortifies us in the end. Retire, reader, into yourself and imagine a slow dissolution of yourself—the light dimming about you—all things becoming dumb and soundless, enveloping you in silence—the objects that you handle crumbling away between your hands—the ground slipping from under your feet—your very memory vanishing as if in a swoon —everything melting away from you into nothingness and you yourself also melting away—the very consciousness of nothingness, merely as the phantom harbourage of a shadow, not even remaining to you. I have heard it related of a poor harvester who died in a hospital bed, that when the priest went to anoint his hands with the oil of*

extreme unction, he refused to open his right hand, which clutched a few dirty coins, not considering that very soon neither his hand nor he himself would be his own any more. And so we close and clench, not our hand, but our heart, seeking to clutch the world in it. *A friend confessed to me that, foreseeing while in the full vigour of physical health the near approach of a violent death, he proposed to concentrate his life and spend the few days which he calculated still remained to him in writing a book. Vanity of vanities!*" (Ha! This and a Cioran quote could intro the book, maybe preface)

- *"If we all die utterly, wherefore does everything exist? Wherefore?"*

- *"Why do I wish to know whence I come and whither I go, whence comes and whither goes everything that environs me, and what is the meaning of it all? For I do not wish to die utterly, and I wish to know whether I am to die or not definitely. If I do not die, what is my destiny? and if I die, then nothing has any meaning for me. And there are three solutions: (a) I know that I shall die utterly, and then irremediable despair, or (b) I know that I shall not die utterly, and then resignation, or (c) I cannot know either one or the other, and then resignation in despair or despair in resignation, a desperate resignation or a resigned despair, and hence conflict. "It is best," some reader will say, "not to concern yourself with what cannot be known." But is it possible?"*

The Beginning of the chapter The Hunger for Immortality

- *"The effort to comprehend it causes the most tormenting dizziness. We cannot conceive ourselves as not existing."*

- *"Nothing is real that is not eternal."*

- *"Like Pascal, I do not understand those who assert that they care not a farthing for these things, and this indifference "in a matter that touches themselves, their eternity, their all, exasperates me rather than moves me to compassion, astonishes and shocks me," and he who feels thus "is for me," as for Pascal, whose are the words just quoted, 'a monster.'"*

- *"The wretched consciousness shrinks from its own annihilation, and, just as an animal spirit, newly severed from the womb of the world, finds itself confronted with the world and knows itself distinct from it, so consciousness must needs desire to possess another life than that of the world itself."* (Again, very Heideggerian. Uncanny, not at home. Becker- A god, but a god who shits)

- *"From the depth of this anguish, from the abyss of the feeling of our mortality, we emerge into the light of another heaven..."*

- *"And they have made a religion of art, a cure for the metaphysical evil, and invented the meaningless phrase of art for art's sake. And it does not suffice them. If the man who tells you that he writes, paints, sculptures, or sings for his own amusement, gives his work to the public, he lies; he lies if he puts his name to his writing, painting, statue, or song. He wishes, at the least, to leave behind a shadow of his spirit, something that may survive him. If the Imitation of Christ is anonymous, it is because its author sought the eternity of the soul and did not trouble himself about that of the name." (things done for their own sake are pathetic, e.g. knowledge, science, art, etc.)*

- *"Before this terrible mystery of mortality, face to face with the Sphinx, man adopts different attitudes and seeks in various ways to console himself for having been born." (Becker)*

- *"There is not a single one of them who, if he came to know the true and the false, would not prefer the falsehood that he had found to the truth discovered by another. Where is the philosopher who would not willingly deceive mankind for his own glory? Where is he who in the secret of his heart does not propose to himself any other object than to distinguish himself? Provided that he lifts himself above the vulgar,*

provided that he outshines the brilliance of his competitors, what does he demand more? *The essential thing is to think differently from others.* With believers he is an atheist; with atheists he would be a believer." How much substantial truth there is in these gloomy confession of this man of painful sincerity!" (Ha! Humility?)

- "The methodical doubt of Descartes is a comic doubt, a doubt purely theoretical and provisional—that is to say, the doubt of a man who acts as if he doubted without really doubting...This methodical or theoretical Cartesian doubt, this philosophical doubt excogitated in a stove, is not the doubt, is not the scepticism, is not the incertitude, that I am talking about here. No! This other doubt is a passionate doubt, it is the eternal conflict between reason and feeling, science and life, logic and biotic. For science destroys the concept of personality by reducing it to a complex in continual flux from moment to moment—that is to say, it destroys the very foundation of the spiritual and emotional life, which ranges itself unyieldingly against reason. And this doubt cannot avail itself of any provisional ethic, but has to found its ethic, as we shall see, on the conflict itself, an ethic of battle, and itself has to serve as the foundation of religion."

- "The vital consequence of rationalism would be suicide." (Heisman, reason leads to contradictions and Ultimate Skepticism, it leads to the faith of a Kierkegaard, i.e. 'the opposite of 'sin' is not 'virtue', but faith, this is so because the nothingness of morality, of finite/transitory existence falls away and you are left with the overwhelming insignificance of the world/the want to die while not knowing how to die)

- "Positivism inducted us into an age of rationalism—that is to say, of materialism, mechanism, or mortalism; and behold now the return of vitalism, of spiritualism. What was the effort of pragmatism but an effort to restore faith in the human finality of the universe?"

- "We have created God in order to save the Universe from nothingness, for all that is not consciousness and eternal consciousness, conscious of its eternity and eternally conscious, is nothing more than appearance." (everything is still nothing even with God)

- "And we need God in order to save consciousness; not in order to think existence, but in order to live it; not in order to know the why and how of it, but in order to feel the wherefore of it. Love is a contradiction if there is no God."

- "'If of two men," says Kierkegaard, "one prays to the true God without sincerity of heart, and the other prays to an idol with all the passion of an infinite yearning, it is the first who really prays to an idol, while the second really prays to God."

- "*Reason orders the sensible perceptions which give us the material world; but when its analysis is exercised upon the reality of the perceptions themselves, it dissolves them and plunges us into a world of appearances, a world of shadows without consistency, for outside the domain of the formal, reason is nihilist and annihilating. And it performs the same terrible office when we withdraw it from its proper domain and apply it to the scrutiny of the imaginative intuitions which give us the spiritual world. For reason annihilates and imagination completes, integrates or totalizes; reason by itself alone kills, and it is imagination that gives life. If it is true that imagination by itself alone, in giving us life without limit, leads us to lose our identity in the All and also kills us as individuals, it kills us by excess of life. Reason, the head, speaks to us the word Nothing! imagination, the heart, the word All! and between all and nothing, by the fusion of the all and the nothing within us, we live in God, who is All, and God lives in us who, without Him, are nothing-. Reason reiterates, Vanity of vanities! all is vanity! And imagination answers, Plenitude of plenitudes! all is plenitude! And thus we live the vanity of plenitude or the plenitude of vanity.*"

(Vivekananda asks if one is truly willing to follow reason to its logical conclusions: 'reason is nihilist and annihilating', reason leads to Nihilism as the Divine)

- "" The wicked man hath said in his heart, There is no God." And this is truth. For in his head the righteous man may say to himself, God does not exist! But only the wicked can say it in his heart. Not to believe that there is a God or to believe that there is not a God, is one thing; to resign oneself to there not being a God is another thing, and it is a terrible and inhuman thing; but not to wish that there be a God exceeds every other moral monstrosity; although, as a matter of fact, those who deny God deny Him because of their despair at not finding him."
- *"Those who say that they believe in God and yet neither love nor fear Him, do not in fact believe in Him but in those who have taught them that God exists, and these in their turn often enough do not believe in Him either. Those who believe that they believe in God, but without any passion in their heart, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God-Idea, not in God Himself."* (Tillich, Vivekananda- holding head under water, thief in room with gold, etc.)
- *"What is certain is that for thinking believers to-day, faith is, before all and above all, wishing that God may exist."* (faith is not a knowledge, but it is part of reason, since reason leads to Nihilism, which is God, and faith is the 'response' or the 'full-on doubt' that is involved with living within the Nihilism)
- "And if you should ask me how I believe in God—that is to say, how God creates Himself in me and reveals Himself to me—my answer may, perhaps, provoke your smiles or your laughter, or it may even scandalize you. I believe in God as I believe in my friends, because I feel the breath of His affection, feel His invisible and intangible hand, drawing me, leading me, grasping me; because I possess an inner consciousness of a particular providence and of a universal mind that marks out for me the course of my own destiny. And the concept of law—it is nothing but a concept after all!—tells me nothing and teaches me nothing."
- "And God is simply the Love that springs from universal suffering and becomes consciousness."
- "He who affirms a faith built upon a basis of uncertainty does not and cannot lie."
- *"The consciousness that everything passes away, that we ourselves pass away, and that everything that is ours and everything that environs us passes away, fills us with anguish, and this anguish itself reveals to us the consolation of that which does not pass away, of the eternal, of the beautiful."* (as with the first of quotes in this section, this is the Nihilistic experience)
- "We ought to ask God to make us conscious of ourselves in ourselves, in our suffering."
- "My most immediate sensation is the sense and love of my own misery, my anguish, the compassion I feel for myself, the love I bear for myself. And when this compassion is vital and superabundant, it overflows from me upon others, and from the excess of my own compassion I come to have compassion for my neighbors. My own misery is so great that the compassion for myself which it awakens within me soon overflows and reveals to me the universal misery."
- *"Suffering is a spiritual thing."*
- "Consciousness, the craving for more, more, always more, hunger of eternity and thirst of infinity, appetite for God—these are never satisfied."
- "And we must spiritualize everything. And this we shall accomplish by giving our spirit, which grows the more it is distributed, to all men and to all things."
- "What is religion? In what does it differ from the religious sense and how are the two related? Every man's definition of religion is based upon his own inward experience of it rather than upon his observation of it in others, *nor indeed is it possible to define it without in some way or another experiencing it.*"
- *"Religion is better described than defined and better felt than described."*

- "Miguel de Molinos, who said in his *Guia Espiritual* 1 that 'he who would attain to the mystical science must abandon and be detached from five things : first, from creatures; second, from temporal things; third, from the very gifts of the Holy Spirit; fourth, from himself; and fifth, he must be detached even from God.' And he adds that 'this last is the completest of all, because that soul only that knows how to be so detached is that which attains to being lost in God, and only the soul that attains to being so lost succeeds in finding itself.' *Emphatically a true Spaniard, Molinos, and truly Spanish is this paradoxical expression of quietism or rather of nihilism*— for he himself elsewhere speaks of annihilation—and not less Spanish, nay, perhaps even more Spanish, were the Jesuits who attacked him, upholding the prerogatives of the All against the claims of Nothingness."

