

Journal314 Part VI 43-46 Recall Summary

Unamuno and the Tragic Sense of Life

- Miguel de Unamuno's work, "The Tragic Sense of Life", emphasizes that humans are affective or feeling animals, rather than just reasoning animals, and that direct experience of existence is necessary, not just futile reasoning through philosophical concepts.
- Unamuno argues that the value of a human soul is worth more than the universe, and that those who do not believe in the soul's conscious immortality tend to exaggerate the worth of their temporary earthly life, highlighting the contradiction between the heart's desire for unending life and the head's acknowledgement of the fleeting nature of earthly existence.
- He acknowledges that life is a tragedy and a perpetual struggle, full of contradictions, and that true philosophy must reconcile intellectual necessities with the necessities of the heart and the will, rather than just being a work of differentiated specialization or pseudo-philosophical erudition.
- Unamuno believes that all knowledge has an ultimate object, and that philosophy must refer to our whole destiny and our attitude in face of life and the universe, with the most tragic problem of philosophy being to reconcile these contradictions, which requires a deep and heartfelt understanding of our existence, rather than just a rational or cerebral one.
- He also emphasizes the importance of considering the "why" of our origin and the "wherefore" of our destiny, and that this consideration must involve the heart, not just the mind, in order to truly understand our place in the universe and the value of human existence, and that vague notions of survival through children, works, or universal consciousness are insufficient to truly address the human condition.

Intellect vs. Emotional Depth and the Human Condition

- The text discusses the idea that having great talent or intelligence does not necessarily translate to emotional or moral intelligence, with thinkers like Cioran and [Vivekananda](#) suggesting that one can be a "smart person" in the world yet still be a "spiritual dunce".
- It criticizes individuals who are clever but lack emotional depth, saying they often dismiss the idea of exploring the unknowable or seeking a higher purpose, and instead focus on more pragmatic and naturalistic concerns, such as the origin of knowledge and the struggle for survival.
- The text also touches on the idea that humans have a fundamental lack or grief that they often try to ignore or hide, and that acknowledging and sharing this grief could be a powerful way to connect with others and find meaning, as suggested by thinkers like Tolstoy and Vivekananda.
- Additionally, the text explores the concept of consciousness as a "disease" that sets humans apart from other animals, and presents a naturalistic account of human origins, suggesting that humans may have evolved from diseased anthropoid monkeys.

The Nature of Knowledge, Philosophy, and the Search for Meaning

- The text also discusses the nature of knowledge and philosophy, arguing that philosophers are driven by a desire to live and find meaning, and that their philosophical pursuits are often motivated by a desire to resign themselves to life, seek finality, or distract themselves from their griefs.
- Furthermore, the text highlights the importance of personal consciousness in shaping our understanding of the world, suggesting that science and knowledge exist only in the minds of individuals who study and cultivate them, and that astronomy and mathematics have no reality beyond their existence as knowledge in human minds.
- The pursuit of knowledge is questioned in the face of the eventual end of personal consciousness on earth, prompting the inquiry into the purpose of accumulating knowledge if it ultimately ends in nothingness, as philosophers like Aristotle have noted the importance of leisure in a society.
- Human existence is characterized by a constant search for meaning, with individuals entertaining purposes in each moment of their life, directing their

actions towards these purposes, and potentially changing them in the next moment, a concept echoed in the philosophies of Heidegger.

- The contemplation of the universe and the self can lead to a profound sense of tedium and vanity, ultimately resulting in universal love and pity for all things, a notion that resonates with the ideas of universal love, God, and Nirvana, as well as Heidegger's concept of anxiety.

Consciousness, Suffering, and the Self

- Consciousness is inherently tied to the awareness of death and suffering, which serves as a catalyst for the development of self-consciousness, a idea shared by philosophers such as [Kierkegaard](#), Seraphim Rose, Cioran, and [Vivekananda](#), who emphasize the importance of suffering in the acquisition of reflective consciousness.
- The experience of suffering is essential for individuals to turn upon themselves, acquire reflective consciousness, and become centered in themselves, as it allows them to remember their existence and true selves, a concept that is also explored in Heidegger's discussion of alienation.
- Meditation on mortality, although potentially inducing anguish, can ultimately fortify individuals, and the consideration of one's own dissolution can lead to a deeper understanding of the impermanence of all things, as illustrated by the anecdote of the poor harvester who refused to let go of his earthly possessions even in the face of death.

The Human Desire for Transcendence and the Fear of Mortality

- The passage discusses the human desire to transcend mortality and understand the meaning of life, with the author referencing various philosophers, including [Pascal](#) and Cioran, to explore the concept of immortality and the fear of death.
- The author notes that humans have a natural inclination to seek answers to fundamental questions about existence, such as where they come from and where they are going, and that this search for knowledge is driven by a desire to avoid utter death and find meaning in life.

- The passage also touches on the idea that humans often try to console themselves for their mortality by adopting different attitudes and seeking various forms of consolation, including art and philosophy, but that these efforts are often motivated by a desire for self-glory and recognition rather than a genuine pursuit of truth.
- The author quotes Pascal as saying that those who claim to be indifferent to questions of mortality and eternity are "monsters," and suggests that true philosophers are rare, as many are driven by a desire to distinguish themselves and outshine others rather than seeking substantial truth.
- The passage also references the concept of "art for art's sake," suggesting that even artists who claim to create for their own amusement are often motivated by a desire to leave behind a lasting legacy and achieve a form of immortality through their work.
- The author concludes that the human search for meaning and transcendence is a fundamental aspect of the human condition, and that it is driven by a deep-seated fear of mortality and a desire to find a way to overcome it, with the author referencing the philosopher Becker and his ideas about the human condition and the search for meaning.

Doubt, Rationalism, and the Role of Faith and Imagination

- The text discusses the concept of doubt, highlighting the difference between methodical or theoretical doubt, as seen in Descartes, and a more passionate doubt that arises from the conflict between reason and feeling, science and life, and logic and biotic experiences.
- This passionate doubt is rooted in the idea that science, by reducing personality to a complex in constant flux, destroys the foundation of spiritual and emotional life, leading to a sense of incertitude and the need for a new ethic, one that is based on the conflict itself and serves as the foundation of religion.
- The text also explores the consequences of rationalism, citing Heisman's idea that reason leads to contradictions and ultimate skepticism, which can ultimately lead to a faith similar to that of [Kierkegaard](#), where the opposite of sin is not virtue, but faith.

