Mysticism and Experience

Twenty-First-Century Approaches

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LEXINGTON BOOKS [2020]
Lanham Boulder New York London

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APPROACHING THE QUESTION OF MYSTICISM

The literature on mysticism, mystical phenomena, attempts at their classification, and theorizing apropos of mystical phenomena's explanatory causes, nature, meaning, and import is enormous. And yet, confusions and contradictions persist on multiple levels, from basic definitions and classifications to methodological and experiential approaches, to generated insights and conclusions that are themselves frequently examples of misapprehension and incoherence. Part of the difficulty is in how the question of mysticism is approached, namely, whether it is viewed as a "problem," an "aporia," or perhaps as something even more mystifying than that—something that would necessitate a fundamentally different or radically divergent attitude. I have proposed to call this more germane status of things mystical *mysterium*.[1] Approaches will also understandably depend on, and be subject to, preconceived ideas and tailored definitions of key terms; the latter can significantly, and sometimes fatally, undermine any ostensibly objective investigation.[2] Yet another self-imposed and decisive handicap is the very methodology known as the "scientific method." As good as any is the following gloss: "A 'science' is to be understood in the usual sense of a conceptual picture and accompanying mathematical formalism within which hypotheses can be expressed precisely and tested out empirically under clear rules of evidence."[3] Rules of evidence for modern sciences are indeed quite clear, with the key requirement being that an experience or experiment must be *reproducible by others*. It would therefore seem that mystical phenomena, or a significant proportion of them, cannot possibly be considered for scientific investigation, since "[w]e can see other people's behavior, but not their experience."[4] Regarding so-called evidence, "one further epistemological worry accompanies religious experience. [William] James claimed that, while mystical experiences proved authoritative grounds for belief in the person experiencing them, they cannot give grounds for a person to whom the experience is reported. In other words, my experience is evidence for me, but not for you."[5]

In short, then, there may seem to be no realistic possibility of scientific explanations for what are arguably some of the most consequential as well as value-laden experiences human beings can have. Sciences—faithfully following a strict methodological regimen elaborated to avoid the capriciousness and unpredictability of individual experiences and to favor instead a thoroughly tested amassing of data and marshaling of the data's import toward a consensus of understanding—

are satisfied that theirs is a foolproof approach to appropriately and accurately investigating, and thus correctly perceiving, the "objective reality."

Does it make sense, however, to mechanically insist on the reproducibility of something that typically can be only a one-time or a one-of-a-kind experience by an individual, an experience that remains closed to observation by others and for which investigators must rely largely on verbal reports? Since reproducibility is normally out of the question, should we abandon any hope of ever having serious, reliable investigations of things mystical? Here it is pertinent to consider the philosopher Henri Bergson's paradoxical maxim: "The rule of science is the one posited by Bacon: obey in order to command. The philosopher neither obeys nor commands."[6] Bergson explains this as follows: "The attitude of commonsense, as it results from the structure of the senses, of intelligence and of language, is nearer to the attitude of science than to that of philosophy."[7] It is surely counterintuitive to be urged to recognize in the scientific approach the rule of the commonsensical. Yet, Bergson's key insight—that "the philosopher did not arrive at unity, he started from it. . . . The process [of] philosophy . . . is not a synthesis but an analysis"—illuminates this.[8] And the mystic? "Insofar as both philosophy and mysticism claim to have something that cannot be put in words, they are never far from each other," states Zhang Longxi, the author of *The Tao and the Logos*.[9] Still, the paths of true philosopher and a genuine mystic rarely fully converge, because the mystic usually endeavors to go further, whether voluntarily or not, not being bound by the academic imperative to "publish or perish." The mystic is also exempted from the philosopher's often desperate predicament of trying to force logic to speak the language of ineffability.

The case of Wittgenstein is exemplary in this regard. Bertrand Russell references Wittgenstein's celebrated claim in the *Tractatus* regarding the limits of what can be expressed in language: "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical."[10] "What causes hesitation," Russell notes, "is the fact that, after all, Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said."[11] Statements such as this one in Russell's Introduction to the *Tractatus*, however, in turn caused Wittgenstein to grumble that, as he put it in a letter to Russell, "All the refinement of your English style was, obviously, lost in the translation [into German], and *what remained was superficiality and misunderstanding*."[12]

WHAT IS EXPERIENCE?