- "How can a human soul live and enjoy God eternally without losing its individual personality—that is to say, without losing itself?...Was it not a kind of doom that the ancient gods, no less than the demons, were subject to—the deprivation of the power to commit suicide?...In effect, an eternal life is unthinkable and an eternal life of absolute felicity, of beatific vision, is more unthinkable still." (Cioran says the thought of suicide kept him alive, an escape)

- "He who sees God shall die, say the Scriptures (Judg. xiii. 22); and may it not be that the eternal vision of God is an eternal death, a swooning away of the personality ? But St. Teresa, in her description of the last state of prayer, the rapture, transport, flight, or ecstasy of the soul, tells us that the soul is borne as upon a cloud or a mighty eagle, 'but you see yourself carried away and know not whither,' and it is "with delight," and 'if you do not resist, the senses are not lost, at least I was so much myself as to be able to perceive that I was being lifted up '—that is to say, without losing consciousness. And God"

- "But there is another more intimate union, and this is " like rain falling from heaven into a river or stream, becoming one and the same liquid, so that the river and the rain-water cannot be divided; or it resembles a streamlet flowing into the sea, which cannot afterwards be disunited from it; or it may be likened to a room into which a bright light enters through two win dows—though divided when it enters, the light becomes one and the same." And what difference is there between this and the internal and mystical silence of Miguel de Molinos, the third and most perfect degree of which is the silence of thought ? (*Guia Espiritual*, book i., chap, xvii., § 128). Do we not here very closely approach the view that " nothingness is the way to attain to that high state of a mind reformed " ? (book iii., chap, xx., § 196)."

- "A beatific vision, a loving contemplation in which the soul is absorbed in God and, as it were, lost in Him, appears either as an annihilation of self or as a pro longed tedium to our natural way of feeling. And hence a certain feeling which we not infrequently observe and which has more than once expressed itself in satires, not altogether free from irreverence or perhaps impiety, with reference to the heaven of eternal glory as a place of eternal boredom. And it is useless to despise feelings such as these, so wholly natural and spontaneous."

- "May it not be that the very condition which makes our eternal union with God thinkable destroys our longing? What difference is there between being absorbed by God and absorbing Him in ourself ? Is it the stream that is lost in the sea or the sea that is lost in the stream ? It is all the same. Our fundamental feeling is our longing not to lose the sense of the continuity of our consciousness, not to break the concatenation of our memories, the feeling of our own personal concrete identity, even though we may be gradually being absorbed in God, enriching Him."

- "Seek, therefore, thyself! But in rinding oneself, does not one find one's own nothingness?"

- “Yes, but what I work at, will not that too be lost in the end? And if it be lost, wherefore should I work at it? Yes, yes, it may be that to accomplish my work—and what is my work?—without thinking about myself, is to love God.”

- *“But, on the other hand, as a religious conception and veiled in mystery, why not—although the idea revolts our feelings—an eternity of suffering? why not a God who is nourished by our suffering? Is our happiness the end of the Universe? or may we possibly sustain with our suffering some alien happiness? (Nietzsche, Cioran, experiencing your own 'happiness' as worthless)*

44. Angela of Foligno

- *““Blessed (saith He), verily blessed is, and shall be, he who loveth poverty in all the aforesaid things and who desireth to be truly poor in worldly things, in deed and not only in words ; poor in friends, in familiar inter course, in all delights, vain knowledge and curiosity, poor in the repute of holiness and in all preferment and dignity. And if any should not be able to put away from himself utterly all these aforesaid things, he should at least endeavour with all his might to withdraw his affection from them. Of a surety these poor are blessed, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. And those who have done the contrary in all things, and have only preached with their lips and uttered empty words, shall be left cursed and lamenting ; because theirs shall be the utmost poverty, eternal hunger and the house of hell, where there is everlasting hunger and thirst, where there is neither friend, nor brother, nor father to redeem them, nor any help whatsoever.”*

- *“He deigned to be poor in all the temporal things of this world. Thus did He own neither land, nor vineyard, nor garden, nor other possessions; He had neither gold, nor silver, nor money whatsoever, nor any other thing of His own, neither would He consent to accept of the things of this world aught save what did suffice to succour Him in the depths of His great poverty and supply the needs of His body, that is to say, hunger, thirst, and want, cold and heat, great weariness, austerity and hardship. Yet of bodily necessities would He accept naught that was delicate or pleasant to the taste, but only coarse and common food such as was found in those places and provinces wherein Christ did live as live a beggar, without house or habitation. The second degree of Christ s poverty was greater than the first, seeing that He did desire to be poor in friends and kindred and in all familiarity with the great and powerful, and finally in all worldly friendship. Where fore did He not possess, nor desire to possess, any friend whatsoever of His own, nor yet of His mother or His putative father Joseph, or His disciples. For this reason did none hesitate to kick Him, strike Him, and scourge Him, and to speak hurtful words unto Him.”*

- *“In that time and by God’s will there died my mother, who was a great hindrance unto me in following the way of God; my husband died likewise, and in a short time there also died all my children. And because I had commenced to follow the aforesaid way and had prayed God that He would rid me of them, I had great consolation of their deaths, albeit I did also feel some grief.”*

45. Thomas Keating

The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation

(same/similar message of the Bagavagita/Ram Dass)

- “This is the human condition—to be without the true source of happiness, which is the experience of the presence of God, and to have lost the key to happiness, which is the contemplative dimension of life, the

path to the increasing assimilation and enjoyment of God's presence. What we experience is our desperate search for happiness where it cannot possibly be found. The key is not in the grass; it was not lost outside ourselves. It was lost inside ourselves. That is where we need to look for it."

- *"When thinking and self-reflection begin, since the experience of God is missing, some other form of happiness has to take its place, just for the sake of survival."*

- *"A generation ago, in the psychedelic era, people opened themselves to the unconscious before they had the humility or the devotion to God to be able to handle it. The unconscious needs to be respected and approached with prudence."*

- *"The contemplative journey, because it involves the purification of the unconscious, is not a magic carpet to bliss. It is an exercise of letting go of the false self, a humbling process, because it is the only self we know."*

- *"Sometimes a sense of failure is a great means to true humility, which is what God most looks for in us. I realize this is not the language of success, but we have oversubscribed to that language. We need to hear about the interior freedom that comes through participation in the sufferings of Christ, the symbol of God's love for everyone on earth."*

- *"In the coming millennium, religious leaders and spiritual teachers might consider as their primary responsibility not so much to convert new constituents or new followers to a particular form of meditation, but to create communion—harmony, understanding, and respect for everyone in the human family, especially the members of other religions. In the world that lies ahead, religious pluralism is going to penetrate all cultures."*

- *"The same unconditional love that moves in God is moving in us by grace, supplanting the human ego with the divine 'I.' We begin to manifest in daily life not our false selves and prejudices, but the infinite tenderness of God, the concern of God for every living thing, especially for the needy and the poor."*

- *"The false self is looking for fame, power, wealth, and prestige."*

- *"Without profound purification, how far can social action actually extend? People involved in social action have a false self, too. They need to know the dynamics that are at work within them. Otherwise, social projects may fall apart, or they will suffer burnout."*

- *"All human history is under the influence of the false-self system that easily moves from our hearts unto our families, communities, and nations and then afflicts the whole human race. God invites us to take responsibility for being human and to open ourselves to the unconscious damage that is influencing our decisions and relationships."*

- *"We are not sick just because of some physiological pathology. It is not just a question of sin either; it is a question of the human condition, for which none of us is initially responsible but, on becoming adults, we are now called to be responsible."*

- *"Contemplative prayer begins to make us aware of the divine presence within us, the source of true happiness. As soon as we begin to taste the peace that comes from the regular practice of contemplative prayer, it relativizes the whole unreal world of demands and 'shoulds,' of aversions and desires that were based on emotional programs for happiness that might have worked for children, but that are, in fact, killing us."*

- *"God is existence. In everything that exists, God is present. The greatest reality is God's presence. The problem is that we only access that presence to the degree that our interior life is attuned to it. Hence the importance in the Christian tradition of listening to sacred scripture, which is much more than just listening to its literal meaning. It is sitting with the text in the presence of the Holy Spirit and allowing the*

Spirit to deepen our capacity to listen. That in no way denigrates the value of the literal; listening simply doesn't stop there. The external word of God is designed to awaken the presence of the word of God in us. When that happens, we become, in a certain sense, the word of God."

- *"To what might we liken our awareness in ordinary daily life? It is like being at a good movie where we identify with the characters on the screen. We may even forget that we are in the movie house. In similar fashion, unless our selfish programs for happiness have begun to be dismantled by a spiritual practice or discipline, we are not aware that events and people or our plans and memories are dominating our awareness from morning to night."*

- *"Everybody is culturally conditioned to some degree. Even the greatest saints only reach a certain degree of freedom from cultural over-identification. That over-identification is challenged in Centering Prayer. We spend the first part of our lives finding a role—becoming a mother or father, a professor, a doctor, a minister, a soldier, a business person, an artisan, or whatever. The paradox is that we can never fully fulfill our role until we are ready to let it go. Whoever we think we are, we are not. We have to find that out, and the best way to do so, or at least the most painless way, is through the process that we call the spiritual journey. This requires facing the dark side of our personality and the emotional investment we have made in false programs for happiness and in our particular cultural conditioning."*

- *"To be really healed requires that we allow our dark side to come to full consciousness and then to let it go and give it to God. The divine therapy is an agreement that we make with God. We recognize that our own ideas of happiness are not going to work, and we turn our lives over completely to God."*

- *"To submit to the divine therapy is something we owe to ourselves and the rest of humanity. If we don't allow the Spirit of God to address the deep levels of our attachments to ourselves and to our programs for happiness, we will pour into the world the negative elements of our self-centeredness, adding to the conflicts and social disasters that come from over-identifying with the biases and prejudices of our particular culture and upbringing. This is becoming more important as we move into a global culture and into the increasing pluralism of religious beliefs."*

- *"The spiritual journey is not a career or a success story. It is a series of humiliations of the false self that become more and more profound. These make room inside us for the Holy Spirit to come in and heal."*

- *"Then God seemed to walk out of my life, abandoning me in a church pew, so to speak. In the dark nights, consolations on the spiritual journey, including the rituals and practices that previously supported our faith and devotion, fail us. Faith becomes simply belief in God's goodness without any taste of it. It is trusting in God without knowing whom we are trusting, because the relationship we thought we had with God has disappeared."*

- *"To bring oneself to nothing—no thing—is to cease to identify with the tyranny of our emotional programs for happiness and the limitations of our cultural conditioning. They are so strong in our culture that even our language reflects them. We say, 'I am angry.' But you are not angry; you just have angry feelings. You may say, 'I am depressed.' No, you are not depressed; you have feelings of depression."*

- *"The beginning of our spiritual conversion is followed by a transition period that is always dark, confusing, and confining. Then comes a period of peace, enjoyment of a new inner freedom, the wonder of new insights. That takes time. Rarely is there a sudden movement to a new level of awareness that is permanent."*

- *"As long as we are identified with some role or persona, we are not free to manifest the purity of God's presence. Part of life is a process of dropping whatever role, however worthy, you identify with. It is not you. Your emotions are not you. Your body is not you. If you are not those things, who are you?" (me- psychedelics, mystics, Heisman*

said this same thing, but did not have a verbal language, never mind a conceptual “language” to deal with this 'ego death')

- *“The ultimate abandonment of one’s role is not to have a self as a fixed point of reference; it is the freedom to manifest God through one’s own uniqueness. This monk had hit bottom. But the bottom in the spiritual journey is also the top. To be no one is to be everyone. To be no self is to be the true Self. To be nothing is to be everything. In a sense, it is to be God.”*

- *“For Christians, it is to be a kind of fifth Gospel: to become the word of God and to manifest God rather than the false self, with its emotional programs for happiness and attachments to various roles, including the most spiritual. When you have been liberated from them all, you are in a space that is both empty of self and full of God.”*

- *“This monk chose the way of spiritual discipline to become the Other. There is at least one other way of negotiating the spiral staircase. It is by passing through great tragedy or physical and mental suffering. God leads some people through the most terrible anguish and pain to the same place.”*

46. Evelyn Underhill

Mysticism

- A direct encounter with absolute truth, then, appears to be impossible for normal non-mystical consciousness. We cannot know the reality, or even prove the existence, of the simplest object: though this is a limitation which few people realize acutely and most would deny. But there persists in the race a type of personality which does realize this limitation: and cannot be content with the sham realities that furnish the universe of normal men. It is necessary, as it seems, to the comfort of persons of this type to form for themselves some image of the Something or Nothing which is at the end of their telegraph lines: some “conception of being,” some “theory of knowledge.” *They are tormented by the Unknowable, ache for first principles, demand some background to the shadow show of things.* In so far as man possesses this temperament, he hungers for reality, and must satisfy that hunger as best he can: staving off starvation, though he many not be filled.”