- The rise of positivism and rationalism is noted, as well as the subsequent return of vitalism and spiritualism, with pragmatism being an effort to restore faith in the human finality of the universe.
- The text quotes Kierkegaard, stating that true prayer is not about praying to the true God without sincerity, but about praying with passion and infinite yearning, even if it is to an idol, and that reason can be nihilist and annihilating when applied to the spiritual world.
- The importance of imagination is highlighted, as it is seen as giving life and completing or integrating reality, whereas reason alone can lead to nothingness and annihilation.
- The text also references Vivekananda's question about following reason to its logical conclusions, which leads to nihilism, and notes that even a righteous man may say that God does not exist in his head, but this is still considered a truth.
- Ultimately, the text suggests that the coexistence of reason and imagination, or the fusion of all and nothing within us, allows us to live in God, who is All, and that God lives in us, who without Him, are nothing.

The Complexity of Belief in God and the Nature of True Faith

- The concept of belief in God is complex, and those who claim to believe in Him but lack passion, anguish, or doubt in their hearts may only believe in the idea of God, rather than God Himself, as noted by philosophers like Tillich and [Vivekananda](#).
- True faith is not just a matter of knowledge, but rather a deep-seated desire for God to exist, and it is a response to the nihilism that reason can lead to, with faith being a part of reason that helps individuals cope with the uncertainty and despair that can come from it.
- The belief in God is often rooted in personal experiences and emotions, such as feeling God's affection, guidance, and providence, and it is not just an intellectual concept, but a living and breathing relationship that involves love, compassion, and suffering.
- The author believes that God is the love that arises from universal suffering and becomes consciousness, and that those who affirm their faith despite

uncertainty are not lying, but rather, they are being honest about their own experiences and emotions.

- The consciousness of one's own suffering and misery can lead to a deeper understanding of the universal suffering and the eternal, and it is through this suffering that individuals can develop compassion for themselves and others, and ultimately, come to know God.

Spiritualizing Everything and the Nature of Religion

- The author emphasizes the importance of spiritualizing everything, giving one's spirit to all men and things, and recognizing that consciousness, craving, and hunger for eternity and infinity are never satisfied, but rather, they are what drive humans to seek more and to seek God.
- The text also touches on the idea that religion is not just a set of beliefs or dogmas, but rather, it is a personal and emotional experience that involves a sense of connection to something greater than oneself, and it is related to the religious sense, which is a more general and universal feeling of awe, wonder, and reverence.
- The concept of religion is deeply personal and can only be truly understood through individual experience, as every man's definition of religion is based upon his own inward experience of it rather than upon his observation of it in others.

Mysticism and the Union with God

- [Miguel de Molinos](#), a Spanish mystic, believed that to attain the mystical science, one must abandon and be detached from five things: creatures, temporal things, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, oneself, and even God, in order to be lost in God and find oneself.
- The idea of eternal life and eternal union with God raises questions about the preservation of individual personality, and whether it is possible for a human soul to live and enjoy God eternally without losing itself, with some suggesting that eternal vision of God may be an eternal death, a swooning away of the personality.

- St. [Teresa](#) described the last state of prayer as a rapture, transport, flight, or ecstasy of the soul, where the soul is borne away without losing consciousness, and Miguel de Molinos described a similar state of internal and mystical silence, where the soul is absorbed in God and lost in Him.
- The concept of a beatific vision, a loving contemplation in which the soul is absorbed in God, can be seen as either an annihilation of self or a prolonged tedium, and some people may view the heaven of eternal glory as a place of eternal boredom, highlighting the complexity and paradox of the human desire for union with God.
- The text also explores the idea that the condition that makes our eternal union with God thinkable may also destroy our longing for it, and that the distinction between being absorbed by God and absorbing Him in ourselves may be meaningless, as it is all the same, whether it is the stream that is lost in the sea or the sea that is lost in the stream.

The Human Condition and the Search for Happiness in God

- The text from 'Journal314_43-46' explores the human condition, delving into the concept of consciousness, personal identity, and the search for happiness, with the underlying idea that true happiness can only be found in the presence of God.
- The discussion touches on the idea of seeking oneself, but also acknowledges the possibility of finding one's own nothingness, and the potential for one's work to be lost in the end, leading to the question of why one should work at it, with the answer being that to accomplish one's work without thinking about oneself is to love God.
- The text also references the idea of an eternity of suffering, and the possibility of a God who is nourished by human suffering, citing philosophers such as Nietzsche and Cioran, who experienced their own happiness as worthless.
- The writings of [Angela of Foligno](#) are quoted, emphasizing the importance of embracing poverty in all aspects of life, including worldly things, friends, and delights, in order to inherit the kingdom of heaven, and warning that those who do not follow this path will be cursed and lamenting.

- The text also describes the poverty of [Christ](#), who owned no possessions, accepted only what was necessary for his bodily needs, and desired to be poor in friends and worldly friendships, ultimately being rejected and persecuted by those around him.
- The personal experience of Angela of Foligno is shared, where she found consolation in the death of her family members, who she saw as a hindrance to her following the way of God, and prayed for their removal.
- The text concludes by referencing the writings of [Thomas Keating](#), who describes the human condition as being without the true source of happiness, which is the experience of the presence of God, and having lost the key to happiness, which is the contemplative dimension of life, a message similar to that of the Bagavagita and Ram Dass.

The Contemplative Journey and the Purification of the Unconscious

- The search for happiness is often misguided, as people look for it outside themselves, when in reality, it can only be found within, and this inner search requires a process of self-reflection and humility, as noted in the context of the psychedelic era, where people opened themselves to the unconscious without proper preparation.
- The contemplative journey is a process of purification of the unconscious, which involves letting go of the false self, and this journey is not a means to instant bliss, but rather a humbling experience that allows individuals to discover their true selves and find interior freedom through participation in the sufferings of [Christ](#), as a symbol of God's love for everyone.
- In the future, religious leaders and spiritual teachers should focus on creating communion, harmony, and respect among people of different religions, rather than trying to convert others, and this can be achieved by promoting unconditional love and respect for all members of the human family, especially those in need.
- The false self is driven by desires for fame, power, wealth, and prestige, and it can lead to burnout and failure in social action, unless individuals undergo profound purification and become aware of the dynamics at work within

themselves, which is a key aspect of the human condition that none of us is initially responsible for, but we are called to be responsible for as adults.