Notions such as unity are the stuff of mystic's world. Thus, we *are* helped here by Bergson, a champion of intuition in philosophy.[13] His claim of unity as being the impetus and the drive behind philosophical inquiries seems to encroach on the mystic's turf: we are summoned to a realization that things mystical likewise are likely to originate outside the commonsensical and away from the experimental/inductive sphere of science. Instead, what needs to be realized is that mystical phenomena ought to be approached, if one's aim is comprehension, with a mind-set that is congruent with the realm of *experience*.

What is experience? One is experiencing life, living; this, among other things, entails possessing—or being in—a "mode of getting into contact with reality."[14] The contact with reality here presumes *conscious* contact, for while a chair might be pressing into the floor and thus "in contact with reality" too, its contact isn't conscious. As a consequence, the chair lacks *experience*;

the link between experience and consciousness becomes both apparent and on the face of it, expected:

> The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of *experience*. When we think and perceive, there is a whir of information-processing, but there is also a subjective aspect. As Nagel (1974) has put it, there is *something it is like* to be a conscious organism. The subjective aspect is experience. . . . If any problem qualifies as *the* problem of consciousness, it is this one. In this central sense of "consciousness," an organism is conscious if there is something it is like to be that organism. . . . Sometimes terms such as "phenomenal consciousness" and "qualia" are also used here, but I find it more natural to speak of "conscious experience" or simply "experience." Another useful way to avoid confusion . . . is to reserve the term "consciousness" for the phenomena of experience, using the less loaded term "awareness" for the more straightforward phenomena described earlier. . . . As things stand, those who talk about "consciousness" are frequently talking past each other.[15]

Are we toying with circularity here, however, given that "consciousness" is just as enigmatic as "experience" (even if the latter *seems* to be less perplexing)? It does appear to be the case, nevertheless, that these two puzzling, complex conceptions might be helpful in shedding some light on each other's mystification. For example, when reading Max Scheler's warning about "a too narrow, restrictive concept of 'experience'" below, one should be led to the equivalent realization that the concept of consciousness, too, can be either too restrictive or not, allowing a wider range consciousness changes, alterations, and transformations:

> There is nothing more disastrous for all of epistemology than to establish at the beginning of one's methodological procedure a too narrow, restrictive concept of "experience," to equate the whole experience with one particular kind of experience and with that mental attitude that is conducive [only] to it, and then to refuse to recognize as "primordially given" anything that cannot be reduced to this one kind of experience.[16]

Is epistemology—the age-old branch of philosophy focused on knowledge, its sources, and human abilities to navigate its reliability, and so forth—to be seen as being in the business of "establishing" the concept of experience appropriate for derivation of knowledge? Indeed, the link between knowledge and experience goes back at least to Aristotle; it then went through elaborations by way of, among others, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, and Hume, as well as Kant, who "considerably redefines" it.[17] With Kant, the very possibility of experience is at issue: experience is not to be identified merely with sensory data but with a "synthesis," a "product of the senses and understanding."[18] As a result, "all synthesis, 'even that which renders perception possible, is subject to the categories; and since *experience is cognition* by means of connected perceptions, the categories are the conditions of the *possibility* of experience.'"[19]

We won't be examining the question of categories here, and we will address neither the critique nor the approbation that Kant's groundbreaking concept of experience has elicited. Rather, our interest is in noting the very changeability and unsettledness of what may constitute one's experience, including its very possibility; these are dependent on and constrained by one's understanding. Subsequent thinkers, including Charles Peirce, who was a founding figure in semiotics, and, closer to our times, Gilles Deleuze, France's maverick philosopher, reinforce the Kantian connection between experience and one's mental status.[20] Along with the question of *possibility* of experience, we now see, squarely within the emerging model of our cognizing, that the limits and range of consciousness as well as of knowledge are movable, changeable,

expandable. Knowledge, as mystics and other firsthand explorers of limits of consciousness always insist, is pliant, stretchy, variable; it's far from being a commodity that is predictable and assured by being stored in some secure, fixed, objectively existing warehouse. *Any* experience, mystical or not, if it is a learning occasion, entails epistemic transformation: "When a person has a new and different kind of experience, a kind of experience that teaches her something she could not have learned without having that kind of experience, she has an *epistemic transformation*."[21]