- Naturalism: “Such an attitude as this may be a counsel of prudence, in view of our ignorance of all that lies beyond: but it can never satisfy p. 9 our hunger for reality. It says in effect, “The room in which we find ourselves is fairly comfortable. Draw the curtains, for the night is dark: and let us devote ourselves to describing the furniture.”

- “Hence, artist and surgeon, Christian and rationalist, pessimist and optimist, do actually and truly live in different and mutually exclusive worlds, not only of thought but also of perception. Only the happy circumstance that our ordinary speech is conventional, not realistic, permits us to conceal from one another the unique and lonely world in which each lives. Now and then an artist is born, terribly articulate, foolishly truthful, who insists on “Speaking as he saw.” Then other men, lapped warmly in their artificial universe, agree that he is mad: or, at the very best, an “extraordinarily imaginative fellow.”

- “The mind which seeks the Real, then, in this shifting and subjective “natural” world is of necessity thrown back on itself: on images and concepts which owe more to the “seer” than to the “seen.” But Reality must be real for all, once they have found it: *must exist “in itself” upon a plane of being unconditioned by the perceiving mind. Only thus can it satisfy that mind’s most vital instinct, most sacred passion—its “instinct*

for the Absolute," its passion for truth. You are not asked, as a result of these antique and elementary propositions, to wipe clean the slate of normal human experience, and cast in your lot with intellectual nihilism. You are only asked to acknowledge that it is but a slate, and that the white scratches upon it which the ordinary man calls facts, and the Scientific Realist calls knowledge, are at best relative and conventionalized symbols of that aspect of the unknowable reality at which they hint."

- "We begin, then, to ask what can be the nature of this One; and whence comes the persistent instinct which—receiving no encouragement from sense experience—apprehends and desires this unknown unity, this all-inclusive Absolute, as the only possible satisfaction of its thirst for truth."

- *"In the great moments of existence, when he rises to spiritual freedom, these are the things which every man feels to be real. It is by these and for these that he is found willing to live, work suffer, and die. Love, patriotism, religion, altruism, fame, all belong to the transcendental world. Hence, they partake more of the nature of reality than any "fact" could do; and man, dimly recognizing this, has ever bowed to them as to immortal centres of energy. Religions as a rule are steeped in idealism: Christianity in particular is a trumpet call to an idealistic conception of life, Buddhism is little less. Over and over again, their Scriptures tell us that only materialists will be damned.*

- "But, when we ask the idealist how we are to attain communion with the reality which he describes to us as "certainly there," his system suddenly breaks down; and discloses itself as a diagram of the heavens, not a ladder to the stars." (psychedelics could help)

- "Those who are temperamentally inclined to credulity may become naturalists, and persuade themselves to believe in the reality of the sense world. Those with a certain instinct for the Absolute may adopt the more reasonable faith of idealism. *But the true intellectualist, who concedes nothing to instinct or emotion, is obliged in the end to adopt some form of sceptical philosophy. The horrors of nihilism, in fact, can only be escaped by the exercise of faith, by a trust in man's innate but strictly irrational instinct for that Real "above all reason, beyond all thought" towards which at its best moments his spirit tends.*" (Horrors of Nihilism! Ha!)

- *If the metaphysician be true to his own postulates, he must acknowledge in the end that we are all forced to live, to think, and at last to die, in an unknown and unknowable world: fed arbitrarily and diligently, yet how we know not, by ideas and suggestions whose truth we cannot test but whose pressure we cannot resist. It is not by sight but by faith—faith in a supposed external order which we can never prove to exist, and in the approximate truthfulness and constancy of the vague messages which we receive from it—that ordinary men must live and move. We must put our trust in "laws of nature" which have been devised by the human mind as a convenient epitome of its own observations of phenomena, must, for the purposes of daily life, accept these phenomena at their face value: an act of faith beside which the grossest superstitions of the Neapolitan peasant are hardly noticeable.*" (the skepticism 'not of the study' or theoretical, but the skepticism that paralyzes)

- *"Certain facts of which too keen a perception would act detrimentally to the life-force are, for most men, impossible of realization: i.e. , the uncertainty of life, the decay of the body, the vanity of all things under the sun. When we are in good health, we all feel very real, solid, and permanent; and this is of all our illusions the most ridiculous, and also the most obviously useful from the point of view of the efficiency and preservation of the race."* (Buddha, Vivekananda, realization, Maya)

"Nothing can be more certain than that man is not so content. He has been called by utilitarian philosophers a tool-making animal—the highest praise they knew how to bestow. More surely he is a vision-making animal; a creature of perverse and unpractical ideals, dominated by dreams no less than by appetites—dreams which can only be justified upon the theory that he moves towards some other goal than that of

physical perfection or intellectual supremacy, is controlled by some higher and more vital reality than that of the determinists. We are driven to the conclusion that if the theory of evolution is to include or explain the facts of artistic and spiritual experience—and it cannot be accepted by any serious thinker if these great tracts of consciousness remain outside its range—it must be rebuilt on a mental rather than a physical basis.”

- Amongst the more intractable of these groups of perceptions and experiences are those which we connect with religion, with pain and with beauty. All three, for those selves which are capable of receiving their messages, possess a mysterious authority far in excess of those feelings, arguments, or appearances which they may happen to contradict. All three, were the universe of the naturalists true, would be absurd...”

- *“The question is not, whence come those conditions which provoke in the self the experiences called sorrow, anxiety, pain: but, why do these conditions hurt the self? The pain is mental; a little chloroform, and though the conditions continue unabated the suffering is gone. Why does full consciousness always include the mysterious capacity for misery as well as for happiness—a capacity which seems at first sight to invalidate any conception of the Absolute as Beautiful and Good? Why does evolution, as we ascend the ladder of life, foster instead of diminishing the capacity for useless mental anguish, for long, dull torment, bitter grief?”*

- *“If it is to be vanquished, either the disharmony must be resolved by a deliberate and careful adjustment of the self to the world of sense, or, that self must turn from the sense-world to some other with which it is in tune. Pessimist and optimist here join hands. But whilst the pessimist, resting in appearance, only sees “nature red in tooth and claw” offering him little hope of escape, the optimist thinks that pain and anguish—which may in their lower forms be life’s harsh guides on the path of physical evolution—in their higher and apparently “useless” developments are her leaders and teachers in the upper school of Supra-sensible Reality. He believes that they press the self towards another world, still “natural” for him, though “supernatural” for his antagonist, in which it will be more at home. Watching life, he sees in Pain the complement of Love: and is inclined to call these the wings on which man’s spirit can best take flight towards the Absolute. Hence he can say with A Kempis, “Gloriari in tribulatione non est grave amanti,” and needs not to speak of morbid folly when he sees the Christian saints run eagerly and merrily to the Cross.”*

(interesting use of the word 'optimist', ha!)

- *“He calls suffering the “gymnastic of eternity,” the “terrible p. 20 initiative caress of God”; recognizing in it a quality for which the disagreeable rearrangement of nerve molecules cannot account. Sometimes, in the excess of his optimism, he puts to the test of practice this theory with all its implications. Refusing to be deluded by the pleasures of the sense world, he accepts instead of avoiding pain, and becomes an ascetic; a puzzling type for the convinced naturalist, who, falling back upon contempt—that favourite resource of the frustrated reason—can only regard him as diseased.”*

- *“Pain, then, which plunges like a sword through creation, leaving on the one side cringing and degraded animals and on the other side heroes and saints, is one of those facts of universal experience which are peculiarly intractable from the point of view of a merely materialistic philosophy.”*

- *“The seeing self is indeed an initiate thrust suddenly into the sanctuary of the mysteries: and feels the “old awe and amazement” with which man encounters the Real. In such experiences, a new factor of the eternal calculus appears to be thrust in on us, a factor which no honest seeker for truth can afford to neglect; since, if it be dangerous to say that any two systems of knowledge are mutually exclusive, it is still more dangerous to give uncritical priority to any one system.”*

- *“Why, after all, take as our standard a material world whose existence is affirmed by nothing more trustworthy than the sense-impressions of “normal men”; those imperfect and easily cheated channels of communication? The*

mystics, those adventurers of whom we spoke upon the first page of this book, have always declared, implicitly or explicitly, their distrust in these channels of communication. They have never been deceived by phenomena, nor by the careful logic of the industrious intellect. One after another, with extraordinary unanimity, they have rejected that appeal to the unreal world of appearance which is the standard of p. 23 sensible men: affirming that there is another way, another secret, by which the conscious self may reach the actuality which it seeks. More complete in their grasp of experience than the votaries of intellect or of sense, they accept as central for life those spiritual messages which are mediated by religion, by beauty, and by pain."

