

## MYSTICISM AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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Of course I was both flattered and intimidated when I saw that I had to be the first to present a paper in this Conference. But before we start with our scientific program, may I say first of all—as an Italian and as an inhabitant of Rome—how happy I was when I learned that this year's Conference of the Parapsychology Foundation would take place in Rome. A remembrance came immediately to my mind, a sweet remembrance, mixed up with an upsurge of regret: it was indeed in Rome, in 1947, that I first met Eileen Garrett, who presided over the Parapsychology Foundation up to her death, and was succeeded by her daughter, Mrs. Eileen Coly, our current President. To say that Eileen Garrett and I were great friends would be to belittle an unforgettable, splendid relationship; and I cannot refrain from saying that her invisible presence still stirs me quite often in my work and in my reflections.

I suppose that for many of you this visit to the Eternal City will be a rather short one. However, I hope and trust that even within unavoidable time limits, your sojourn will be both pleasant and profitable. A warm welcome and best wishes to you all!

Now please let me add a few preliminary words concerning my paper. Almost in their entirety, the ideas I will try to expound were first written down in an article that appeared in March 1985 in Issue 1 of *The Christian Parapsychologist*, edited by the Venerable Michael Perry, whom I am extremely honored and pleased to meet here in person. Of this fact, I duly informed the Parapsychology Foundation months ago. However, I have revised the text of the paper I am going to present complete with a bibliography that was absent in the published version. But the main reasons for what might be considered a sort of replica were the following: first, the wish to see how my particular views could be discussed by a selected audience, particularly by persons that have *not* read my previous essay; second, because in the February, 1985 issue of the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* I was happy to read a very valuable paper, "Transcendent Psi," by Dr. Michael Grosso, who is also a participant in this Conference. I could see that, in a quite

independent frame of reference, several of Dr. Grosso's assumptions and contentions were similar to my own—particularly to those that I have tried to express in the paper I am going to read. Neither of us was acquainted with the other writer's paper and I do not think for a moment that there had been any telepathic resonance between Dr. Grosso and me! This sort of coincidence is not rare among philosophical and scientific researchers. I remember that a similar event happened when, around 1935, Dr. Istvan Hollós of Hungary and I had the same ideas regarding some particular aspects of psi occurrences in the psychoanalytic setting. This coincidence is very well known, and is often quoted by those who are interested in the connections between psychoanalysis and parapsychology.

I think that what I just said was a necessary prelude to my paper, which I will now bring to your kind attention.

If we close our eyes for a few moments and try to distance ourselves from external stimuli and, as far as possible, from images and inner voices, we find ourselves on the threshold of those experiences which go under the name of "mystical." It is perhaps not by chance that the probable etymology of the term "mysticism" could be its derivation from the Greek word *múein* (to close one's eyes) for sight is the principal means of our rapport with external objects, while its deliberate suppression constitutes one of the conditions in which ordinary sight can eventually be replaced by extraordinary "vision."

Mysticism, as we all know, is a discipline that has as its object the possible elevation of the soul towards divinity. Indeed, it is the state of consciousness which permits such elevation, and ultimately permits the contemplation of things divine and union with God. More generally, mysticism presupposes a receptive and devotional attitude concerning the supernatural and the divine. As the theorists and practitioners of mysticism admit, man cannot achieve mystical ecstasy and beatitude by human strength alone, without divine aid.

I here wish to see, first of all, how we may most usefully consider certain happenings which define the mystical experience and are clear even to the secular observer. Many people maintain that they belong to the level of phenomena investigated by parapsychology. There are, however, two positions which would invalidate any further consideration. The first is that which maintains that in the lives and experiences of mystics there is nothing paranormal, and that the so-called observations and reports on the subject are either unfounded accounts based on popular beliefs, or pure invention and, therefore, non-existent, or explicable by the methods of normal scientific investigation.