Anthony Steinbock, in keeping with Scheler's thrust, endeavors to expand the range of the experiential beyond the perceptual and epistemic: "By experience, in general I mean the givenness of something . . . as 'it' is lived. . . . [I]t is arbitrary to restrict what we count as experience only to the way objects are presented perceptually and epistemically."[22] In particular, "mystical experiences are not *within anyone's reach* because they are not correlative to our efforts in the first place, as would be the case in the field of presentation; they are experienced as 'gifts.'"[23] Such "gifts" aren't unrelated, among other things, to Bergsonian intuitions. Yet, Steinbock is wrong to assert that the "gifts," as such, are not correlative to our efforts. As the religious-mystical or shamanic initiatory traditions the world over and throughout history bear witness, individual efforts, when properly channeled via respective traditions, yield their respective mystical—or some other extra- (supra-, super-, or hyper-) sensory, preternatural, "paranormal"—results.[24] The expansion, or the possibility of broadening the range as well as depth of one's experience, is the issue I turn to in the next three sections.

DOES REALITY HAVE "THE CHARACTER OF OUR EXPERIENCE"?

Does reality have "the character of our experience"?[25] Certain key philosophers disagreed with each other regarding this pivotal question, often for different reasons. As I think will become increasingly apparent in the discussion below, "our experience" is a highly variable affair as well as a varying conception. As we saw with Kant and Peirce, experience hinges on the person's understanding (Kant), and even one's very mind is "a sign resulting from inference" (Peirce).[26] Both understanding and inferences are subject to substantial variations, relativity, and, not infrequently, extreme polarizations and radical divergences, to say nothing of latent, obviously not-out-of-the-question unsuitability and outright erroneousness.[27] This then leads to the question of "objective" reality; Galen Strawson, for example, draws attention to "what Kant calls 'experience,' by which he means what some now call 'objective experience,' i.e. experience that has, for the experiencer, the character of being experience of a world of objects existing independently of the experiencer."[28] Yet, for Kant the matter doesn't end there: he points to "the distinction between phenomena and noumena as one of the oldest and noblest achievements of ancient philosophy. In [*Prolegomena*] it is clear that he is referring to Plato's distinction between the apparent world of sensible phenomena and the 'real' intelligible world of ideas."[29] Kant

> re-states the distinction; but his re-statement is very far from the classical distinction between the real world of ideas and the phenomenal world of sensibility.
>
> The most salient feature of noumena is that they are not objects of intuition but problems "unavoidably bound up with the limitation of our sensibility," namely "whether there may not be objects" for a "*quite different intuition and a quite different understanding from ours*" ([*Critique of Pure Reason*], A 287/B 344).[30]

Kantian intuition refers to "sensible intuitions," namely, those that enter into "synthetic a priori judgments."[31] What is important and relevant for our focus here is that, while Kant has scorned and poured sarcasm on what he called the transcendent (as opposed to the transcendental of the synthetic a priori), at the same time he allows, as in the above quote, for the possibility of "quite different intuition and a quite different understanding from ours." Kant was "the first to give a name to human reason's remarkable power to overstep all sensible experience. He called it the *transcendent* use of reason and denounced it as the permanent source of our metaphysical illusions."[32] According to Kant, if one oversteps the sensible experience leading to transcendence, the resultant intuition will differ from sensible intuitions; this amounts to encountering illusions. Étienne Gilson, for his part, refuses to accept such a quandary; in his "third law," he reaffirms, seemingly without first properly disqualifying Kant's position, that "metaphysics is the knowledge gathered by naturally transcendent reason in its search for the first principles, or first causes, of what is given in sensible experience."[33] A different tack, to reach out beyond the "limitation of our sensibility" (as Kant worded it), is offered by Jean-Luc Marion: a phenomenon as normally conceived—in both Kant's and Husserl's phenomenology—is conditioned and reducible, in the former by "its horizon," while in Husserl, "to an I."[34] "Why wouldn't there correspond," asks Marion, "the possibility of a phenomenon where intuition would give *more, indeed immeasurably more*, than the intention would ever have aimed at or foreseen?"[35] What Marion has in mind here, it would seem, is that phenomena that are both unconditioned and unreduced—he calls them "saturated"—would entail a major broadening of one's experience: "To let phenomena appear demands not imposing a horizon on them, whatever the horizon might be, since it would exclude some of them."[36] Likewise, it means not reducing them to an "I."