- *"To all who will receive it, news comes of a world of Absolute Life, Absolute Beauty, Absolute Truth, beyond the bourne of time and place: news that most of us translate—and inevitably distort in the process—into the language of religion, of beauty, of love, or of pain."*

- *"Of all those forms of life and thought with which humanity has fed its craving for truth, mysticism alone postulates, and in the persons of its great initiates proves, not only the existence of the Absolute, but also this link: this possibility first of knowing, finally of attaining it. It denies that possible knowledge is to be limited (a) to sense impressions, (b) to any process of intellection, (c) to the unfolding of the content of normal consciousness. Such diagrams of experience, it says, are hopelessly incomplete. The mystics find the basis of their method not in logic but in life: in the existence of a discoverable "real," a spark of true being, within the seeking subject, which can, in that ineffable experience which they call the "act of union," fuse itself with and thus apprehend the reality of the sought Object. In theological language, their theory of knowledge is that the spirit of man, itself essentially divine, is capable of immediate communion with God, the One Reality."*

- *"Where the philosopher guesses and argues, the mystic lives and looks; and speaks, consequently, the disconcerting language of first-hand experience, not the neat dialectic of the schools."* (me- Kierkegaard would agree and say that this definition of 'mysticism' is actually a true description of philosophy, e.g. Job over Hagel, despair over reason)

- *"...you will find it impossible to prove that the world as seen by the mystics, 'unimaginable, formless, dark with excess of bright,' is less real than that which is expounded by the youngest and most promising demonstrator of a physicochemical universe. We will be quite candid with you. Examine us as much as you like: our machinery, our veracity, our results. We cannot promise that you shall see what we have seen, for here each man must adventure for himself; but we defy you to stigmatize our experiences as impossible or invalid. Is your world of experience so well and logically founded that you dare make of it a standard? Philosophy tells you that it is founded on nothing better than the reports of your sensory apparatus and the traditional concepts of the race. Certainly it is imperfect, probably it is illusion in any event, it never touches the foundation of things. Whereas 'what the world, which truly knows nothing, calls "mysticism" is the science of ultimates, . . . the science of self-evident Reality, which cannot be "reasoned about," because it is the object of pure reason or perception."*

- *"The intellect by itself moves nothing," said Aristotle, and modern psychology has but affirmed this law. Hence his quest of Reality is never caused, though it may be greatly assisted, by the intellectual aspect of his consciousness; for the reasoning powers as such have little initiative."*

- *"This act of perfect concentration, the passionate focusing of the self upon one point, when it is applied "with a naked intent" to real and transcendental things, constitutes in the technical language of mysticism the state of recollection: a condition which is peculiarly characteristic of the mystical consciousness, and is the necessary prelude of pure contemplation, that state in which the mystic enters into communion with*

Reality.” (me- 'recollection' is a main theme in mystical thought. It seems there is something 'outside' of you that is really 'inside' of you, information is being 'discovered'")

- “It appears generally from these that the act of contemplation is for the mystic a psychic gateway; a method of going from one level of consciousness to another...It was recognized by Plato as that consciousness which could apprehend the real world of the Ideas.”

- “These adventures, looked upon by those who stay at home as a form of the Higher Laziness, are in reality the last and most arduous labours which the human spirit is called to perform.”

- “Mary has chosen the better, not the idler part; for her gaze is directed towards those First Principles without which the activity of Martha would have no meaning at all. *It remains a paradox of the mystics that the passivity at which they appear to aim is really a state of the most intense activity: more, that where it is wholly absent no great creative action can take place. In it, the superficial self compels itself to be still, in order that it may liberate another more deep-seated power which is, in the ecstasy of the contemplative genius, raised to the highest pitch of efficiency.*” (Cioran says Mystics are 'conquerors')

- “The value of contemplation is that it tends to produce this state, release this transcendental sense; and so turns the “lower servitude” in which the natural man lives under the sway of his earthly environment to the “higher servitude” of fully conscious dependence on that Reality “in Whom we live and move and have our being.”

- “The mystic way must therefore be a life, a discipline...”

- “It is clear that under ordinary conditions, and save for sudden gusts of “Transcendental Feeling” induced by some saving madness such as Religion, Art, or Love, the superficial self knows nothing of the attitude of this silent watcher—this “Dweller in the Innermost”—towards the incoming messages of the external world: nor of the activities which they awake in it. Concentrated on the sense-world, and the messages she receives from it, she knows nothing of the relations which exist between this subject and the unattainable Object of all thought. But by a deliberate inattention to the messages of the senses, such as that which is induced by contemplation, the mystic can bring the ground of the soul, the seat of “Transcendental Feeling,” within the area of consciousness: making it amenable to the activity of the will.”

- (Transcendent Feelings) “A belief in its actuality is the pivot of the Christian position; indeed of every religion worthy of the name. It is the justification of mysticism, asceticism, the whole machinery of the self-renouncing life. That there is an extreme point at which man’s nature touches the Absolute: that his ground, or substance, his true being, is penetrated by the Divine Life which constitutes the underlying reality of things; this is the basis on which the whole mystic claim of possible union with God must rest.”

- ““The two eyes of the soul of man,” says the “Theologia p. 56 Germanica,” here developing a profound Platonic image, “cannot both perform their work at once: but if the soul shall see with the right eye into eternity, then the left eye must close itself and refrain from working, and be as though it were dead. For if the left eye be fulfilling its office toward outward things, that is holding converse with time and the creatures; then must the right eye be hindered in its working; that is, in its contemplation. Therefore, whosoever will have the one must let the other go; for ‘no man can serve two masters.’”

- “Transcendental matters are, for most of us, always beyond the margin; because most of us have given up our whole consciousness to the occupation of the senses, and permitted them to construct there a universe in which we are contented to remain. Only in certain states—recollection, contemplation, ecstasy and their allied conditions—does the self contrive to turn out the usual tenants, shut the “gateways of the flesh,” and let those

submerged powers which are capable of picking up messages from another plane of being have their turn."

- "The phenomenon known as double or disintegrated personality may perhaps give us a hint as to the mechanical nature of the change which contemplation effects. In this psychic malady the total character of the patient is split up; a certain group of qualities are, as it were, abstracted from the surface-consciousness and so closely associated as to form in themselves a complete "character" or "personality"—necessarily poles asunder from the "character" which the self usually shows to the world, since it consists exclusively of those elements which are omitted from it." (this is one of the biggest issues of my thoughts/actions. Augustine and Tolstoy are good examples of this as well, this is the divided-self of James, or the double-mindedness of Kierkegaard)

- *"Indian mysticism founds its external system almost wholly on (a) Asceticism, the domination of the senses, and (b) the deliberate practice of self-hypnotization; either by fixing the eyes on a near object, or by the rhythmic repetition of the mantra or sacred word. By these complementary forms of discipline, the pull of the phenomenal world is diminished and the mind is placed at the disposal of the subconscious powers. Dancing, music, and other exaggerations of natural rhythm have been pressed into the same service by the Greek initiates of Dionysus, by the Gnostics, by innumerable other mystic cults."*

- "They have not hesitated to call St. Paul an epileptic. St. Teresa the "patron saint of hysterics"; and have found room for most of their spiritual kindred in various departments of the pathological museum. They have been helped in this grateful task by the acknowledged fact that the great contemplatives, though p. 59 almost always persons of robust intelligence and marked practical or intellectual ability—Plotinus, St. Bernard, the two Ss. Catherine, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and the Sufi poets Jami and Jalalu 'ddin are cases in point—have often suffered from bad physical health."

- *"In such cases as Kant and Beethoven," says Von Hügel justly, "a classifier of humanity according to its psycho-physical phenomena alone would put these great discoverers and creators, without hesitation, amongst hopeless and useless hypochondriacs."*

- "In the mystic the dominant idea is a great one: so great in fact, that when it is received in its completeness by the human consciousness, almost of necessity it ousts all else. It is nothing less than the idea or perception of the transcendent reality and presence of God. Hence the mono-ideism of the mystic is rational, whilst that of the hysteric patient is invariably irrational."

- "Our bodies are animal things, made for animal activities. When a spirit of unusual ardour insists on using its nerve-cells for other activities, they kick against the pricks; and inflict, as the mystics themselves acknowledge, the penalty of "mystical ill-health." *"Believe me, children," says Tauler, "one who would know much about these high matters would often have to keep his bed, for his bodily frame could not support it."* (Cioran-conquerors)

- "In those abnormal types of personality to which we give the name of genius, we seem to detect a hint of the relations which may exist between these deep levels of being and the crust of consciousness. In the poet, the musician, the great mathematician or inventor, powers lying below the threshold, and hardly controllable by their owner's conscious will, clearly take a major part in the business of perception and conception. In all creative acts, the larger share of the work is done subconsciously: its emergence is in a sense automatic. This is equally true of mystics, artists, philosophers, discoverers, and rulers of men. The great religion, invention, work of art, always owes its inception to some sudden uprush of intuitions or ideas for which the superficial self cannot account; its execution to powers so far beyond the control of that

self, that they seem, as their owner sometimes says, to “come from beyond.” (me- Plato's theory of recollection)

- “To let oneself go, be quiet, receptive, appears to be the condition under which such contact with the Cosmic Life may be obtained.” (humility)

- “The subliminal mind of the great mystic, however, is not disorderly. *It is abnormally sensitive, richly endowed and keenly observant*—a treasure house, not a lumber room—and becomes in the course of its education, a highly disciplined and skilled instrument of knowledge.”

- “(4) Neither conation nor cognition—action nor thought—as performed by this surface mind, concerned as it is with natural existence and dominated by spatial conceptions, is able to set up any relations with the Absolute or transcendental world. Such action and thought deal wholly with material supplied directly or indirectly by the world of sense. The testimony of the mystics, however, and of all persons possessing an “instinct for the Absolute,” points to the existence of a further faculty—indeed, a deeper self—in man; a self which the circumstances of diurnal life usually keep “below the threshold” of his consciousness, and which thus becomes one of the factors of his “subliminal life.” This hidden self is the primary agent of mysticism, and lives a “substantial” life in touch with the real or transcendental world. (5) Certain processes, of which contemplation has been taken as a type, can so alter the state of consciousness as to permit the emergence of this deeper self; which, according as it enters more or less into the conscious life, makes man more or less a mystic.”

- “It will be our business later to consider in more detail the characteristics and significance of magic. Now it is enough to say that we may class broadly as magical all forms of self-seeking transcendentalism. It matters little whether the apparatus which they use be the incantations of the old magicians, the congregational prayer for rain of orthodox Churchmen, or the consciously self-hypnotizing devices of “New Thought”: whether the end proposed be the evocation of an angel, the power of transcending circumstance, or the healing of disease. *The object is always the same: the deliberate exaltation of the will, till it transcends its usual limitations and obtains for the self or group of selves something which it or they did not previously possess.* It is an individualistic and acquisitive science: in all its forms an activity of the intellect, seeking Reality for its own purposes, or for those of humanity at large. Mysticism, whose great name is too often given to these supersensual activities, has nothing in common with this. *It is non-individualistic. It implies, indeed, the abolition of individuality; of that hard separateness, that “I, Me, Mine” which makes of man a finite isolated thing.* It is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys, but purely from an instinct.”

- “...transcendental philosophy, hardly comes within the scope of the present inquiry; since it is purely academic, whilst both magic and mysticism are practical and empirical. Such philosophy is often wrongly called mysticism, because it tries to make maps of the countries which the mystic explores. Its performances are useful, as diagrams are useful, so long as they do not ape finality; remembering that the only final thing is personal experience...”

(Symbolism, Vivekananda and realization, Tillich, finite/infinite gap, psychedelics)

- “The mystic, too, tries very hard to tell an unwilling world his secret. But in his case, the difficulties are enormously increased. First, there is the huge disparity between his unspeakable experience and the language which will most nearly suggest it. Next, there is the great gulf fixed between his mind and the mind of the world. His audience must be bewitched as well as addressed, caught up to something of his state, before they can be made to understand.”