Usually those who think in this way further maintain that so-called

"mystic" states are in reality neurotic regressions or psychic (or even definitely psychotic) manifestations. According to James Leuba, many of the utterances of mystics are "obviously meaningless." To S. Tarachow, "mystical freedom" is "simply licence to be masochistic." "Some psychiatrists are still able to believe," Herbert Fingarette writes, "that the mystic is close to a psychotic confusion between external and internal reality, with the consequent loss of personal identity, as in hallucinations and paranoid delusions." "The mystical experience," writes Elemire Zolla, "is often described in terms which suggest a regression to childhood, to the oceanic stage, to the pleasures of infant feeding, to the dependence of the child on the parent-figure, to ecstatic narcissism. . . ." For not a few psychologists and psychoanalysts, it is always a question of some kind of drawing away from concrete reality, from the levels of the adult mind, of "introversion," of "pathological regression."

We shall return to these allegations in due course. Meanwhile, let us consider the second of the two positions which would invalidate our whole inquiry. By and large, parapsychologists take for granted the possibilities of paranormal phenomena; therefore they simply point out the paranormality of many manifestations which can accompany mystical experiences, and they then compare them to those they have verified in their own investigations. So did Charles Richet in 1922; so did Théodore Flournoy when he pointed out the similarity between mystical ecstasy and mediumistic trance. So have others, who have compared the stigmata of the saints to facts and phenomena of dermatography, or the levitations of St. Joseph of Copertino or of St. Theresa to those of the medium D. D. Home, or the miracle workings of St. Salvatore of Horta to those of modern "healers."

Giorgio De Martini, of the Italian Society of Parapsychology, summed it up as follows: "In the course of his progressing spiritual life, the mystic often becomes endowed with exceptional powers. Among the phenomena of a mental character are the visions and clair-audience that cover types of revelation, illumination, inspiration, the knowledge of previously-unknown languages and of events distant in space and time. Among the emotional phenomena we place ecstasies, raptures, jubilation, euphoria and the onset of very high temperatures, with the capacity also to bear the lowest mystical sufferings and maladies. A particular kind of suffering among Christian mystics is the stigmata, sweating of blood and other agonies comparable to those suffered by Christ in his passion.

"Among the phenomena related to the physical body are abstinence from food and drink, keeping awake for days, weeks, months and even

years, the mystical perfume or 'odor of sanctity' that emanated from the wounds or even the corpses of the saints, the radiance and luminosity of the aura, the transposing of the senses, levitation, bilocation, penetration of solid bodies, rigidity (sometimes of long duration), invulnerability, incombustibility, the capacity to make oneself invisible, action on inanimate material which may cause the displacement of huge masses, containing of floods, drying up of lakes, starting or quelling storms, causing springs to come forth, transforming and multiplying food, working miracles in the fields or on the harvest, or on flowers, influencing or taming wild animals, and healing, without recourse to physical means, of illnesses declared incurable."

At least some of the aforesaid phenomena are not comparable with those more usually studied by parapsychologists and others are difficult to document. But even so, there are many paranormal phenomena documented in the lives of Western or Eastern mystics. It will suffice to recall the very numerous manifestations of clairvoyance, telepathy and telekinesis in the life of St. John Vianney, the Curé d'Arns; or the posthumous voice of Luigi Comollo, heard not only by St. John Bosco, but by all the seminarists who shared the dormitory with him. To Padre Pio of Pietrelcina have been attributed innumerable paranormal manifestations. Then there are the levitations of St. Joseph of Copertino. As for the East, we need only mention the names of the Tibetan Milarepa, the Indians Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi, or Sai Baba who is still alive and whose deeds are subject to continuous verification.