- Contemplative prayer is a means to access the divine presence within, which is the source of true happiness, and regular practice of contemplative prayer can help individuals relativize the demands and desires of the world, and find peace and inner freedom, by awakening the presence of the word of God in us, as described in the [Christian](#) tradition of listening to sacred scripture in the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The process of spiritual growth and self-awareness is likened to a journey where one must let go of their selfish programs for happiness and cultural conditioning to truly find themselves and manifest the presence of God.
- According to the text, everybody is culturally conditioned to some degree, and even the greatest saints only reach a certain degree of freedom from cultural over-identification, which is challenged in Centering Prayer and requires facing the dark side of one's personality.
- The spiritual journey is not a career or a success story, but rather a series of humiliations of the false self that become more and more profound, making room for the Holy Spirit to come in and heal, and it requires submitting to the divine therapy and allowing God to address the deep levels of one's attachments to themselves and their programs for happiness.
- The text emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between one's true self and their emotions, thoughts, and roles, stating that "you are not angry; you just have angry feelings" and "you are not depressed; you have feelings of depression", and that one must cease to identify with the tyranny of their emotional programs for happiness and the limitations of their cultural conditioning.
- The spiritual conversion process involves a transition period that is dark, confusing, and confining, followed by a period of peace, enjoyment of a new inner freedom, and the wonder of new insights, which takes time and rarely happens suddenly, and it requires dropping whatever role or persona one identifies with, as it is not their true self.
- The text highlights the importance of submitting to the divine therapy and allowing the Spirit of God to address the deep levels of one's attachments to themselves and their programs for happiness, as this is essential for personal

healing and for contributing to the greater good of humanity, especially in a global culture with increasing pluralism of religious beliefs.

- The concept of ego death is discussed, where the ultimate abandonment of one's role is not having a self as a fixed point of reference, but rather the freedom to manifest God through one's own uniqueness, as noted by Heisman and other mystics, including the idea that to be no one is to be everyone and to be nothing is to be everything.
- According to the text, this state can be achieved through spiritual discipline, as chosen by a monk, or by passing through great tragedy or physical and mental suffering, as God may lead some people through terrible anguish and pain to the same place of liberation from the false self.

Mysticism, Naturalism, and the Search for Reality

- Evelyn Underhill's work on [Mysticism](#) is referenced, explaining that a direct encounter with absolute truth is impossible for normal non-mystical consciousness, and that some people are tormented by the Unknowable and ache for first principles, demanding some background to the shadow show of things.
- The text also discusses the concept of Naturalism, which may be a counsel of prudence due to our ignorance of all that lies beyond, but it can never satisfy our hunger for reality, and that people live in different and mutually exclusive worlds, not only of thought but also of perception, as noted by the idea that artist and surgeon, [Christian](#) and rationalist, pessimist and optimist, do actually and truly live in different worlds.
- The mind that seeks the Real is thrown back on itself, relying on images and concepts that owe more to the "seer" than to the "seen", but Reality must be real for all, existing "in itself" upon a plane of being unconditioned by the perceiving mind, in order to satisfy the mind's most vital instinct and sacred passion for truth, as discussed in the context of the instinct for the Absolute and the passion for truth.
- The concept of reality is relative and conventionalized, with the ordinary man perceiving facts and the Scientific Realist perceiving knowledge as symbols of an unknowable reality, and it is acknowledged that these symbols are at best approximate representations of the truth.

- The human instinct persistently seeks an unknown unity, an all-inclusive Absolute, which is perceived as the only possible satisfaction of the thirst for truth, and this is evident in the great moments of existence when individuals rise to spiritual freedom, feeling that love, patriotism, religion, altruism, and fame are more real than any factual reality.
- Religions, such as Christianity and [Buddhism](#), are steeped in idealism, emphasizing the importance of transcending the material world, and their scriptures often warn that materialists will be damned, highlighting the significance of idealistic conceptions of life.
- However, when idealists are asked how to attain communion with the described reality, their system breaks down, and it becomes apparent that their philosophy is more of a theoretical diagram than a practical guide, and some individuals may find that psychedelics could potentially help in this regard.
- The true intellectualist, who relies solely on reason and concedes nothing to instinct or emotion, is often forced to adopt a sceptical philosophy, as the horrors of nihilism can only be escaped by exercising faith in man's innate instinct for the Real, which is beyond reason and thought.
- Ultimately, the metaphysician must acknowledge that humans are forced to live, think, and die in an unknown and unknowable world, relying on faith in a supposed external order and the approximate truthfulness of the messages received from it, which is a fundamental aspect of human existence.

Living by Faith and the Illusion of Maya

- Ordinary men must live and move by faith, trusting in the laws of nature devised by the human mind, and accepting phenomena at their face value, which is an act of faith that is necessary for daily life, and certain facts, such as the uncertainty of life and the decay of the body, are often impossible for most men to realize, as they would act detrimentally to the life-force.
- The concept of Maya, as discussed by philosophers like Buddha and [Vivekananda](#), highlights the illusory nature of human perceptions, and the idea that humans are not content with their current state, as they are driven to create and strive for more, is a fundamental aspect of human existence, as noted by utilitarian philosophers who describe man as a tool-making animal.

- The human being is characterized as a vision-making animal, driven by dreams and ideals that cannot be explained by the theory of evolution based on physical perfection or intellectual supremacy, and is instead controlled by a higher and more vital reality.
- The theory of evolution must be rebuilt on a mental rather than a physical basis in order to include and explain the facts of artistic and spiritual experience, such as those related to religion, pain, and beauty, which possess a mysterious authority that exceeds feelings, arguments, or appearances.