Otherwise, we are in danger of encountering a truncated "phenomenon whose mode of Being is reduced by the reduction to what the primacy of consciousness imposes upon it."[37]

INEFFABLE EXPERIENCES

The point of the foregoing discussion was to arrive at this crucial juncture. To begin grasping mystical experiences requires a straightforward awareness of a simple fact: such experiences alter or entail alteration of the experiencer's consciousness, to varying degrees and in varied, distinctive, often idiosyncratic ways. Among other things, such alterations may cause dramatic changes in one's experiences of oneself, the world or reality, and one's mental awareness and cognizing—I say *may*, because each type of mystical experience may involve or emphasize differing but often overlapping sets of changing parameters, factors, strictures, or transformational values. The latter can present a range of alterations, from (1) ego/I/self fluctuations (diminution or dissolving, or, on the contrary, enlargement, in some cases even enormous broadening or expansion); to (2) spreading out and concurrent alteration of "horizons" (invoked in the Marion quote above), that is, the world's accessibility as reported and reflected by one's sensory data collecting, resulting in sensory experiences becoming not merely extrasensory but supersensory, in the sense of being able to deliver heretofore unheard of "intuitions" (going beyond both the Kantian sensible intuitions and Husserl's categorical intuitions, representing, in Kant's words, "quite different intuition and a quite different understanding from ours"); (3) ability to focus becoming sharpened a hundredfold, with attention to some detail or specific factor increased to extraordinary levels; or (4) to the contrary, one's powers of noticing things or aspects heretofore overlooked, unseen, or

ignored are now felt and exercised; (5) uncanny premonition and foreknowledge powers, often present as part of these experiences; and so on.

Putting this differently, if one of the implications of the position that "creature consciousness requires not merely the capacity to sense or perceive, but the current active use of those capacities"—Robert Van Gulick calls it "wakefulness and arousal"—then envision a hyperwakefulness and a super-arousal.[38] The latter are metaphors that have sometimes been invoked to give some idea of mystical experiences' dramatically heightened, altered, and transformative import. More about these experiences later.

What about the veracity of such experiences? Further, are they not to be seen, moreover, as mental aberrations, even mental pathologies rather than the more innocuous sounding "alterations of consciousness"? Finally, would they not at least be answerable to Kant's charge that they would be, inevitably, mere illusions?

To begin addressing these and other seemingly reasonable concerns, we might be helped by the following remarkable assertion, made apropos of one of Jacques Derrida's searching exertions vis-à-vis Judaism: "The way of God must pass through the desert, where truth is not assured—there is always the risk of following a mirage."[39] However, isn't our own judgment, even under normal circumstances, suspect too? Husserl, who founded the branch of philosophy that derives its name from the phenomenal, reminds us that "judgments present themselves as alleged cognitions and . . . many which pass themselves off as yielding knowledge later prove to be illusory."[40] We are now very far indeed from the reassurances of scientific expectations of reproducibility and verifiability. But there is more.

There is, on the one hand, the overwhelming issue of solitude, the extreme solitude of a human psyche wandering the desert. "Solitude is a project."[41] On the other hand, there is at the same time one's necessarily inept struggle with this unanticipated, startling, disorienting ineffability, an altercation and discomfort with a disconcerting unspeakableness of one's inner experience.[42] It is a struggle with one's inability to communicate this most intimate of all experiences, verging on utmost discomfiture, yet, simultaneously, also awe and sublimity.

Uriah Kriegel brings recognition of the validity, if not the necessity, of ineffable experiences into today's philosophy of mind: "[I]t is plausible to hold that at least some types of phenomenology are *ineffable*, and that this renders impossible, perhaps unintelligible, inquiry into their ontological status. However, even types of phenomenology that are indescribable, and hence ineffable, are *namable*, and one could always use such names in the relevant inquiry."[43]

With regard to the question of mental aberrations or pathologies of mind, the following distinction should suffice for our purposes: "The capability to rebound is . . . an indication of health. Patients are those individuals who get stuck on the left or the right side of our continuum and are incapable to rebound or otherwise return to levels of arousal which correspond to the normal state of daily routine."[44] Roland Fischer describes an entire "perception-hallucination continuum" of ergotropic, or hyperaroused mystical states involving hallucinations, while at the same time arriving at a sophisticated critical distinction between pathology and health in such experiences. Otherwise healthy individuals undergoing mystical and other kinds of alterations of consciousness, unlike mental patients, are capable of rebound back to baseline consciousness.[45] But while persons are *in* such states of consciousness, undergoing massively transformational, ecstatic, or some other kind of mystical or similarly consciousness-altering experience, their world may expand to multiple worlds; reality may exhibit its heretofore unimaginable features (such as,

for example, pliable time or bendable space) and their understanding and level of insight may escalate to undreamed of degrees. A person's memory of such experiences will never fade.[46]