Parapsychologists are in a difficult situation regarding these and similar manifestations. In the first place, they would like to approach them with the methods of standard scientific research. Above all, they would like to verify their objectivity by noting what can be seen and measured, touched and analyzed, compared and classified. That in itself is hard enough, for phenomena which happen outside any set rules are often reported in an emotional and imprecise manner, and of them, in general, those who experience them do not like to speak. But, secondly, the parapsychological investigators tend not to ask whether the search for mechanism or scientific law is as apposite in research into the mystical world as it is in the world of physics, of psychology, or of medicine. The mystical world is not of excessive interest to the scientist who is concerned with the "how" rather than with the "why" of what he observes. It is, then, almost superfluous to say that in the study of phenomena presented by the mystics, it is useless to make the standard distinction between spontaneous and experimental phenomena. No mystic would agree to submit to laboratory experiments—they are

even unacceptable to many other parapsychological subjects! A monk might agree to be interrogated by his confessor, but certainly not to be studied in a parapsychology laboratory.

But is the scientific method the only possible instrument for gaining knowledge of reality? Indeed, is it even the only one fitted to make us understand paranormal phenomena and coordinate the rest of our knowledge with them? Perhaps the manifestations surrounding the mystics may enable us to glimpse an aspect of reality for which our standard methods of studying and assessing natural phenomena are not suitable.

In recent years, the scientific method has undergone important theoretical revisions. One is beginning to ask oneself whether this method constitutes a definitive mastery of the thought process, or if it is not itself the result of an option or choice made beforehand. There have been some remarkable theoretical and epistemological speculations recently which have not yet taken sufficient hold with the parapsychologists. It may (so it now seems) be presumptuous to speak of a single "reality." The concept of "separate realities" is rather more plausible. It is chiefly Lawrence LeShan (though also de Ropp, de Bono and Castaneda, amongst others), who has tried to show how a possible general framework for paranormal phenomena should be sought on a totally different level, even though it is equally legitimate and plausible as an explanation of ordinary experience. It can unify normal experience as well as the world of seers, mystics and saints—that world whose laws and principles are radically different from those which are proper to our world, yet seem to allow for the same paranormal phenomena that the purely scientific approach has not successfully integrated into one framework.

I wrote some years ago that the attempts we make to relate paranormal phenomena to our ordinary reality could be compared with the efforts of a naturalist who tried to study fishes by bringing them out of the water and hoped to explain them in the context of a non-watery world!

Let me now return to the allegations with which I started—those of the people who view mystics as exhibiting emotional or even psychopathic aberrations. Professor V. H. Mottram, not a devotee or an apologist, but a man of science (Professor of Psychology in the University of London, who had also taught in Liverpool, Montreal and Toronto) wrote, in his book *The Physical Basis of Personality*, that mystics claim a "special kind of non-rational experience" in which they attain "some degree of illumination or insight into the essential and normally

hidden nature of reality. This knowledge of the essential nature of things is not abstract like intellectual knowing, but concrete, like sense experience. To explain: they receive immediate assurance of the existence of a Something, a Unity, behind the data of the senses, which is as real to them as their own existence. I know, for instance, that 'I am' much more certainly than I know that the pen with which I am writing these words 'is.' I know of the existence of the pen only through the sense impressions I obtain from it all. But I need no sensory approaches to tell me that I am. The truth of my own existence is much more immediate to me than the truth of the existence of my pen. The one I get directly, the other I have to obtain through sensory endings in my skin, muscles and joints, or through my eyes, and a complex mechanism of nerve fibres and brain cells of different hierarchies. Now the knowledge which the mystics claim has that same immediacy as my knowledge that I am. The mystic does not feel, he knows. He knows that for some instant of time he has made connection with the reality behind appearance, and he may renew this experience from time to time. And the experience has a quality that makes it convincing, so convincing that it can never thereafter be doubted . . . . The way of the practical mystic is long and arduous, and there is danger on the road. But if success crowns his efforts the result is soul shaking. All his conduct is irradiated by memory of his vision. He is able to surmount all troubles with fortitude and joy. He behaves with increased wisdom, sincerity, courage and devotion to whatever social ideal he has espoused. He is spurred by a new sense of the reality that informs ordinary phenomenal things. Even sense-perception may reveal unexpected significance to him of the essential nature of the universe. . . ."