The Problem of Suffering and the Path to a Higher Reality

- The experiences of sorrow, anxiety, and pain are mental and raise questions about why they hurt the self, and why evolution fosters the capacity for useless mental anguish and suffering as it ascends the ladder of life, which seems to invalidate the conception of the Absolute as Beautiful and Good.
- To overcome suffering, the self must either deliberately adjust to the world of sense or turn to a different world with which it is in tune, with the pessimist seeing little hope of escape and the optimist believing that pain and anguish can be life's guides on the path to a higher reality, where the self will be more at home.
- The optimist views pain and love as complementary forces that can help the self take flight towards the Absolute, and sees suffering as a "gymnastic of eternity" and a "terrible initiative caress of God", as expressed by A Kempis, who says "Gloriari in tribulatione non est grave amanti", highlighting the idea that suffering can be a transformative and redemptive experience.
- The individual who refuses to be deluded by the pleasures of the sense world and instead accepts pain, becoming an ascetic, is a puzzling type for the convinced naturalist, who can only regard them as diseased, highlighting the limitations of a materialistic philosophy in explaining such experiences.
- Pain is one of those universal experiences that is intractable from a materialistic perspective, yet it can lead to the emergence of heroes and saints, and is a factor that no honest seeker for truth can afford to neglect in their pursuit of knowledge.

The Mystical Path and the Theory of Knowledge

- The mystics, who are described as adventurers, have always declared their distrust in the sense-impressions of "normal men" and the careful logic of the intellect, instead affirming that there is another way to reach the actuality they seek, which is mediated by spiritual messages, religion, beauty, and pain.
- [Mysticism](#) postulates the existence of the Absolute and the possibility of knowing and attaining it, denying that knowledge is limited to sense impressions, intellection, or normal consciousness, and instead finding its basis in life and the existence of a discoverable "real" within the seeking subject.
- The mystics' theory of knowledge is that the spirit of man, essentially divine, is capable of immediate communion with God, the One Reality, and they speak the language of first-hand experience, which can be disconcerting to those accustomed to the neat dialectic of philosophical schools, as noted by philosophers like [Kierkegaard](#), who would agree that this definition of mysticism is actually a true description of philosophy.
- The world as seen by the mystics, described as "unimaginable, formless, dark with excess of bright," is no less real than the physicochemical universe expounded by demonstrators, and the mystics invite examination of their experiences and results, highlighting the importance of considering multiple perspectives in the pursuit of truth.

Mysticism and the Science of Ultimates

- The text from 'Journal314_43-46' discusses the concept of mysticism and its relationship with reality, highlighting that individual experiences and perceptions are subjective and may not be universally applicable, and therefore, one should not stigmatize others' experiences as impossible or invalid.
- According to the text, philosophy suggests that our understanding of the world is based on the reports of our sensory apparatus and traditional concepts, which are imperfect and may be illusions, whereas [mysticism](#) is considered the science of ultimates, dealing with self-evident Reality that cannot be reasoned about.

- The text quotes Aristotle, stating that the intellect alone is not sufficient to move or initiate the quest for Reality, and that the reasoning powers have little initiative, but rather, it is the act of perfect concentration and passionate focusing of the self that constitutes the state of recollection, a necessary prelude to pure contemplation.
- The state of recollection is described as a condition in which the mystic enters into communion with Reality, and it is characterized by the discovery of something that is really inside, but appears to be outside, and this concept of recollection is a main theme in mystical thought.
- The text also references [Plato](#), who recognized contemplation as a consciousness that could apprehend the real world of Ideas, and it is described as a psychic gateway that allows the mystic to transition from one level of consciousness to another.
- The process of contemplation is valued for its ability to produce a state of transcendental sense, releasing the individual from the "lower servitude" of earthly environment and turning them towards the "higher servitude" of dependence on a higher Reality, and this is achieved through a life of discipline and intense activity, rather than idleness.
- The text cites the example of Mary and Martha, where Mary's choice to focus on the First Principles is considered the better part, as it allows for a deeper understanding and connection with Reality, and it is noted that the passivity aimed for by mystics is actually a state of intense activity, where the superficial self is stilled to liberate a deeper power.
- The text concludes by emphasizing that the mystic way must be a life and a discipline, and that under ordinary conditions, the superficial self is unaware of the attitude of the "Dweller in the Innermost" towards the external world, but that contemplation and transcendental feelings induced by experiences such as religion, art, or love can provide glimpses into this deeper reality.

Contemplation and the Transcendental Feeling

- The mystic can bring the ground of the soul, also known as the seat of "Transcendental Feeling," within the area of consciousness by deliberately ignoring the messages of the senses through contemplation, making it amenable to the activity of the will.

- A belief in the actuality of transcendent feelings is the foundation of the [Christian](#) position and every other religion, justifying [mysticism](#), asceticism, and the self-renouncing life, and is based on the idea that there is a point at which human nature touches the Absolute.
- The "Theologia Germanica" develops a Platonic image, stating that the two eyes of the soul cannot work at the same time, and that to see into eternity with the right eye, the left eye must close itself and refrain from working, illustrating the need to let go of worldly concerns to achieve contemplation.
- Transcendental matters are typically beyond the margin of most people's consciousness because they have given up their whole consciousness to the occupation of the senses, but certain states such as recollection, contemplation, and ecstasy can allow the self to turn out the usual tenants and let submerged powers have their turn.
- The phenomenon of double or disintegrated personality may provide insight into the mechanical nature of the change that contemplation effects, where a group of qualities are abstracted from the surface-consciousness to form a complete "character" or "personality" that is separate from the usual self.
- Indian mysticism is founded on asceticism and the deliberate practice of self-hypnotization, using techniques such as fixing the eyes on a near object or the rhythmic repetition of a mantra, to diminish the pull of the phenomenal world and place the mind at the disposal of the subconscious powers.

Mystical Techniques and the Lives of Contemplatives

- Various mystic cults, including the Greek initiates of Dionysus and the Gnostics, have used similar techniques, such as dancing and music, to achieve a state of contemplation and union with the divine.
- Some people have pathologized great contemplatives, such as [St. Paul](#) and [St. Teresa](#), calling them epileptic or hysterical, but this ignores the fact that these individuals were often persons of robust intelligence and marked practical or intellectual ability, such as Plotinus, [St. Bernard](#), and the two Ss. Catherine.
- The lives of notable figures such as [John of the Cross](#), Jàmi, Jalalu 'ddin, Kant, and Beethoven demonstrate that great discoverers and creators have often

suffered from poor physical health, which could lead a classifier to mistakenly categorize them as hopeless hypochondriacs.