- *"The mystery of music is seldom realized by those who so easily accept its gifts. Yet of all the arts music alone shares with great mystical literature the power of waking in us a response to the life-movement of the universe: brings us--we know not how--news of its exultant passions and its incomparable peace. [p. 77] Beethoven heard the very voice of Reality, and little of it escaped when he translated it for our ears."*

- *"Mysticism, then, is not an opinion: it is not a philosophy. It has nothing in common with the pursuit of occult knowledge. On the one hand it is not merely the power of contemplating Eternity: on the other, it is not to be identified with any kind of religious queerness. It is the name of that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God: the achievement here and now of the immortal heritage of man. Or, if you like it better--for this means exactly the same thing--it is the art of establishing his conscious relation with the Absolute."*

- *"The movement of the mystic consciousness towards this consummation, is not merely the sudden admission to an overwhelming vision of Truth: though such dazzling glimpses may from time to time be vouchsafed to the soul."*

- *"It were more accurate to reverse the epigram above stated, and say, that Platonism is the reaction of the intellectualist upon mystical truth."*

- *"The paradoxical "quiet" of the contemplative is but the outward stillness essential to inward work."*

- *"Mysticism is an entirely spiritual activity."*

"Only this mystic passion can lead us from our prison. Its brother, the desire of knowledge, may enlarge and improve the premises to an extent as yet undreamed of: but it can never unlock the doors." (philosophy is useful, helpful, only in navigating the experience)

- *"The psychologist finds little difficulty, for instance, in reconciling the "Degrees of Orison" described by St. Teresa 170 --Recollection, Quiet, Union, Ecstasy, Rapt, the "Pain of God," and the Spiritual Marriage of the soul--with the four forms of contemplation enumerated by Hugh of St. Victor, or the Sufi's "Seven Stages" of the soul's ascent to God, which begin in adoration and end in spiritual marriage. 171 Though each wayfarer may choose different landmarks, it is clear from their comparison that the road is one."*

- *"As a corollary to these four rules, it is perhaps well to reiterate the statement already made, that True Mysticism is never self-seeking. It is not, as many think, the pursuit of supernatural joys; the satisfaction of a high ambition. The mystic does not enter on his quest because he desires the happiness of the Beatific Vision, the ecstasy of union with the Absolute, or any other personal reward. That noblest of all passions, the passion for perfection for Love's sake, far outweighs the desire for transcendental satisfaction."*

- *"The mystics are emphatic in their statement that spiritual desires are useless unless they initiate this costly movement of the whole self towards the Real."* (Smith says it's not about the experience, but rather the 'religious life', religious dogmas, creeds, prayers, rituals, etc. are all finite expressions of our desire for the infinite, and can therefore never be anything more than simple idolatry. Every belief will be necessarily false. Non-literalism. This is Nihilism, this is Tillich and Vivekananda, there comes a time when I will just snap and go for it)

- *"More than the apprehension of God, then, more than the passion for the Absolute, is needed to make a mystic. These must be combined with an appropriate psychological make-up, with a nature capable of extraordinary concentration, an exalted moral emotion, a nervous organization of the artistic type. All these are necessary to the successful development of the mystic life process."*

- *"Like his type, the "devout lover" of romance, then, the mystic serves without hope of reward. By one of the many paradoxes of the spiritual life, he obtains satisfaction because he does not seek it; completes his personality because he gives it up. "Attainment," [p. 93] says Dionysius the Areopagite in words which are writ large on the annals of Christian ecstasy, "comes only by means of this sincere, spontaneous, and entire*

surrender of yourself and all things." 176 Only with the annihilation of selfhood comes the fulfilment of love. Were the mystic asked the cause of his often extraordinary behaviour, his austere and steadfast quest, it is unlikely that his reply would contain any reference to sublime illumination or unspeakable delights."

- *"Here, in this world of illusion, they say, we have no continuing city. This statement, to you a proposition, is to us the central fact of life. "Therefore, it is necessary to hasten our departure from hence, and detach ourselves in so far as we may from the body to which we are fettered, in order that with the whole of our selves, we may fold ourselves about Divinity, and have no part void of contact with Him."* (everything is transitory, Vivekananda, finite, passing, Nihilism)

- "The view which regards the mystic as a spiritual anarchist receives little support from history; which shows us, again and again, [p. 96] the great mystics as faithful sons of the great religions. Almost any religious system which fosters unearthly love is potentially a nursery for mystics: and Christianity, Islam, Brahmanism, and Buddhism each receives its most sublime interpretation at their hands. Thus St. Teresa interprets her ecstatic apprehension of the Godhead in strictly Catholic terms, and St. John of the Cross contrives to harmonize his intense transcendentalism with incarnational and sacramental Christianity. Thus Boehme believed to the last that his explorations of eternity were consistent with the teaching of the Lutheran Church. The Sufis were good Mohammedans, Philo and the Kabalists were orthodox Jews. Plontinus even adapted--though with what difficulty--the relics of paganism to his doctrine of the Real. Attempts, however, to limit mystical truth--the direct apprehension of the Divine Substance--by the formula of any one religion, are as futile as the attempt to identify a precious metal with the die which converts it into current coin."

- "It is characteristic of his intellectual humility, however, that he is commonly willing to use the map of the community in which he finds himself, when it comes to showing other people the route which he has pursued...Time after time he puts his finger on some spot--some great hill of vision, some city of the soul--and says with conviction, "Here have I been." At other times the maps have embarrassed him, have refused to fit in with his description. Then he has tried, as Boehme did and after him Blake, to make new ones. Such maps are often wild in drawing, because good draughtsmanship does not necessarily go with a talent for exploration. Departing from the usual convention, they are hard--sometimes impossible--to understand. As a result, the orthodox have been forced to regard their makers as madmen or heretics: when they were really only practical men struggling to disclose great matters by imperfect means."

- "Any attempt towards a definition of God which does not account for and acknowledge these three aspects is found in experience to be incomplete. They provide objectives for the heart, the intellect, and the will: for they offer to the Self material for its highest love, its deepest thought, its act of supreme volition." (me- mystics always have the 'biggest' conceptions of the Divine)

- "Further, since He is One, and in all things, "to conceive one's self as separate from God is an error: yet only when one sees oneself as separate from God, can one reach out to God."

- "Further, the Christian atmosphere is the one in which the individual mystic has most often been able to develop his genius in a sane and fruitful way; and an overwhelming majority of the great European contemplatives have been Christians of a strong impassioned and personal type. This alone would justify us in regarding it as embodying, at any rate in the West, the substance of the true tradition: providing the "path of least resistance" through which that tradition flows. The very heretics of Christianity have often owed their attraction almost wholly to the mystical element in their teachings."

- "It is a disturbance of the equilibrium of the self, which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from lower to higher levels, with a consequent removal of the centre of interest from the subject to an

object now brought into view: the necessary beginning of any process of transcendence. It must not, however, be confused or identified with religious conversion as ordinarily understood: the sudden and emotional acceptance of theological beliefs which the self had previously either rejected or treated as conventions dwelling upon the margin of consciousness and having no meaning for her actual life."

- "The Memorial of Pascal is a scrap of parchment on which, round a rough drawing of the Flaming Cross, there are written a few strange phrases, abrupt and broken words; all we know about one of the strangest ecstatic revelations chronicled in the history of the mystic type. After Pascal's death a servant found a copy of this little document, now lost, sewn up in his doublet. He seems always to have worn it upon his person: a perpetual memorial of the supernal experience, the initiation into Reality, which it describes.

Though Bremond has shown that the opening [p. 189] of Pascal's spiritual eyes had begun, on his own declaration, eleven months earlier, "d'une manière douce et obligeante," 369 the conversion thus prepared was only made actual by this abrupt illumination; *ending a long period of spiritual stress, in which indifference to his ordinary interests was counterbalanced by an utter inability to feel the attractive force of that Divine Reality which his great mind discerned as the only adequate object of desire.*"

- "This hard and wholly unnutritious shell, this one-sided secretion of the surface-consciousness, makes as it were a little cave of illusion for each separate soul. A literal and deliberate getting out of the cave must be for every mystic, as it was for Plato's prisoners, the first step in the individual hunt for reality."

- "In the plain language of old-fashioned theology "man's sin is stamped upon man's universe." We see a sham world because we live a sham life. We do not know ourselves; hence do not know the true character of our senses and instincts; hence attribute wrong values to their suggestions and declarations concerning our relation to the external world."

- "That which we call the "natural" self as it exists in the "natural" world--the "old Adam" of St. Paul--is wholly incapable of supersensual adventure."

- "All its activities are grouped about a centre of consciousness whose correspondences are with the material world. In the moment of its awakening, it is abruptly made aware of this disability. It knows itself finite. It now aspires to the infinite."

- "The lives of the mystics abound in instances of the "vehemence of this showing": of the deep-seated sense of necessity which urges the newly awakened self to a life of discomfort and conflict, often to intense poverty and pain, as the only way of replacing false experience by true."

- "To the true lover of the Absolute, Purgation no less than Illumination is a privilege, a dreadful joy. It is an earnest of increasing life. "Let me suffer or die!" said St. Teresa: a strange alternative in the ears of common sense, but a forced option in the spiritual sphere."

- "It is in this torment of contrition, this acute consciousness of unworthiness, that we have the first swing back of the oscillating self from the initial state of mystic pleasure to the complementary state of pain."

- "We must be filled with a burning fervour full of anguish." St. John of the Cross

- "The greatest of the contemplative saints, far from leaving purgation behind them in their progress, were increasingly aware of their own inadequateness, the nearer they approached to the unitive state: for the true lover of the Absolute, like every other lover, is alternately abased and exalted by his unworthiness and his good fortune. There are moments of high rapture when he knows only that the banner over him is Love: but there are others in which he remains bitterly conscious that in spite of his uttermost surrender there is within him an ineradicable residuum of selfhood, which "stains the white radiance of eternity." *In this sense, then, purification is a perpetual process.*"

- "Its business is the getting rid, first of self-love; and secondly of all those foolish interests in which the surface-consciousness is steeped."

- "(1) The Negative aspect, the stripping or purging away of those superfluous, unreal, and harmful things which dissipate the precious energies of the self. This is the business of Poverty, or Detachment. (2) The Positive aspect: [p. 205] a raising to their highest term, their purest state, of all that remains--the permanent elements of character. This is brought about by Mortification, the gymnastic of the soul: a deliberate recourse to painful experiences and difficult tasks."

- "Apart from the plain necessity of casting out imperfection and sin, what is the type of "good character" which will best serve the self in its journey towards union with the Absolute?

The mystics of all ages and all faiths agree in their answer...Three virtues...*By Poverty the mystic means an utter self-stripping, the casting off of immaterial as well as material wealth, a complete detachment from all finite things. By Chastity he means an extreme and limpid purity of soul, cleansed from personal desire and virgin to all but God: by Obedience, that abnegation of selfhood, that mortification of the will, which results in a complete self-abandonment, a "holy indifference" to the accidents of life.*"

- "What is Purity? It is that a man should have turned himself away from all creatures and have set his heart so entirely on the Pure Good that no creature is to him a comfort, that he has no desire for aught creaturely, save so far as he may apprehend therein the Pure Good, which is God."