An important point, upon which I can here only touch lightly, is that of discriminating between mysticism, mediumship and the experience of initiation. Usually, a medium "abandons himself" to "something other," of which he does not generally know the nature or the origin. Many mediums believe it is the spirits of the dead which inspire their trance behavior and phenomena. The medium does not plan his experience and is not able to foresee, still less to control, what will occur (or not occur) during his trance. As a rule, he does not remember what has happened, and can describe only vaguely how he passes from normal wakefulness into the trance state. Finally, a medium rarely bothers about what yoga terms *yama-niyama* and on which the West confers (often erroneously) a moral significance. In the practice of yoga, good behavior, the avoidance of excess, the leading of a well-ordered life, the abstention from certain pleasures or foolish ambitions, do not

have anything really moralistic about them. Scraping and whitewashing a wall does not make it "good"; it makes it "clean." But how many mediums take the trouble to whitewash the walls of their inner habitat?

The attitude of the mystic is quite different. Above all, his profound faith in a superior order of things is such as to purify the inner self in an extraordinary manner, although all is seen in the light of morality, of what is "good" or "not good." Moreover, when he enters into an altered state of consciousness (ecstasy, the "flight of the soul," rapture, or some similar state), the mystic knows with certainty what can bring him nearer to God, or to the Absolute, and that the final step will be to achieve the supreme beatitude of the joyful and eternal contemplation of things divine. The true mystical state, therefore, is different from mediumistic trance. The paranormal or supernormal events which may accompany it are nearer to an extreme degree of clairvoyance, or to a simplified formula for dissolving the boundaries of those things which we call "objects" or "matter," than to any mediumistic achievement. But the mystic always distinguishes the Creator from the created, as an eternal distinction, however much the "losing himself in God" makes him transcend "duality" as normally understood on the human level of experience.

An initiate thinks, or believes he knows, that every human being is a spark of a supreme Flame, and that anyone who thinks differently does so out of human ignorance and decadence. The technique of initiation serves to realize this belief and puts an end to every distinction between the individual and the Universal Self, between Atman and Brahman. Therefore it is legitimate to think that mystical states and initiation experiences have much in common. In particular, it is well to remember that both mystics and initiates have little interest in (and sometimes even a repugnance for) phenomena that too often occur in their lives. They do not seek these happenings and they do not at all wish to prove that they exist.

Let us now ask whether parapsychology can investigate the manifestations which occur round the figures of the mystics. In principle, nothing forbids it, either morally or scientifically; but, from the practical point of view, as I have already pointed out, there are difficulties which are not easy to resolve, and can in some cases prove insurmountable.

Secular science has always tried to examine and verify the apparently paranormal phenomena of the mystics. A famous example is that of the doctor and the surgeon who were present at a levitation of St. Joseph of Copertino and gave precise testimony to it. In our days the stigmata of Padre Pio of Pietrelcina have been minutely examined and

variously recorded by scientists and doctors. So nothing should in principle prevent parapsychologists from investigating any other such case that might present itself to them.

In practice, the problem is different. Many paranormal phenomena presented by the mystics take place in such circumstances as to preclude scientific observation. Very often, such happenings occur in sacred buildings such as a convent or a hermitage. Secondly, the mystics concerned not only place little importance on such phenomena and often try to keep them from public gaze, but they are reluctant to undergo secular investigation and hope and pray that such things will not happen to them again!

All that has so far been achieved is the collection of a little more or less tenable evidence of paranormal phenomena associated with the mystics; mainly accounts in which it is very difficult to separate the possible truth from much which is presumably imaginary. As for the question of what conditions are related to the manifestations of the phenomena in question, it is generally quite useless to inquire. The mystics themselves, even if they do not shun interrogation, do not know how to respond.