- The dominant idea in the mind of a mystic is the perception of the transcendent reality and presence of God, which is a rational concept that ousts all other ideas, whereas the mono-ideism of a hysteric patient is irrational.
- The human body is limited in its ability to support intense spiritual activities, and mystics often acknowledge that their bodily frame cannot support the demands of their spiritual pursuits, leading to what they term "mystical ill-health", as noted by Tauler.

Genius, Creativity, and the Deeper Self

- Geniuses, including poets, musicians, mathematicians, and inventors, seem to have a unique connection between their deep levels of being and their conscious awareness, with powers below the threshold of consciousness playing a major role in their creative work, as seen in the ideas of Plato's theory of recollection.
- The process of creation, whether in art, science, or religion, often involves a sudden uprush of intuitions or ideas that seem to come from beyond the individual's conscious control, and the execution of these ideas is often beyond the control of the superficial self.
- To access the deeper levels of consciousness and connect with the Cosmic Life, one must be quiet, receptive, and humble, allowing the subliminal mind to become a highly disciplined and skilled instrument of knowledge.
- The surface mind, concerned with natural existence and dominated by spatial conceptions, is unable to establish relations with the Absolute or transcendental world, but the deeper self, which is usually kept below the threshold of consciousness, is the primary agent of [mysticism](#) and lives a substantial life in touch with the real or transcendental world.
- Certain processes, such as contemplation, can alter the state of consciousness and permit the emergence of this deeper self, making an individual more or less a mystic, depending on the extent to which this deeper self enters into their conscious life.

Mysticism vs. Magical Transcendentalism

- The concept of magical transcendentalism encompasses various forms of self-seeking activities, including the use of incantations, congregational prayer, and self-hypnotizing devices, all of which aim to exalt the will and obtain something previously unpossessed, distinguishing it from mysticism, which is a non-individualistic and heart-centered movement seeking to transcend individual limitations and surrender to ultimate Reality.
- Mysticism is often misconstrued as being related to transcendental philosophy, which is an academic and map-making endeavor, whereas mysticism is a practical and empirical pursuit that seeks personal experience and the abolition of individuality, as opposed to the acquisition of knowledge or personal gain.
- The mystic faces significant challenges in conveying their experiences to others due to the disparity between their unspeakable experiences and the limitations of language, as well as the gulf between their mind and the minds of their audience, requiring a bewitching and captivating approach to facilitate understanding.
- Music is uniquely positioned to evoke a response to the life-movement of the universe, sharing this power with great mystical literature, as exemplified by Beethoven's ability to hear the voice of Reality and translate it into his compositions, highlighting the capacity of music to convey the exultant passions and incomparable peace of the universe.

The Nature of Mysticism and the Mystic's Journey

- [Mysticism](#) is not an opinion, philosophy, or pursuit of occult knowledge, but rather an organic process that involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God, the achievement of the immortal heritage of man, and the establishment of a conscious relation with the Absolute, characterized by a movement of the mystic consciousness towards this consummation, which is not merely a sudden admission to an overwhelming vision of Truth.
- The mystic's journey is often marked by a paradoxical "quiet" of the contemplative, which is an outward stillness essential to inward work, and is driven by a mystic passion that can lead individuals out of their prison, with notable thinkers such as [Vivekananda](#) and Tillich, and concepts like

symbolism and the finite/infinite gap, being relevant to the discussion of mysticism and its distinction from other philosophical and spiritual pursuits.

- The pursuit of knowledge and philosophy can be helpful in navigating experiences, but it has its limitations and can never unlock the doors to true understanding, as stated in the context of the mystic's journey.
- The psychologist can reconcile various stages of contemplation and spiritual ascent described by different mystics, such as St. Teresa's "Degrees of Orison" and the Sufi's "Seven Stages", indicating that despite different landmarks, the road to spiritual enlightenment is one.
- True mysticism is never self-seeking, and the mystic does not pursue supernatural joys or personal rewards, but rather is driven by a passion for perfection and love, as emphasized by the statement that spiritual desires are useless unless they initiate a costly movement of the whole self towards the Real.
- The mystic life process requires a combination of an appropriate psychological make-up, extraordinary concentration, exalted moral emotion, and a nervous organization of the artistic type, as well as a willingness to surrender oneself and all things, as stated by Dionysius the Areopagite.
- The mystic serves without hope of reward, and attainment comes only by means of a sincere, spontaneous, and entire surrender of oneself and all things, leading to the annihilation of selfhood and the fulfilment of love, as seen in the examples of St. [Teresa](#), St. [John of the Cross](#), and Boehme.
- The mystics view the world as a place of illusion, where everything is transitory and finite, and they seek to detach themselves from the body and fold themselves about Divinity, as expressed in the statement that we have no continuing city in this world.

Mysticism and Religion

- The great mystics are often faithful sons of the great religions, and their experiences are interpreted within the context of their respective religious traditions, such as [Christianity](#), [Islam](#), Brahmanism, and [Buddhism](#), which can foster unearthly love and potentially become a nursery for mystics.
- The Sufis, Philo, the Kabbalists, and Plotinus were all able to adapt their respective religious beliefs to their mystical doctrines, demonstrating that

mystical truth cannot be limited by a single religion, as it is a direct apprehension of the Divine Substance.

- Mystics often use the map of their community to describe their spiritual journey, but when this map is insufficient, they may create new ones, as seen in the examples of Boehme and Blake, which can be difficult to understand and may lead to them being regarded as madmen or heretics by the orthodox.

The Definition of God and the Christian Mystic

- A complete definition of God must account for three aspects, which provide objectives for the heart, intellect, and will, and offer material for the Self's highest love, deepest thought, and supreme volition, as emphasized by mystics who have the largest conceptions of the Divine.
- The concept of separation from God is an error, yet it is a necessary step for one to reach out to God, and the [Christian](#) atmosphere has often provided a fertile ground for individual mystics to develop their genius in a sane and fruitful way, with many great European contemplatives being Christians of a strong and personal type.
- The process of transcendence involves a disturbance of the self's equilibrium, shifting the field of consciousness to higher levels, and removing the centre of interest from the subject to an object, but it must not be confused with religious conversion, as seen in the example of Pascal's ecstatic revelation, which was a profound and personal experience that he kept as a perpetual memorial.
- The spiritual conversion of [Pascal](#) was facilitated by an abrupt illumination, which marked the end of a long period of spiritual stress and indifference to his ordinary interests, as noted by Bremond, who observed that this process had begun eleven months earlier in a gentle and obliging manner.