- "'To it all creatures are pure to enjoy!" This is hardly the popular concept of the mystic; which credits him, in the teeth of such examples as St. Francis, St. Mechthild of Magdeburg, Rolle, Suso, and countless others, with a hearty dread of natural things. Too many examples of an exaggerated asceticism--such as the unfortunate story told of the holy Curé d'Ars, who refused to smell a rose for fear of sin--have supported in this respect the vulgar belief; for it is generally forgotten that though most mystics have practised asceticism as a means to an end, all ascetics are not mystics. Whatever may be the case with other deniers of the senses, it is true that the soul of the great mystic, dwelling on high levels of reality, his eyes set on the Transcendental World, is capable of combining with the perfection of detachment that intense and innocent joy in natural things, as veils and vessels of the divine, which results from seeing "all creatures in God and God in all creatures." (me- oh, yeah?)

"How then is this contradiction to be resolved: that the mystic who has declared the fundamental necessity of "leaving all creatures" yet finds them pure to enjoy? The answer to the riddle lies in the ancient paradox of Poverty: that we only enjoy true liberty in respect of such things as we neither possess nor desire. "That thou mayest have pleasure in everything, seek pleasure in nothing."

- "Poverty, then, prepares man's spirit for that union with God to which it aspires. She strips off the clothing which he so often mistakes for himself, transvaluates all his values, and shows him things as they are." (Nietzsche, the Absurd Perspective, Nihilism, the illusory nature of morality, etc.)

- "The true rule of poverty consists in giving up those things which enchain the spirit, divide its interests, and deflect it on its road to God--whether these things be riches, habits, religious observances, friends, interests, distastes, or desires--not in mere outward destitution for its own sake."

- "It is impossible to predict what those things will be which a self must give up, in order that the transcendental consciousness may grow."

- "Thus each adventurer must discover and extirpate all those interests which nourish selfhood, however innocent or even useful these interests may seem in the eyes of the world. The only rule is the ruthless

abandonment of everything which is in the way."

- *"Here East and West are in agreement: "Their science," says Al Ghazzali of the Sufis, who practised, like the early Franciscans, a complete renunciation of worldly goods, "has for its object the uprooting from the soul of all violent passions, the extirpation from it of vicious desires and evil qualities; so that the heart may become detached from all that is not God, and give itself for its only occupation meditation upon the Divine Being." All those who have felt themselves urged towards the attainment of this transcendental vision, have found that possessions interrupt the view; that claims, desires, attachments become centres of conflicting interest in the mind. They assume a false air of importance, force themselves upon the attention, and complicate [p. 211] life. Hence, in the interest of self-simplification, they must be cleared away: a removal which involves for the real enthusiast little more sacrifice than the weekly visit of the dustman. "Having entirely surrendered my own free-will," says Al Ghazzali of his personal experience, "my heart no longer felt any distress in renouncing fame, wealth, or the society of my children."*

- "This may mean the prompt and utter self-stripping of St. Francis of Assisi, who cast off his actual clothing in his relentless determination to have nothing of his own: 428 the reluctant bit-by-bit renunciations which at last set his follower Angela of Foligno free, or the drastic proceedings of Antoinette Bourignon, who found that a penny was enough to keep her from God."

- Angela of Foligno "From this time, the more she entered into herself the more she was inclined to abandon all. But she had not the courage necessary for the complete renunciation towards which her transcendental consciousness was pressing her. She struggled to adjust herself to the inner and the outer life, but without success."

- Angela of Foligno "She disguised herself in a hermit's dress- she had no one to help or advise her--and "went out of her chamber about Four in the Morning, taking nothing but one Penny to buy Bread for that Day and it being said to her in the going out, Where is thy Faith? In a Penny? she threw it away. . . . Thus she went away wholly delivered from the heavy burthen of the Cares and Good Things of this World."

- "During the years of inward stress, of penance and growing knowledge of the Infinite, which she spent in the Convent of the Incarnation, and which accompanied this slow remaking of character, Teresa's only self-indulgence--as it seems, a sufficiently innocent one--was talking to the friends who came down from Avila to the convent-parlour, and spoke to her through the grille. Her confessors, unaccustomed to the education of mystical genius, saw nothing incompatible between this practice and the pursuit of a high contemplative life. But as her transcendental consciousness, her states of orison grew stronger, Teresa felt more and more the distracting influence of these glimpses of the outer world. They were a drain upon the energy which ought to be wholly given to that new, deep, more real life which she felt stirring within her, and which could only hope to achieve its mighty destiny by complete concentration upon the business in hand. No genius can afford to dissipate his energies: the mystic genius least of all. Teresa knew that so long as she retained these personal satisfactions, her life had more than one focus; she was not whole-hearted in her surrender to the Absolute. But though her inward voices, her deepest instincts, urged her to give them up, for years she felt herself incapable of such a sacrifice. It was round the question of their retention or surrender that the decisive battle of her life was fought."

- "So that these two inclinations warred with each other in the breast of this blessed woman, and the authors who inspired them each did his utmost to inflame her most, and the oratory blotted out what the grating wrote, and at times the grating vanquished and diminished the good fruit produced by prayer, causing agony and grief which disquieted and perplexed her soul: for though she was resolved to belong

entirely to God, she knew not how to shake herself free from the world: and at times she persuaded herself that she could enjoy both, which ended mostly, as she says, in complete enjoyment of neither."

- "Teresa must give up her passionate delight in human friendship. Antoinette, never much tempted in that direction, must give up her last penny. What society was to Teresa's generous, energetic nature, prudence was to the temperamentally shrewd and narrow Antoinette: a distraction, a check on the development of the all-demanding transcendental genius, an unconquered relic of the "lower life."

- "Many a mystic, however, has found the perfection of detachment to be consistent with a far less drastic renunciation of external things than that which these women felt to be essential to their peace...Here we are reminded of Plato. *"The true order of going is to use the beauties of Earth as steps along which one mounts upwards for the sake of that other Beauty."*

- *"the Blessed Angela of Foligno, who, though a true mystic, viewed with almost murderous satisfaction the deaths of relatives who were "impediments."* Quote of Angela of Foligno: *"In that time and by God's will there died my mother, who was a great hindrance unto me in following the way of God: soon after my husband died likewise, and also all my children. And because I had commenced to follow the Aforesaid Way, and had prayed God that He would rid me of them, I had great consolation of their deaths."*

- St. Augustine- "Love, and do what you like." (me- Ha! Is it this simple? Vivekananda says this too)

- "Since the greater and stronger the mystic, the stronger and more stubborn his character tends to be, this change of life and turning of energy from the old and easy channels to the new is often a stormy matter. It is a period of actual battle between the inharmonious elements of the self, its lower and higher springs of action: of toil, fatigue, bitter suffering, and many disappointments."

- "The stronger the death the more powerful and thorough is the corresponding life; the more intimate the death, the more inward is the life."

- *"No more than detachment, then, is mortification an end in itself. It is a process, an education directed towards the production of a definite kind of efficiency, the adjustment of human nature to the demands of its new life."* (how do we explain someone like Cioran, if detachment and mortification is not an 'end' or a 'true' conception of God itself? 3/20- Update! Ha! I understand this now. After reading Cioran in the context of the saints/mystics, this previous question is misguided)

- *"Severe, and to the outsider apparently unmeaning--like their physical parallels the exercises of the gymnasium--its disciplines, faithfully accepted, do release the self from the pull of the lower nature, establish it on new levels of freedom and power."*

- On Mortification- "All those self-regarding instincts--so ingrained that they have become automatic--which impel the self to choose the more comfortable part, are seen by the awakened intuition of the embryo mystic as gross infringements of the law of love."

- "The senses have grown stronger than their masters, monopolized the field of perception, dominated an organism which was made for greater activities, and built up those barriers of individuality which must be done away if true personality is to be achieved, and with it some share in the boundless life of the One."

- *"The soul is plunged in utter [p. 221] ignorance, when she supposes that she can attain to the high estate of union with God before she casts away the desire of all things, natural and supernatural, which she may possess,"* says St. John of the Cross, "because the distance between them and that which takes place in the state of pure transformation in God is infinite."

- *"The mystics have a profound conviction that Creation, Becoming, Transcendence, is a painful process at the best. Those who are Christians point to the Passion of Christ as a proof that the cosmic journey to perfection, the path of*

the Eternal Wisdom, follows of necessity the Way of the Cross. That law of the inner life, which sounds so fantastic and yet is so bitterly true--"No progress without pain"--asserts itself. It declares that birth pangs must be endured in the spiritual as well as in the material world: that adequate training must always hurt the athlete."

- *"Pain, therefore, the mystics always welcome and often court: sometimes in the crudely physical form which Suso describes so vividly and horribly in the sixteenth chapter of his Life, more frequently in those refinements of torture which a sensitive spirit can extract from loneliness, injustice, misunderstanding--above all, from deliberate contact with the repulsive accidents of life." (me- theync? Ha!)*

- *"And while she worked such and so many mortifications of all her senses it was several times asked of her 'Why do you do this?' And she answered 'I do not know, but I feel myself drawn inwardly to do this . . . and I think it is God's will.'"*

- *"This established ascendancy of the "interior man," the transcendental consciousness, over "sensitive nature"--the self in its reactions to the ups and downs and manifold illusions of daily life--is the very object of Purgation. It is, then, almost impossible that any mystic, whatever his religion, character or race, should escape its battles: for none at the beginning of their growth are in a position to dispense with its good offices. Neoplatonists and Mahomedans, no less than the Christian ascetics, are acquainted with the Purgative Way."*

- *"In this intermittent style, torn by these constant fluctuations between depression and delight, did Merswin, in whom the psychic instability of the artistic and mystic types is present in excess, pass through the purgative and illuminated states. 472 They appear to have coexisted in his consciousness, first one and then the other emerging and taking control. Hence he did not attain the peaceful condition which is characteristic of full illumination, and normally closes the "First Mystic Life"; but passed direct from these violent alternations of mystical pleasure and mystical pain to the state which he calls "the school of suffering love." This, as we shall see when we come to its consideration, is strictly analogous to that [p. 229] which other mystics have called the "Dark Night of the Soul," and opens the "Second Mystic Life" or Unitive Way."*

- *"Though it is convenient for purposes of study to practise a certain dissection, and treat as separate states which are, in the living subject, closely intertwined, we should constantly remind ourselves that such a proceeding is artificial. The struggle of the self to disentangle itself from illusion and attain the Absolute is a life-struggle."*

- On William Blake *"They thought him a madman for his pains."*

- On Illuminated Consciousness *"This consciousness, in its various forms and degrees, is perhaps the most constant characteristic of Illumination; and makes it, for the mystic soul, a pleasure-state of the intensest kind. I do not mean by this that the subject passes months or years in a continuous ecstasy of communion with the Divine. Intermittent periods of spiritual fatigue or "aridity"--renewals of the temperamental conflicts experienced in purgation--the oncoming gloom of the Dark Night--all these may be, and often are, experienced [p. 242] at intervals during the Illuminated Life; as flashes of insight, indistinguishable from illumination, constantly break the monotony of the Purgative Way. But a deep certitude of the Personal Life omnipresent in the universe has been achieved; and this can never be forgotten, even though it be withdrawn."*

- *"The mystics, however, who discriminate so much more delicately than their critics between true and false transcendental experience, never feel any doubt about its validity. Even when their experience seems inconsistent with their theology, they refuse to be disturbed."*

- *"The real distinction between the Illuminative and the Unitive Life is that in Illumination the individuality of the subject--however profound his spiritual consciousness, however close his apparent communion with the Infinite--remains separate and intact. His heightened apprehension of reality lights*

up rather than obliterates the rest of his life: and may even increase his power of dealing adequately with the accidents of normal existence."