These considerations are valid for Eastern as for Western mystics. Western mysticism has as its goal the elevation of the soul to the Divine; the Oriental initiate seeks the supreme ecstatic condition, or perfect union, the final step of the initiate of Yoga or Zen. How can one translate in precise scientific or psychological terms what is experienced in such states of consciousness? How convey its essence to one who has never experienced it? It would be like trying to make a man born blind understand what color is, or what love is like to one who has never been in love.

Certainly, there would be nothing unlawful in trying (for example) to verify with precision the loss of weight of an ascetic during one of his periods of meditation, or measuring the temperature of the blood of a mystic in prayer which has been alleged to reach a height that no thermometer can register. That has happened many times and been reported of Padre Pio. Nevertheless, these aspects are only marginal to the *real* phenomena and tell us nothing about their mechanism, still less about their essence.

In the case of certain (chiefly Eastern) contemplatives, the electroencephalograph has shown differences in the brain waves of the subjects, according to whether they were or were not meditating. Likewise there have been careful observations about the extraordinary capacity of some subjects almost totally to suspend some vital function (cardiac rhythm, respiration, etc.) over long periods. But, for all the reasons



already mentioned, it does not seem likely that the field of mysticism is among the most suitable for parapsychological research as it is today generally understood.

Let us, instead, listen to the voices of the mystics themselves. From West and East alike they tell us, without exception, that the duality which forms the core both of our daily empirical experience and also of the subject-object distinction which is essential to scientific observation, is transcended in mystical experience. What is paramount is the longing for unity, the overcoming of duality in one supreme identity. St. Catherine of Siena tries to make us comprehend "the words which express the union of two divided elements in one spirit alone, all-sufficient." Ruysbroek the Admirable says that "the loving contemplator, attuning to the all-embracing void that envelops all things, finds and feels himself transformed in that same light that makes him see, and nothing more." But long before him, Plotinus was declaring that when the Soul turns to the Divine, "it will experience the entrance of God within. Nothing intervenes between the two. Rather, the two are One." "He who truly knows the supreme Brahman, himself becomes Brahman," we read in the Mandukya Upanishad. Nearer to us, but still from the East, the chant of Jalal-ud-din-Rumi reaches us: "I, becoming All in All, see God clearly in all things, and from the ardent desire for union arises the cry of love." Another Sufi poet, Jami, adds a footnote: "I raise my sights until I become One with Him whom I contemplate. He and I, and nothing other, but united in an indivisible being." But perhaps only Angelus Silesius has been able thus to portray the Cosmic Flame of Love which celebrates the fusion of the individual with the All:

"I am not what I am, I am not what I know,  
A thing and not a thing, a point and a circumference.  
Nothing moves you, you yourself are the wheel  
Which moves of its own accord and takes no rest.  
Stopl Where are you hasting? You have heaven within you.  
If you search for God elsewhere you will lose him a thousand times.  
I am not outside God, God is not outside me;  
I am his reflection and he is my glory.  
God is the flame within me and I am mirrored in him.  
Are we not mutually co-existing?  
We pray: 'Lord, thy will be done,'  
But see, he does not will, he is the eternal calm.  
To love is wearisome: we should not just show love alone  
Like God, we should be very love itself."

Nevertheless, the mystic, as a mortal man, cannot leave duality out of account. He must live largely in his experience of duality, particularly when he seeks to transmit his experience to others. Then, he must use language and (albeit temporarily) abandon that state of consciousness, that sense of absolute identity or unity, while he seeks in words to communicate to us its significance and splendor. A contradiction? Well, undoubtedly, the language of the mystics often appears contradictory. Their attitude and behavior appear contradictory to those who use the standard instruments of logical and rational assessment to examine them. If one reads that the mystic extinguishes the tumults of desire within himself, one is told on the other hand that (according to the Bhagavad Gita) even a wise man behaves according to the tendencies of his nature and that "desire courses through the soul of the prophet, but does not cause him to be disturbed." As for thought, we read in a Buddhist text that "to suppress every thought is a grave error." Suzuki writes that "the enlightened one is seen to be associating with drunkards and butchers."