ALTERATION OF EXPERIENCER'S CONSCIOUSNESS

In this final expository section, let us train our lenses more specifically on the question of alteration of consciousness. We'll get both a bit clinical and somewhat scientific here, aiming to lift, even if only slightly, the notorious veil presumably spread over things mystical since time immemorial.

The clinical will pertain mostly to psychoanalysis and its recent post-post-Freudian developments. The scientific, in this context, refers essentially to cognitive neurosciences. We'll revisit first the question of what consciousness is, or what it entails: "One common philosophical definition is 'Consciousness is what it is like to be something,' . . . to experience something."[47] The fundamental discernment apropos of identity between experience and consciousness has already been noted.[48] Michael Gazzaniga urges a further key consideration, namely, a distinction between "levels" of consciousness and "layers" of consciousness: levels seem to be synonymous with "states" of consciousness, whereas layers refer to the brain's layered architecture, different parts of which function in parallel.[49] For us, it is the levels, or the states, of consciousness that are most relevant.

As Christof Koch explains,

> To be conscious of anything, the brain must be in a relatively high state of arousal (sometimes also referred to as *vigilance*). . . . The level of brain arousal, measured by electrical or metabolic brain activity, fluctuates in a circadian manner, and is influenced by lack of sleep, drugs and alcohol, physical exertion, and so on in a predictable manner. High arousal states are always associated with some conscious state—a percept, thought, or memory—that has a specific *content*.[50]

Koch stipulates that "[d]ifferent levels or states of consciousness are associated with different *kinds* of conscious experiences."[51] Furthermore,

> [t]he awake state in a normal functioning individual is quite different from the dreaming state . . . or from the state of deep sleep. In all three cases, the basic physiology of the brain is changed, affecting the space of possible conscious experiences. Physiology is also different in *altered states of consciousness*, for instance, after taking psychedelic drugs when events often have a stronger emotional connotation than in normal life. Yet another state of consciousness can occur during certain meditative practices, when interoceptive perception and insight may be enhanced compared to the normal waking state.[52]

But it is the following acknowledgment that is most important, as well as highly pertinent for this essay's principal focus: "In some obvious but difficult to rigorously define manner, the *richness of conscious experience* increases as an individual transitions from deep sleep to drowsiness to full wakefulness."[53] While Koch ends this passage with "full wakefulness," he obviously intends by that designation the baseline "normal waking state" (as he calls it in the preceding quotation). Beyond the "full wakefulness" of the "normal waking state," however, there are additional stages of wakefulness, including those that entail such extraordinary arousals as to be to the "normal waking state" as the latter is to the state of deep sleep. The richness of conscious experience in

such altered states of consciousness is beyond almost anything we experience while in our habitual conscious states; it is this dramatic and unusual richness that often necessitates descriptions such as "ineffable," "unspeakable," or "inexpressible."[54]

That we are dealing here with empirically experienced phenomena is beyond doubt; these aren't invented fantasies of Hollywood-style, nerve-pinching fables (that nonetheless leave us cold). These are, rather, our enduring human capabilities known since time immemorial—capabilities entailing enormous possibilities for the expansion of our range of cognition and thinking, feeling and empathy, willpower and fearlessness—in short, broadening the scope and breadth of experience.

I'd like to close this brief exploration of the problematics of experience with a glance at a recent psychoanalytic window on the huge—"perhaps infinite"—"unstructured or unformulated unconscious."[55] The unconscious is, as should by now be understood even by lay people, crucial as the key source and stimulus of our psychic life; for us here it also occupies a prime position in our interest as the domain not deferential to our ordinary senses. All the expansion that is possible—conceivable or achievable—either for our consciousness or for our cognitive and other powers and capabilities, would have to be at the expense of the vast unconscious resources. As Howard Levine states,