- "The mind, concentrated upon a higher object of interest, is undistracted by its own anxieties, likes, or dislikes; and hence performs the more efficiently the work that is given it to do. Where it does not do so, then the normal make-up or imperfect discipline of the subject, rather than its mystical proclivities, must be blamed." (me- Vivekananda)

- *"The great contemplatives, those destined to attain the full stature of the mystic, emerge from this period of destitution, however long and drastic it may be, as from a new purification. It is for them the gateway to a higher state. But persons of a less heroic spirituality, if they enter the Night at all may succumb to its dangers and pains. This "great negation" is the sorting-house of the spiritual life. Here we part from the "nature mystics," the mystic poets, and all who shared in and were contented with the illuminated vision of reality. Those who go on are the great and strong spirits, who do not seek to know, but are driven to be."* (which will I turn out to be? Kierkegaard mentions the 'dangers' of this process of renunciation resulting in suicide)

- *"The theory here advanced that the "Dark Night" is, on its psychic side, partly a condition of fatigue, partly a state of transition, is borne out by the mental and moral disorder which seems, in many subjects, to be its dominant character. When they are in it everything seems to "go wrong" with them. They are tormented by evil thoughts and abrupt temptations, lose grasp not only of their spiritual but also of their worldly affairs. Thus Lucie-Christine says: "Often during my great temptations to [p. 385] sadness I am plunged in such spiritual darkness that I think myself utterly lost in falsehood and illusion; deceiving both myself and others. This temptation is the most terrible of all."*

790 *The health of those passing through this phase often suffers, they become "odd" and their friends forsake them; their intellectual life is at a low ebb. In their own words "trials of every kind," "exterior and interior crosses," abound."*

- *"Everything depends," says Tauler, on "a fathomless sinking in a fathomless nothingness." He continues, "If a man were to say, 'Lord, who art Thou, that I must follow Thee through such deep, gloomy, miserable paths?' the Lord would reply, 'I am God and Man, and far more God.' If a man could answer then, really and consciously from the bottom of his heart. 'Then I am nothing and less than nothing'; all would be accomplished, for the Godhead has really no place to work in, but ground where all has been annihilated."* (selflessness, everything is one, the meaninglessness/Nihilism of the world and all the actions inside of it)

- *"The state of "Quiet," we have said, entails suspension of the surface-consciousness: yet consciousness of the subject's personality remains. It follows, generally, on a period of deliberate and loving recollection, of a slow and steady withdrawal of the attention from the channels of sense. To one who is entering this state, the external world seems to get further and further away: till at last nothing but the paramount fact of his own existence remains. So startling, very often, is the deprivation of all his accustomed mental furniture, of the noise and flashing of the transmitting instruments of sense, that the negative aspect of his condition dominates consciousness; and he can but describe it as a nothingness, a pure passivity, an emptiness, a "naked" orison. He is there, as it were poised, resting, waiting, he does not know for what: only he is conscious that all, even in this utter emptiness, is well. Presently, however, he becomes aware that Something fills this emptiness; something omnipresent, intangible, like sunny air. Ceasing to attend to the messages from without, he begins to notice That which has always been within. His whole being is thrown open to its influence: it permeates his consciousness."* (me- great description of a psylocibin trip. Hence the connections between the mystics, the saints, and the psychedelics of Mckenna, etc. I feel this way on cannabis, but it's more of a remembrance of the actual experience. It is a vague picture inside my

consciousness, and not the full blown experience that seemingly came from what felt like from outside myself, while still being wholly interior at the same time. Cioran pg 42, 61,)

- *"The soul," he says, "with all its powers, has divided and scattered itself in outward things, each according to its functions: the power of sight in the eye, the power of hearing in the ear, the power of taste in the tongue, and thus they are the less able to work inwardly, for every power which is divided is imperfect. So the soul, if she would work inwardly, must call home all her powers and collect them from all divided things to one inward work. . . . If a man will work an inward work, he must pour all his powers into himself as into a corner of the soul, and must hide himself from all images and forms, and then he can work. Then he must come into a forgetting and a not-knowing. He must be in a stillness and silence, where the Word may be heard. One cannot draw near to this Word better than by stillness and silence: then it is heard and understood in utter ignorance. When one knows nothing, it is opened and revealed. Then we shall become aware of the Divine Ignorance, and our ignorance will be ennobled and adorned with supernatural knowledge. And when we simply keep ourselves receptive, we are more perfect than when at work."* (me- finite/infinite distinction)

- *"In this," says Eckhart finely, "the soul is of equal capacity with God. As God is boundless in giving, so the soul is boundless in receiving. And as God is almighty in His work, see the soul is an abyss of receptivity: and so she is formed anew with God and in God."* (me- Vivekananda)

- *"There is this difference between the orison of quiet and that in which the whole soul is united to God; that in this last the soul has not to absorb the Divine Food. God deposits it with her, she knows not how. The orison of quiet, on the other hand, demands, it seems to me, a slight effort; but it is accompanied by so much sweetness that one hardly feels it."* 670 *"A slight effort," says St. Teresa. "A naked intent stretching," says the "Pystle of Private Counsel." These words mark the frontier between the true and healthy mystic state of "Quiet" and its morbid perversion in "Quietism": the difference between the tense stillness of the athlete and the limp passivity of the sluggard, who is really lazy, though he looks resigned. True "Quiet" is a means, not an end: is actively embraced, not passively endured. It is a phase in the self's growth in contemplation; a bridge which leads from its old and uncoordinated life of activity to its new unified life of deep action--the real "mystic life" of man.* (me- the distinction of 'quite' and 'quietism' is only valid under a false/misunderstood description of 'quietism'. Cioran says mystics are 'conquerors', Tillich talks about 'participation', Vivekananda says we must *strive* after God with the same vigor as a man who is being held under water is dying for a gasp of air, the end is not 'laziness', it is an attempt at the impossible: an understanding of God, and I think that Molinos would agree with all of this)

- *"Thus Molinos gives in the "Spiritual Guide" many unexceptional maxims upon Interior Silence: "By not speaking nor desiring, and not thinking," he says justly enough of the contemplative spirit, "she arrives at the true and perfect mystical silence wherein God speaks with the soul, communicates Himself to it, and in the abyss of its own depth teaches it the most perfect and exalted wisdom. He calls and guides it to this inward solitude and mystical silence, when He says that He will speak to it alone in the most secret and hidden part of the heart." Here Molinos speaks the language of all mystics, yet the total result of his teaching was to suggest to the ordinary mind that there was a peculiar virtue in doing nothing at all, and that all deliberate spiritual activities were bad."* (me- and, obviously, this is not what Molinos means. As a mystic, Molinos' Nothingness is one of plenitude. He is a conqueror, not a lazy person)

- *"The true contemplative, coming to this plane of utter stillness, does not desire "extraordinary favours and visitations," but the privilege of breathing for a little while the atmosphere of Love. He is about that which St. Bernard called "the business of all businesses": goes, in perfect simplicity, to the encounter of Perfection, not to the*

development of himself. So, even at this apparently "passive" stage of his progress, the mystic's operations are found on analysis to have a dynamic and purposive character: his very repose is the result of stress. He is a pilgrim that still seeks his country." (me- this is not about my "happiness" or "pleasure", this is actually hard work! Ha!)

- "All activity was forbidden it, all choice was a negation of its surrender, all striving was unnecessary and wrong. It needed only to rest for evermore and "let God work and speak in the silence." This doctrine is so utterly at variance with all that we know of the laws of life and growth, that it hardly seems to stand in need of condemnation. Such a state of indifference--which the quietists strove in vain to identify with that state of Pure Love which "seeketh not its own" [p. 326] in spiritual things--cannot coexist with any of those "degrees of ardent charity" through which man's spirit must pass on its journey to the One: and this alone is enough to prove its non-mystical character." (me- Cioran says the mystics are 'conquerors', the mystical state and the journey to it is anything but passive, Tillich says 'participation' is necessary, Vivekananda says we search after the Ideal and want God like a man whose head is being held down under water wants air. This description, a 'state of indifference, is not an accurate depiction of the Quietist position. The Quietist is just pointing out the *limited* perception of finite beings and as a consequence making a failure, necessarily, of all human conceptions of the Divine, i.e. symbolism. It's not a state of indifference but an unending 'spiritual crisis' that involves a conquering of an invisible world')

- Quoting St. Teresa *"To me it seems to be nothing else than a death, as it were, to all the things of this world, and a fruition of God. I know of no other words whereby to describe it or explain it; neither does the soul then know what to do--for it knows not whether to speak or be silent, whether it should laugh or weep. It is a glorious folly, a heavenly madness wherein true wisdom is acquired; and to the soul a kind of fruition most full of delight. . . . The faculties of the soul now retain only the power of occupying themselves wholly with God..."*

- "Thanks to the spatial imagery inseparable from human thinking and human expression, no direct description of spiritual experience is or can be possible to man. It must always be symbolic, allusive, oblique: always suggest, but never tell, the truth..." (me- Tillich and Vivekananda, symbolism)

- *"The first is the craving which makes him a pilgrim and wanderer. It is the longing to go out from his normal world in search of a lost home, a "better country"; an Eldorado, a Sarras, a Heavenly [p. 127] Syon. The next is that craving of heart for heart, of the soul for its perfect mate, which makes him a lover. The third is the craving for inward purity and perfection, which makes him an ascetic, and in the last resort a saint."* (me- Plato, Vivekananda)

- *"These three cravings, I think, answer to three ways in which mystics of different temperaments attack the problem of the Absolute: three different formulae under which their transcendence of the sense-world can be described. In describing this transcendence, and the special adventures involved in it, they are describing a change from the state of ordinary men, in touch with the sense-world, responding to its rhythms, to the state of spiritual consciousness in which, as they say, they are "in union" with Divine Reality, with God. Whatever be the theological creed of the mystic, he never varies in declaring this close, definite, and actual intimacy to be the end of his quest. "Mark me like the tulip with Thine own streaks," says the Sufi. 258 "I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man," says the German contemplative. 259 "My me is God, nor do I know my self-hood save in Him," says the Italian saint."*