The "why" of these contradictions can be explained by the fact that "the mode of scientific language, intellectually fascinating as it is, blinds us to the overall sufficiency in everyday life of illogical modalities of language" (Herbert Fingarette, *The Self in Transformation*). We commonly make use of only one language to express experiences and states of the soul, that belong to diverse spheres. So, the poet Rimbaud can speak of "the golden kiss of the wood" and St. Theresa of Avila can exclaim, "I die because I do not die." How can we make it understood that the "death" which is here alluded to is the death of the transient and subjective self? Or that the "nothingness" of Nirvana coincides in no way with "nothing," but rather with the total expansion of a more profound and true "self"?

Contradiction at a certain level, therefore, is evident in the manifestations and expressions of mysticism. At another level, however, that is in a world of experiences different from our daily vicissitudes, our habitual reasonings and our scientific observations and investigations, it is not contradiction.

In a paper yet unpublished, Professor Sergio Bernardi has pointed out that the term "regression" can be used in psychopathology to define more or less severe neurotic conditions (for example, depressive states), but that it can also describe the mystic "selflessness" and the merging of the soul into the universal stream of divinity, as described by Saint Theresa of Avila. The mistake of many psychiatrists, psychologists, and, I regret to say psychoanalysts, has been that of denying any possible mystic kind of "regression" and considering a priori *every* regression

as pathological, whether the term be used to define a state of melancholia, or an ecstasy of Saint John of the Cross.

But what has all this to do with parapsychology? In part, I have already replied to this question. The traditional scientific approach, with its "observer" and "thing observed," is inadequate to a study of paranormal phenomena. But now, it seems to me, the link with mysticism becomes still more evident, so much so that it is not difficult to perceive that the contradictions at certain levels of mystical experience correspond much more closely to the contradictions, at similar levels, in the attempts to observe paranormal phenomena in a rational, logical and scientific manner. Is there not contradiction in the fact that one person can, in no sensory way, communicate with someone else? That without any available measurable energy, thought can influence the movement and behavior of material objects? As can be seen, I here simply allude to telepathic perception and psychokinetic effects. According to our modes of observation, they *are* contradictory and they cannot but appear thus to many men of science and lead them to the denials of the reality of the phenomena which we know so well.

Here, therefore, is the true link between mysticism and parapsychology! The experience of the one, as much as the phenomena of the other, belong contemporaneously to two worlds, to two planes of reality. Thereby they are no more contradictory than two projections of a three dimensional body which may be different in appearance, but is one in essence. Therefore we must check, refine and criticize the way in which, so far, almost all students of parapsychology have approached those paranormal phenomena which are connected with mystical experience. By being so attached to what is imagined to be "scientific," they have been able to assert that the phenomena within mysticism are no different from those in neurotic individuals, mediums, or any other persons. Very rarely in parapsychological literature can one note questions specific to the mystical experience as such. How many parapsychologists, when they record and comment on the paranormal manifestations which accompany the ecstasies and "flights of the soul" of this or that saint, have asked themselves, "What is *this* ecstasy, *this* 'flight,' *this* specific coordination—not transmutable to others, irreducibly inherent in these manifestations?"

The parapsychological approach to this whole area, therefore, in my view, needs not so much to be reviewed as to be practically overturned. It is not so much whether we can verify that even mystics have paranormal manifestations, but whether the phenomena in question are not seen more naturally to have their roots in mystical experience than in scientific laboratory research.

I am aware that this theme can lend itself to who knows how many other considerations, discriminations and discussions. But it seems to me to indicate that here at least is a way of comparison, a truer and more profound possibility of drawing together the mystical and the parapsychological fields of experience, in view of a unity of experience and spiritual intuition.