The Escape from Illusion and the Awakening of the Self

- According to the text, the surface-consciousness creates a cave of illusion for each individual, and escaping this cave is the first step towards reality, as

emphasized by Plato's prisoners, and this escape is necessary for the individual to discern the true character of their senses and instincts.

- The "natural" self, or the "old Adam" as referred to by [St. Paul](#), is incapable of supersensual adventure and is centered on the material world, but upon awakening, it becomes aware of its finitude and aspires to the infinite, as seen in the lives of mystics who often undergo intense poverty and pain in their pursuit of true experience.
- The process of Purgation, which includes poverty and mortification, is a necessary step towards union with the Absolute, and is considered a privilege and a dreadful joy by true lovers of the Absolute, such as St. [Teresa](#), who exclaimed "Let me suffer or die!", and St. [John of the Cross](#), who stated "We must be filled with a burning fervour full of anguish".

Purgation and the Path to Union with the Absolute

- The greatest of the contemplative saints, including St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, were aware of their own inadequateness and the need for perpetual purification, which involves getting rid of self-love and foolish interests, and is achieved through two aspects: the Negative aspect of stripping away superfluous and harmful things, and the Positive aspect of raising the remaining elements of character to their highest term through mortification and deliberate recourse to painful experiences.
- The text highlights the importance of purification as a perpetual process, which is necessary for the self to approach the unitive state, and notes that even the greatest contemplative saints remained conscious of their unworthiness and the need for continued purification, as they alternated between moments of high rapture and bitter consciousness of their selfhood.

The Three Virtues of the Mystic: Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience

- The mystics of all ages and faiths agree on the importance of three virtues: Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, which involve self-stripping, purity of soul, and self-abandonment, respectively, in order to attain a complete detachment from finite things and achieve a union with God.

- Poverty, in the context of [mysticism](#), means an utter self-stripping and detachment from all finite things, including material and immaterial wealth, and is not just about outward destitution, but rather about giving up things that enchain the spirit and deflect it from its road to God.
- The concept of Purity, as described by mystics such as St. Francis, St. Mechthild of Magdeburg, Rolle, and Suso, involves turning away from all creatures and setting one's heart entirely on the Pure Good, which is God, and seeing all creatures as veils and vessels of the divine.
- The mystic's approach to natural things is often misunderstood, as they are not necessarily opposed to enjoying them, but rather, they see them as a means to an end, and their intense and innocent joy in natural things comes from seeing "all creatures in God and God in all creatures".
- The ancient paradox of Poverty suggests that true liberty and enjoyment can only be achieved by not possessing or desiring things, and that one must seek pleasure in nothing in order to have pleasure in everything.
- The true rule of poverty, as described by mystics and philosophers such as Al Ghazzali and Nietzsche, consists in giving up those things that enchain the spirit, divide its interests, and deflect it from its road to God, whether these things be riches, habits, religious observances, friends, interests, distastes, or desires.

The Practice of Poverty and Detachment

- The attainment of transcendental consciousness requires the ruthless abandonment of everything that is in the way, and each individual must discover and extirpate their own interests that nourish selfhood, in order to achieve a complete self-abandonment and detachment from all that is not God.
- The process of self-simplification requires the removal of distractions and attachments, as seen in the personal experiences of Al Ghazzali, [St. Francis of Assisi](#), [Angela of Foligno](#), and Antoinette Bourignon, who all underwent significant renunciations to focus on their spiritual journeys.
- Angela of Foligno, for example, struggled to abandon all worldly attachments, but eventually found the courage to disguise herself as a hermit and give up

all her possessions, including a penny that she had kept, in order to fully devote herself to her spiritual path.

- Similarly, [Teresa](#), who was a mystical genius, had to give up her self-indulgence in talking to friends who visited her at the convent, as she realized that these interactions were distracting her from her contemplative life and preventing her from fully surrendering to the Absolute.
- The struggle between Teresa's desire for human connection and her desire for spiritual devotion was a major battle in her life, with her inward voices and deepest instincts urging her to give up her attachments to the world, but she felt incapable of making such a sacrifice for many years.
- Ultimately, Teresa and other mystics like Antoinette Bourignon had to make a choice between their attachment to the world and their devotion to God, with Antoinette giving up her last penny and Teresa giving up her passionate delight in human friendship in order to achieve a deeper level of spiritual consciousness and union with the divine.

Complete Concentration and the Pursuit of the Spiritual Life

- The examples of these mystics demonstrate that the pursuit of a high contemplative life requires complete concentration and the willingness to let go of all distractions and attachments, as genius and mystical genius alike cannot afford to dissipate their energies and must focus on their spiritual goals.
- The concept of prudence is seen as a distraction to the development of one's transcendental genius, as it can hinder the pursuit of a higher spiritual life, as observed in the case of Antoinette, who is contrasted with Teresa's generous and energetic nature.
- Many mystics, including [Plato](#), have found that the perfection of detachment can be achieved without drastic renunciation of external things, and instead, they use the beauties of Earth as steps to mount upwards towards a higher Beauty, as stated by Plato.
- The lives of mystics such as the [Blessed Angela of Foligno](#), who viewed the deaths of her relatives as a relief from the impediments they posed to her spiritual journey, and St. Augustine, who said "Love, and do what you like,"

illustrate the complex and often contradictory nature of the mystical experience.