- *"But, since this Absolute God is for him substance, ground or underlying Reality of all that is : present yet absent, near yet far: He is already as truly immanent in the human soul as in the Universe. The seeker for the Real may therefore objectify his quest in two apparently contradictory, yet really mutually explanatory ways. First he may see it as an outgoing journey from the world of illusion to the real or transcendental world: a leaving of the visible for the*

invisible. Secondly, it may appear to him as an inward alteration, remaking or regeneration, by which his personality or character is so changed as to be able to enter into communion with that Fontal Being which he loves and desires; is united with and dominated by the indwelling God who is the fount of his spiritual life. In the first case, the objective idea "God" is the pivot of his symbolism: the Blazing Star, or Magnet of the Universe which he has seen far off, and seeing, has worshipped and desired. In the second case, the emphasis falls on the subjective idea "Sanctity," with its accompanying consciousness of a disharmony to be abolished. The Mystic Way will then be described, not as a journey, but as an alteration of personality, the transmuting of "earthly" into "heavenly" man. Plainly these two aspects are obverse and reverse of one whole. They represent that mighty pair of opposites, Infinite and Finite, God and Self, which it is the business of mysticism to carry up into a higher synthesis. [p. 128] Whether the process be considered as outward search or inward change, its object and its end are the same. Man enters into that Order of Reality for which he was made, and which is indeed the inciting cause of his pilgrimage and his purification: for however great the demand on the soul's own effort may be, the initiative always lies with the living Divine World itself. Man's small desire is evoked, met, and fulfilled by the Divine Desire, his "separated will" or life becomes one with the great Life of the All." (me- Vivekananda, Jnana/Karma Yoga, Tillich "faith pg. 12-13, 53, 120")

The Spiritual Life

- "Most of our conflicts and difficulties come from trying to deal with the spiritual and practical aspects of our life separately instead of realising them as parts of one whole. If our practical life is centred on our own interests, cluttered up by possessions, distracted by ambitions, passions, want— and worries, beset by a sense of our own rights and importance, or anxieties for our own future, or longings for our own success, we need not expect that our spiritual life will be a contrast to all this."
- "is All. All takes place within Him. He alone matters, He alone is. Our spiritual life is His affair; because, whatever we may think to the contrary, it is really produced by His steady attraction, and our humble and self forgetful response to it. It consists in being drawn, at His pace and in His way, to the place where He wants us to be; not the place we fancied for ourselves."
- "For the most part, of course, the presence and action of the great spiritual universe surrounding us is no more noticed by us than the pressure of air on our bodies, or the action of light. Our field of attention is not wide enough for that; our spiritual senses are not sufficiently alert. *Most people work so hard developing their correspondence with the visible world, that their power of corresponding with the invisible is left in a rudimentary state.*"
- "So, while we must avoid too much indefiniteness and abstraction on one hand, we must also avoid hard and fast definitions on the other hand. For no words in our human language are adequate or accurate when applied to spiritual realities; and it is the saints and not the sceptics who have most insisted on this. "No knowledge of God which we get in this life is true knowledge," says St. John of the Cross. It is always confused, imperfect, oblique." (Tillich, Vivekananda)
- "The old writers call these two activities Mortification and Prayer. These are formidable words, and modern man tends to recoil from them." (Ha!)
- "Mortification means killing the very roots of self-love; pride and possessiveness, anger and violence, ambition and greed in all their disguises, however respectable those disguises may be, whatever uniforms they wear. In fact, it really means the entire transformation of our personal, professional and political life into something more consistent

with our real situation as small dependent, fugitive creatures; all sharing the same limitations and inheriting the same half-animal past."

- "Prayer means turning to Reality, taking our part, however humble, tentative and half-understood, in the continual conversation, the communion, of our spirits with the Eternal Spirit; the acknowledgment of our entire dependence, which is yet the partly free dependence of the child. For Prayer is really our whole life toward God: our longing for Him, our "incurable God-sickness," as Barth calls it, our whole drive towards Him."

- *"Here we are, small half-real creatures of sense and spirit, haunted by the sense of a Perfection ever calling to us, and yet ourselves so fundamentally imperfect, so hopelessly involved in an imperfect world; with a passionate desire for beauty, and more mysteriously still, a knowledge of beauty, and yet unable here to realise perfect beauty; with a craving for truth and a deep reverence for truth, but only able to receive flashes of truth. Yet we know that perfect goodness, perfect beauty, and perfect truth exist within the Life of God; and that our hearts will never rest in less than these. This longing, this need of God, however dimly and vaguely we feel it, is the seed from which grows the strong, beautiful and fruitful plant of prayer."*

- "What a contrast this almost inarticulate act of measureless adoration is, to what Karl Barth calls the dreadful prattle of theology. Hallowed be thy Name: not described: or analysed be thy Name. Before that Name, let the most soaring intellects cover their eyes with their wings, and adore. Compared with this, even the coming of the Kingdom and the doing of the Will are side issues; particular demonstrations of the Majesty of the Infinite God, on whom all centres, and for whom all is done. People who are apt to say that adoration is difficult and it is so much easier to pray for practical things, might remember that in making this great act of adoration they are praying for extremely practical things: among others, that their own characters, homes, social contacts, work, conversation, amusements and politics may be cleansed from imperfection, sanctified."

- *"What really seems to you to matter most? The perfection of His mighty symphony, or your own remarkably clever performance of that difficult passage for the tenth violin?"*

- "There is energy, drive, purpose in those words; an intensity of desire for the coming of perfection into life. Not the limp resignation that lies devoutly in the road and waits for the steam roller; but a total concentration on the total interests of God, which must be expressed in action. It is useless to utter fervent petitions for that Kingdom to be established and that Will be done, unless we are willing to *do something about it ourselves*. As we walk through London we know very well that we are not walking through the capital of the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet we might be, if the conviction and action of every Christian in London were set without any conditions or any reluctance towards this end; if there were perfect consistency, whatever it cost— and it is certain that *the cost would not be small— between our spiritual ideals and our social and political acts*.

- *"The life of this planet, and especially its human life, is a life in which something has gone wrong, and badly wrong. Every time that we see an unhappy face, an unhealthy body, hear a bitter or despairing word, we are reminded of that. The occasional dazzling flashes of pure beauty, pure goodness, pure love which show us what God wants and what He is, only throw into more vivid relief the horror of cruelty, greed, oppression, hatred, ugliness; and also the mere muddle and stupidity which frustrate and bring suffering into life. Unless we put on blinkers, we can hardly avoid seeing all this; and unless we are warmly wrapped up in our own cozy ideas, and absorbed in our own interests, we surely cannot help feeling the sense of obligation, the shame of acquiescence, the call to do something about it."*

- "...the awakening of a human being to his true situation over against Reality, and the true object of his fugitive life. There are three stages in it. First, the sudden disclosure of the Divine Splendour; the mysterious and daunting beauty of Holiness, on which even the seraphs dare not look. The veil is lifted, and the Reality which is always there is revealed. And at once the young man sees, by contrast, his own dreadful imperfection. "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips!" The vision of perfection, if it is genuine, always brings shame, penitence, and therefore purification. That is the second stage. What is the third? The faulty human creature, who yet possesses the amazing power of saying Yes or No to the Eternal God, is asked for his services, and instantly responds. "Who will go for us?" "Here am I! send me!" There the very essence of the spiritual life is gathered and presented in a point: first the vision of the Perfect, and the sense of imperfection and unworthiness over against the Perfect, and then because of the vision, and in spite of the imperfection, action in the interests of the Perfect— co-operation with God."

- *"The action may be almost anything; from the ceaseless self-offering of the enclosed nun to the creation of beauty, or the clearance of slums. "Here am I! send me!" means going anyhow, anywhere, at any time.*

- *"Great courage and initiative, the hardy endurance of privation and fatigue, the calm acceptance of unpopularity, misunderstanding and contempt, are at least as characteristic of them as any of the outward marks of piety. So too their inner life, which we are inclined to think of as a constant succession of spiritual delights, was often hard and painful. Willingly and perpetually, they prayed from within the Cross, shared the agony, darkness, loneliness of the Cross; and because of this, they shared in its saving power. The Church is in the world to save the world. It is a tool of God for that purpose; not a comfortable religious club established in fine historical premises."*

- *"Fuss and feverishness, anxiety, intensity, intolerance, instability, pessimism and wobble, and every kind of hurry and worry — these, even on the highest levels, are signs of the self-made and self-acting soul; the spiritual parvenu. The saints are never like that. They share the quiet and noble qualities of the great family to which they belong: the family of the Sons of God."* (disagree with this, or have trouble making sense of the 'dark night', am skeptical about 'bliss' being anything other than another transitory possibility, the infinite/finite distinction makes the 'mystical' state 'lower' than the experience of Nihilism or meaninglessness, Tillich)

- *"We see that plainly in the Saints; in the quiet steadiness of spirit with which they meet the vicissitudes and sufferings of their lives. They know that these small and changing lives, about which we are often so troubled, are part of a great mystery; the life that is related to God and known by God."*

- *"St. Bernard and St. Francis discard all outward possessions, all the grace and beauty of life, and accept poverty and hardship; and through their renunciation a greater wealth and a more exquisite beauty is given the world."*

- *"The action of those whose lives are given to the Spirit has in it something of the leisure of Eternity; and because of this, they achieve far more than those whose lives are enslaved by the rush and hurry, the unceasing tick-tick of the world. In the spiritual life it is very important to get our timing right. Otherwise we tend to forget that God, Who is greater than our heart, is greater than our job too."*

- *"Even that mysterious communion with God in which we seek, and offer ourselves to, that which we love — in spite of the deep peace it brings — is not without the pain and tension which must be felt by imperfect human creatures, when they contemplate and stretch towards a beauty and perfection which they cannot reach."* (just mentioned this above, Tillich)

- *"I think as I write this of Dürer's wonderful drawing of the Knight, Death and the Devil: the Knight of the Spirit on his strong and well kept horse — human nature, treated as it ought to be, and used as it ought to be — riding up a dark rocky defile. Beside him travels Death, a horrible, doddering figure of decay,*

saying, "All things perish— time is passing— we are all getting older— is this effort really worth while?" On his flank is a yet more hideous fellow-pilgrim; the ugly, perverse, violent element of our mixed human nature, all our animal part, our evil impulses, nagging at him too. In one way or another, we all hear those two voices from time to time; with their discouragements and sneers, their unworthy invitations, their cynical comments and vile suggestions. "Don't forget me, I am your future," says Death. "Don't forget me," says animal man, "I am your undying past." But the Knight of the Spirit does not look at them. He has had his hand-to-hand struggle farther back; and on his lance is impaled the horrid creature, his own special devil, which he has slain. Now he is absorbed in the contemplation of something beyond the picture, something far more real than the nightmarish landscape through which he must travel; and because of that, he rides steadily forth from that lower world and its phantasies to the Eternal World and its realities. He looks at that which he loves, not at that which he hates, and so he goes safely out of the defile into the open; where he will join the great army of God."