I have already quoted the Sufi poet, Jalal-ud-din-Rumi. He said, concerning the resolution of one of the apparent contradictions of duality: "A man knocked at the door of a friend. 'Who is there?' 'I.' 'There is not room for two.' The man returned after a year of solitude. 'Who is there?' 'Thou, O Loved One.' 'Since I am I, I enter. There is not room for two in a single dwelling'."

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#### DISCUSSION

HALL: Dr. Servadio, I was very interested in your quote from Fingarette. Toward the end of that volume he compares statements made by a Zen master and those by a woman who had undergone successful psychoanalysis. She had gone into analysis because of difficulties with being very angry with a friend. The interviewer was asking her if she was now angry with the friend and she said something like "No, I am not angry, but yes, I am angry, but it doesn't bother me anymore." She seemed to be trying to describe a state of being aware of her emotions at the same time as being an observer of them. This seems to me very much like what in Jungian psychology would be the unification of opposites in the psyche. It isn't that there is an opposite of one thing and another, but both can function simultaneously or in

rapid succession in the service of whatever the appropriate situation requires. It seems to me also close to what Steven Rosen in his paper was calling "non-dual duality." Would you comment on that state of mind from a psychoanalytic point of view?

SERVADIO: Yes, I think I can. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint the achievement that Dr. Fingarette describes is perhaps the maximum one can obtain. That is: the possibility of the subject's seeing something that is going on in his inner self and feeling a distance from it and able, to a certain extent, to control what he still senses, but can object to. As I said, this is the maximum that can be obtained in the usual and successful analytic treatment. If this particular lady quoted by Dr. Fingarette (I am sorry I do not remember the passage well, I read the book by Dr. Fingarette a long time ago) had gone a step further, leaving the purely scientific approach of psychoanalysis, and tried to acquire some sort of experience such as Yoga, she would have felt different. She would have been able to control her emotions and feel that although she had a certain amount of objection to or hatred towards another person, her final achievement would be that she would move beyond her hate and finally love the other person.

PERRY: I was interested, Dr. Servadio, in the way in which you were talking about mysticism and showing that mystics can belong to very many different kinds of religions or religious affiliations. Some people, I think, would say that therefore mysticism was in itself a religion transcending religion. I would be happier if one thought of mysticism as a kind of universal religious datum, a kind of primordial religious state or altered state of consciousness or what have you, which then became a datum which men of religion could interpret within their particular theology and men of parapsychology could interpret within their particular science. And, therefore, I would see mysticism as a datum from which one can go in more than one direction. If you go in a religious direction you can interpret that state of consciousness within a religion such as Buddhism or Zen or Christianity or Islam. One could also look at that altered state of consciousness as a scientist and ask what we are learning about the physical world from it, what we are learning about the relationship between the electroencephalograph brainwaves and states of consciousness. So one goes one way or the other, either interpreting mysticism religiously or interpreting mysticism scientifically. What I am then interested in is how those two roads can converge, how one can see the scientific explanation and the religious explanation coming together into a unitary world view which can satisfy both the religious scientist and the scientific man of religion.

SERVADIO: I agree with you completely. I pointed out that mysticism does not belong to any single religion in particular, it can belong to

any religion, even to religions which, for instance, do not think of a personal God as Catholicism does. Regarding the other aspects you pointed out, I think you are perfectly right because much can be learned from mystical experience if we take it seriously, but, unfortunately, as I wrote in my paper, many times these are reductive in their approach to mystical experiences. It is quite true that to take an electroencephalograph of a mystic during a particular state of consciousness that he is going through could be very useful to neurology, for instance, in order to learn a little more about brain waves or matters such as that. So there is much to learn from mystical experience. Of course, a scientist who studies mysticism should be much more open-minded than the scientists of our day who have a bias. Either they feel that this is nothing serious to be concerned with or they are reductive and try to interpret everything in terms of ordinary neurology, psychiatry, psychology and so on.