> I use the term, Experience, with a capital E, to indicate raw, existential Experience in contrast to the more ordinary "experience" with a small e, which refers to that which is potentially knowable and amenable to self-perception and self-reflection. While aspects of "small-e experience" are sometimes unconscious, they are organized psychic elements that are potentially knowable, articulable, and contained within the psyche. In contrast, Experience with a capital E . . . can never in its unmodified form be known or contained within the mind as thought or perception and is most usefully thought of as pre-psychic or proto-psychic. I will further assume, following Bion, that "Experience" is inherently traumatic unless and until it can be transformed into something containable within the mind—that is, into "experience."[56]

This passage—whether its author intended as much or not, and even if using a different set of disciplinary jargon—captures most helpfully as well as succinctly the distinctive concerns, inimitable struggles, and exceptional challenges of the extraordinary and remarkable process, one that is among the highest of human attainments, that we identify by the name of mystical experience.

NOTES

[1] See Kohav, "Introductory Essay: The Problem, Aporia, and Mysterium of Mysticism."

[2] A recent example could be that offered by Jerome Gellman in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "In the narrow sense, more common among the philosophers, 'mystical experience' refers to a sub-class of mystical experience in the wide sense. Specifically, it refers to a (purportedly) super sense-perceptual or sub sense-perceptual *unitive* experience granting acquaintance of realities or states of affairs that are of a kind not accessible by way of sense-perception, somatosensory modalities, or standard introspection." Gellman, "Mysticism," 6, emphasis added. Gellman's essay proceeds to exclusively adopt this "narrow sense" of mystical experience, even though such a choice has long been discredited as arbitrary, as well as significantly obscuring the question of mysticism, by projecting a particular

characteristic of some types of mystical experiences onto mysticism as a generic term. See, e.g., Merkur, *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*, and chapter 9 in this volume.

[3] Cooper, *Foundations of Logico-Linguistics*, 1.

[4] Laing, *Politics of Experience*, 17.

[5] Webb, "Religious Experience," 12. Webb specifies (as does Gellman's essay) that "religious experience is . . . to be distinguished from mystical experience. Although there is obviously a close connection between the two, and mystical experiences are religious experiences, not all religious experiences qualify as mystical" (2).

[6] Bergson, "Philosophical Intuition," 104.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 103.

[9] Zhang, *Tao and the Logos*, 45.

[10] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.522, 107.

[11] Russell, Introduction to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, by Wittgenstein, 22.

[12] Wittgenstein, quoted in Monk, *Wittgenstein*, 183, emphasis added.

[13] Intuition is a multidenotational, multifarious, and multifaceted complex notion that, like "instinct," "intelligence," or "knowledge," has taken sometimes very different meanings in philosophies of thinkers who employ it. For example, Charles Peirce's usage of it pertains to perception, whereas Bergson is identifying what he calls philosophical intuition. The latter correlates with "immediate knowledge. Often used as a synonym for intuitive knowledge; knowledge unmediated by any factors (for example, signs)." Colapietro, *Glossary of Semiotics*, 117.

[14] Siebert, "Pragmatic Methodology in the Philosophy of Religion," 20.

[15] Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," 10–11, original emphasis. Galen Strawson puts it as follows: "Suppose we replace 'consciousness' by 'conscious experience,' and then shorten 'conscious experience' to 'experience'—taking it to be true by definition, as before, that all experience is conscious experience." Strawson, *Subject of Experience*, 143.

[16] Max Scheler, quoted in Steinbock, *Phenomenology of Mysticism*, 6.

[17] See the entry "Experience," in Caygill, *Kant Dictionary*, 186.

[18] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that will be able to come forward as Science*, §20, quoted in Caygill, *Kant Dictionary*, 186.

[19] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd ed., 1787, B 161, quoted in Caygill, *Kant Dictionary*, 187, emphasis added.

[20] Peirce states, "[T]he content of consciousness, the entire phenomenal manifestation of mind, is a sign *resulting from inference*." From *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur Burks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931–58), 5.313–314, cited in Jiang, "Peirce's Semeiotic Naturalism," 252, emphasis added. Deleuze, in turn, speaks of signals and signs, this time apropos of the phenomena: "There are locks everywhere. Every phenomenon flashes in a signal-sign system." Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 222.

[21] Paul, *Transformative Experience*, 10, original emphasis.

[22] Steinbock, *Phenomenology of Mysticism*, 25.

[23] Ibid., 26, original emphasis.