The Process of Transformation and the Role of Mortification

- The process of becoming a mystic is often marked by a stormy period of change, where the individual must battle between the inharmonious elements of the self, and this change is necessary for the production of a definite kind of efficiency, as the adjustment of human nature to the demands of its new life requires mortification and detachment.
- Mortification is not an end in itself, but rather a process directed towards the production of a definite kind of efficiency, and it is through this process that the self can be released from the pull of the lower nature and established on new levels of freedom and power, as stated in the text.
- The disciplines of mortification, although severe and seemingly unmeaning to outsiders, can help the self to overcome the self-regarding instincts that impel it to choose the more comfortable part, and to establish it on new levels of freedom and power, as the senses are dominated and the barriers of individuality are broken down.
- The mystics, including St. [John of the Cross](#), have a profound conviction that the journey to perfection is a painful process, and that no progress can be made without pain, as the law of the inner life asserts itself, and the path of the Eternal Wisdom follows the Way of the Cross, as pointed out by Christians who cite the Passion of [Christ](#) as a proof of this law.
- The spiritual journey of a mystic involves enduring birth pangs in both the spiritual and material worlds, requiring adequate training that can be painful, as the mystics always welcome pain and sometimes even seek it out in various forms, including physical and emotional suffering.
- The process of Purgation is essential for the mystic to establish the ascendancy of the "interior man" or transcendental consciousness over the "sensitive nature", and it is a necessary step for individuals from various religious backgrounds, including Neoplatonists, Mahommedans, and [Christian](#) ascetics.

The Purgative Way and the Illuminated Consciousness

- The Purgative Way is characterized by constant fluctuations between depression and delight, as seen in the example of Merswin, who experienced intense psychic instability and passed through the purgative and illuminated states in an intermittent style.
- The Illuminated Consciousness is a state of intense pleasure and deep certitude of the Personal Life omnipresent in the universe, which can be achieved through the mystic's journey, but it is not a continuous state and can be interrupted by periods of spiritual fatigue or "aridity" and the oncoming gloom of the Dark Night.
- The distinction between the Illuminative and the Unitive Life is that in Illumination, the individuality of the subject remains separate and intact, whereas in the Unitive Life, the individuality is transcended, and the mystic experiences a state of union with the Infinite.
- The mystics, including those like William Blake who were thought to be madmen for their experiences, are able to discriminate between true and false transcendental experiences and never doubt the validity of their experiences, even when they seem inconsistent with their theology.
- The journey of the mystic is a life-struggle to disentangle themselves from illusion and attain the Absolute, and it is important to remember that the different states of the mystic's journey are closely intertwined and not separate entities, despite being treated as such for the purposes of study.

The Dark Night and the State of Quiet

- The heightened apprehension of reality experienced by individuals can increase their power to deal with the challenges of everyday life, as stated by [Vivekananda](#), who notes that a mind focused on a higher object of interest can perform its tasks more efficiently.
- The "Dark Night" is a period of spiritual transformation that can be a gateway to a higher state for great contemplatives, but may also pose dangers and pains for those with less heroic spirituality, as described by [Kierkegaard](#), who mentions the risk of suicide as a potential outcome.

- During this period, individuals may experience mental and moral disorder, characterized by evil thoughts, temptations, and a loss of grasp on both spiritual and worldly affairs, as exemplified by Lucie-Christine's account of her own experiences with spiritual darkness and temptation.
- The health and well-being of those passing through this phase can suffer, leading to feelings of isolation and abandonment, as well as a decline in their intellectual life, with Tauler emphasizing the importance of a "fathomless sinking in a fathomless nothingness" in order to truly follow a higher power.

Quiet, Quietism, and the Search for Interior Silence

- The state of "Quiet" is a condition of suspension of surface-consciousness, where the individual's personality remains, but their attention is withdrawn from the senses, leading to a sense of emptiness and passivity, but ultimately allowing them to become aware of an omnipresent and intangible presence within themselves, as described by the author, who notes that this experience can be similar to a psychedelic trip, such as one induced by psilocybin.
- The author reflects on the connections between mystics, saints, and psychedelic experiences, mentioning the works of McKenna and the feelings of remembrance and interior experience induced by cannabis, which is compared to a vague picture in consciousness rather than a full-blown experience.
- The author references Cioran, page 42 and 61, who discusses the idea that the soul has divided and scattered its powers in outward things, and that to work inwardly, the soul must call home all its powers and collect them from all divided things to one inward work, requiring a state of forgetting, not-knowing, stillness, and silence to hear the Word.
- The author also references Eckhart, who describes the soul as being of equal capacity with God in receiving, and that the soul is an abyss of receptivity, formed anew with God and in God, highlighting the idea of the soul's boundless capacity for receiving and its relationship with the divine.
- The text further explores the concept of "Quiet" and "Quietism", with St. [Teresa](#) and the "Pystle of Private Counsel" discussing the difference between a true and healthy mystic state of "Quiet" and its morbid perversion in "Quietism", emphasizing that true "Quiet" is a means, not an end, and is actively embraced, not passively endured.

- The author notes that the distinction between "Quiet" and "Quietism" may be based on a false or misunderstood description of "Quietism", referencing the ideas of Cioran, Tillich, and [Vivekananda](#), who emphasize the importance of striving for an understanding of God, and that the end goal is not laziness, but rather an attempt at the impossible, an understanding of the divine.
- The author also references Molinos' "Spiritual Guide", which discusses the importance of interior silence, and how it allows God to speak with the soul and communicate Himself to it, teaching it perfect and exalted wisdom, but notes that Molinos' teaching was often misunderstood as suggesting that doing nothing at all was a virtue, and that all deliberate spiritual activities were bad, which is not what Molinos intended.
- The concept of Nothingness, as described by Molinos, is one of plenitude, where the true contemplative seeks to breathe in the atmosphere of Love, rather than desiring extraordinary favors or visitations, and this state is characterized by a dynamic and purposive character, despite appearing to be passive.
- The mystic's journey is not about seeking happiness or pleasure, but rather it is hard work, and according to various thinkers such as Cioran, Tillich, and Vivekananda, the mystical state and the journey to it require participation, ardent charity, and a conquering of the invisible world, rather than a state of indifference.
- The Quietist position is often misunderstood as a state of indifference, but it is actually an unending spiritual crisis that involves a conquering of the invisible world and a recognition of the limited perception of finite beings, which necessarily leads to a failure of all human conceptions of the Divine.

The Mystical Experience and the Cravings of the Soul

- The mystical experience, as described by St. [Teresa](#), is a death to all things of this world and a fruition of God, characterized by a glorious folly and a heavenly madness, where the soul is fully occupied with God, and this experience can only be described symbolically, allusively, and obliquely, due to the spatial imagery inseparable from human thinking and expression.