[24] For instance, "the realization of momentariness" is "only available to practitioners after long meditative training." On the other hand, "Buddhist philosophers have also come up with arguments to convince those without access to such direct experience. . . . These arguments . . . do not generate an insight into [the theory of momentariness] at the experiential level." Westerhoff, *Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, 79.

[25] Magee, *Ultimate Questions*, 65.

[26] See note 20.

[27] Compare the view of Anil Gupta, who speaks of "the principle of induction" as "murky and dubious." Gupta, *Conscious Experience*, xii. In accordance with Peircean semiotics, "in our inquiries, the

three forms of inference—induction, deduction, and abduction—work together." Colapietro, *Glossary of Semiotics*, 120. Thus, Gupta could have spoken of the "principle of inference" instead.

[28] Strawson, *Subject of Experience*, 180. Compare the view of Patrick de Gramont: "If . . . you assume that reality is something we construct, then the standard of an external world cannot be used to determine its meaningfulness. Reality would be something that results from the interaction of what we bring, and the world we bring it to." De Gramont, *Language and the Distortion of Meaning*, 1.

[29] Caygill, *Kant Dictionary*, 301–2.

[30] Ibid., 302, emphasis added.

[31] Ibid., 264.

[32] Gilson, *Unity of Philosophical Experience*, 308.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Marion, *Being Given*, 189.

[35] Ibid., 197, original emphasis.

[36] Ibid., 320.

[37] Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, 54.

[38] Van Gulick, "Consciousness and Cognition," 21.

[39] Quoted in Shakespeare, "Thinking about Fire," 246.

[40] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 17.

[41] Laing and Cooper, *Reason and Violence*, 122.

[42] I borrow here Bataille's term for mystical experience: "By 'inner experience' I understand what one usually designates under the name 'mystical experience,' the experience of living states of ecstasy, of rapture, at least of meditated emotion." Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 215n1.

[43] Kriegel, *Varieties of Consciousness*, 246n10.

[44] Fischer, "Transformations of Consciousness," 6.

[45] Dietrich similarly confirms that, "unlike most cases of mental illness and brain damage, altered states of consciousness can be characterized as transient in nature." Dietrich, "Functional Neuroanatomy of Altered States of Consciousness," 238.

[46] Another, rather startling but telling, distinction between (some) pathological states of consciousness and the otherwise healthy altered states of consciousness is the "desymbolized thinking/experience" of the former—a "breakdown in metaphorical thinking [that] is one form of what we call 'concrete.'" Frosch, introduction to *Absolute Truth and Unbearable Psychic Pain*, ed. Frosch, xix. Frosch adds that "abstract or conceptual thought is so much a part of our daily lives that, more often than not, we become acutely aware of it in its absence" (ibid.). In contrast, mystical alteration of consciousness, if anything, typically leads to greatly enhanced cognitive abilities, albeit entailing expansion beyond the conceptual. Compare Kohav, "*Megaphoric* Theater of Eden's Garden of Semiosis."

[47] Koch, "Neurobiology of Consciousness," 1137.

[48] Additionally, consider Louis Sass et al.'s pithy observation of the Kantian and Husserlian sense of experience, which "implies recognizing consciousness as a constituting *medium* of experience rather than conceiving it as a process somehow existing on the same plane with other natural objects." Sass, Pienkos, and Fuchs, "Other Worlds," 6, original emphasis.

[49] Gazzaniga, *Consciousness Instinct*, 112–13.

[50] Koch, "Neurobiology of Consciousness," 1139, original emphasis.

[51] Ibid., emphasis added.

[52] Ibid., original emphasis.

[53] Ibid., original emphasis.

[54] The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus observed that "[t]he waking have one world in common; sleepers have each a private world of his own." Plutarch, *On Superstition* 166C, Fr. 15 (= Fr. 89 in Diels-Kranz), in Wheelwright, *Heraclitus*, 13. Yet Heraclitus also reportedly said that "[human beings] should not act and speak as though asleep." Quoted in Jaspers, *Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plotinus, Lao-Tzu, Nagarjuna*, 16. This is precisely the contention of G. I. Gurdjieff's well-known system

of esotericism, namely, that "man is a machine" who needs to wake up; see, e.g., Ouspensky, *Fourth Way*.

[55] Levine, "Colorless Canvas," 43.

[56] Ibid., n.3. The reference within the quote is to W. R. Bion, *Attention and Interpretation* (London: Tavistock, 1970).

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