- The mystic's journey is driven by three cravings: the craving to go out from the normal world in search of a lost home, the craving of heart for heart, and the craving for inward purity and perfection, which correspond to three ways of attacking the problem of the Absolute, and these cravings lead to a change from the state of ordinary men to a state of spiritual consciousness, where the mystic is in union with Divine Reality, with God, as described by thinkers such as [Plato](#) and [Vivekananda](#).
- The mystic's ultimate goal is to achieve a close, definite, and actual intimacy with the Absolute God, regardless of their theological creed, as expressed by various mystics such as the Sufi, the German contemplative, and the Italian saint.
- The seeker of the Real may objectify their quest in two ways: as an outgoing journey from the world of illusion to the real or transcendental world, or as an inward alteration, remaking, or regeneration, by which their personality is changed to enter into communion with the Fontal Being.
- These two aspects of the mystic's journey are obverse and reverse of one whole, representing the pair of opposites, Infinite and Finite, God and Self, which [mysticism](#) aims to carry up into a higher synthesis, as noted by authors such as Vivekananda, Jnana/Karma Yoga, and Tillich in their works, including "Jnana/Karma Yoga" and "Faith".

The Integration of Spiritual and Practical Life

- The spiritual life is not separate from the practical life, and most conflicts and difficulties arise from trying to deal with them separately, instead of realizing they are parts of one whole, as emphasized by the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of all aspects of life.
- The spiritual life is produced by the steady attraction of the Divine and our humble and self-forgetful response to it, and it consists in being drawn to the place where God wants us to be, rather than the place we fancied for ourselves, highlighting the need for self-awareness and surrender.
- The presence and action of the great spiritual universe surrounding us often goes unnoticed, and our spiritual senses are not sufficiently alert, due to our focus on developing our correspondence with the visible world, as noted in the

discussion on the importance of balancing the development of our spiritual and practical lives.

- It is essential to avoid both too much indefiniteness and abstraction, as well as hard and fast definitions, in order to truly understand and experience the spiritual life, and to recognize the importance of balance and awareness in our spiritual journey.

The Language of Spiritual Realities and the Importance of Prayer

- The language used to describe spiritual realities is often inadequate and inaccurate, as noted by saints such as St. [John of the Cross](#), who stated that any knowledge of God obtained in this life is confused, imperfect, and oblique, a concept also discussed by Tillich and [Vivekananda](#).
- The process of spiritual growth involves two key activities: Mortification, which means killing the roots of self-love, including pride, possessiveness, anger, and greed, and transforming one's personal and professional life to be more consistent with one's dependence on a higher power.
- Prayer is the act of turning to Reality and acknowledging one's dependence on the Eternal Spirit, which is a fundamental aspect of one's life towards God, driven by a longing for Him and a desire for perfection, beauty, and truth, as described by [Karl Barth](#) as an "incurable God-sickness".
- Humans are imperfect creatures with a deep-seated desire for beauty, truth, and goodness, which can only be fully realized in the Life of God, and this longing is the seed from which grows the plant of prayer, which is a measureless adoration that surpasses intellectual analysis or description.
- The act of adoration is a powerful form of prayer that is often overlooked in favor of more practical petitions, but it is actually a prayer for extremely practical things, such as the cleansing and sanctification of one's character, home, and social contacts, and it requires a total concentration on the interests of God, which must be expressed in action.
- Ultimately, the pursuit of spiritual growth and perfection requires a willingness to take action and work towards the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than simply waiting for it to happen, and it involves a deep desire for the coming of perfection into life, as expressed in the

desire for the perfection of God's symphony rather than one's own individual performance.

Living a Consistent Christian Life

- The text emphasizes the importance of Christians living consistently with their spiritual ideals, which would require significant personal cost, but would ultimately lead to a more meaningful and impactful life.
- The world is described as a place where something has gone wrong, with evidence of cruelty, greed, oppression, and suffering, and Christians are called to acknowledge this reality and feel a sense of obligation to do something about it.
- The awakening of a human being to their true situation involves three stages: the sudden disclosure of the Divine Splendour, which reveals the individual's own imperfection and leads to shame, penitence, and purification, and finally, a response of willingness to serve and cooperate with God.
- The spiritual life is characterized by action in the interests of the Perfect, which can take many forms, from self-offering to creative pursuits, and requires great courage, initiative, and endurance, as well as a calm acceptance of challenges and difficulties.
- The text also highlights the importance of the inner life of Christians, which is often marked by hard and painful experiences, but ultimately shares in the saving power of the Cross, and notes that the Church is a tool of God for saving the world, rather than a comfortable religious club.

The Qualities of Saints and the Mystery of Life

- In contrast to the self-made and self-acting soul, which is marked by fuss, feverishness, and anxiety, the saints are characterized by quiet and noble qualities, such as steadiness of spirit, and meet the challenges of their lives with calmness and dignity, as noted in the examples of the saints and the thoughts of theologians like Tillich.
- The lives of individuals are part of a great mystery related to God and known by God, and this understanding can bring a sense of peace and tranquility amidst the troubles of the world.

- Historical figures such as [St. Bernard](#) and St. Francis have demonstrated that renouncing worldly possessions and embracing poverty and hardship can lead to a greater wealth and more exquisite beauty, as their actions were guided by their devotion to the Spirit.
- The spiritual life requires a sense of timing and leisure, allowing individuals to achieve more than those who are enslaved by the rush and hurry of the world, and it is essential to remember that God is greater than one's heart and job.

The Knight of the Spirit and the Pursuit of a Higher Reality

- Even in the midst of a deep and peaceful communion with God, individuals may experience pain and tension as they strive towards a beauty and perfection that they cannot fully attain, as noted by Tillich.
- The concept of the Knight of the Spirit, as depicted in Dürer's drawing, represents the human nature that is treated and used as it ought to be, riding towards a higher reality while accompanied by the voices of Death and the Devil, which symbolize the discouragements and temptations that individuals face.
- The Knight of the Spirit, having overcome his own personal struggles and slain his special devil, remains focused on his contemplation of something beyond the worldly landscape, and by looking at what he loves rather than what he hates, he is able to safely navigate through the challenges and join the great army of God.