ROSSNER: First I would like to say that I appreciate your paper very much. I think there are some extraordinary and important considerations in it. The need for new paradigms and methodologies is suggested by some of the things you have said, not only for parapsychology, but for the sciences in general at this juncture in the history of the West. What you have pointed out, I think, implies that there are "peak experiences" and higher altered forms of consciousness. Collectively, the experiences which people have had in such states of consciousness do suggest a multi-leveled model of reality, of the universe and of the nature of man. These universal forms of mystical experience must be taken seriously. As Michael Perry has said, I would call these forms of experience a "primordial language." These "right-brain" kinds of experience should provide the lead for and teach our left-brain or ratiocinative sciences, theologies and philosophies. In other words, if the human mind in some persons who are "mystics" has the capacity to function in "alternative higher modes" throughout all religions, sciences and cultures, then there *are* things that our present paradigms and methods in parapsychology cannot possibly map without taking our states of consciousness into consideration. Our limited sciences, according to the Cartesian-Lockean model, are based upon the foundation of physical observation and logical computation of physical data through empirical sources. You have pointed out correctly that the "OBE" and various ecstatic states of the mystic, fall entirely outside of the parameters of contemporary parapsychological paradigms or methodologies. They also for the same reasons fall outside of our present general scientific models and paradigms.

I would like to see this line of thinking go on from the point that

you have brought it in your paper. I would like to see a discussion in our future works of the question of whether it might be possible, through the use of new models in the sciences and through the further studies in comparative mysticism, to go beyond the present limits of empiricism in order to develop valid future sciences which can take into consideration the internal as well as external criteria of psi phenomena. This of course, puts us right onto the threshold of the New Psychologies and the New Physics. I think our future theologians and future philosophers as well as our future scientists will have to be students of the interesting kinds of mystical experience that you have described in your paper.

PERRY: May I say, John, that you have started to answer my question in that you have been showing how once we look at mysticism both in religious terms and in scientific terms the scientific paradigm begins to be infected by the religious and vice versa. Infected, of course is a bad word, but the two then can learn from each other, which is what we are about in this conference anyhow.

SERVADIO: I am, of course, very grateful to you for what you have said because it coincides so much with what I tried to expound. Regarding the functions of the left and right hemispheres, the question nowadays is what comes first, the right brain that produces these different kinds of feelings or something that has been established in the left material brain. This question has been discussed in a sense that is very similar to our own by people like Eccles and Pribram, so there is some progress.

ROSSNER: It is ironic that we have almost come back full circle to what perhaps was intended, but never conveyed by the Medieval idea that theology should be the "queen of the sciences" or that "Revelation" should lead "Reason." The problem in the Middle Ages was that theologians often reified Revelation into limited philosophical and conceptual ratiocinative expressions and did not study the dynamics involved in revelation itself as a process. In fact part of what we mean by Revelation is a "higher mode of functioning" a Transcendent apprehension or intuition in consciousness also known as a "mystical functioning." This intuitive process must lead the intellect, not be forced to follow it or conform to its finite limitations. The things that first come from the Transcendent realm into the right-brain functions must lead the left-brain functions. Symbolically speaking, "Thy Kingdom come in the earth plane as it already is in the heavenly places" must be the correct order, rather than vice versa. But there is practically no one in the philosophy of science today who is seriously exploring these matters.

ROSEN: Speaking of the philosophy of science, at this point it might help to call attention to an important distinction: that between leaving the scientific method behind because it cannot apply to psychical functioning and bringing about a *change* in the scientific method. Dr. Servadio mentioned Dr. Lawrence LeShan's work. While I agree to a great extent with what LeShan says, he seems to suggest that the scientific method is not susceptible to change, that it will be used in spheres where it is appropriate, but that we need a method entirely different from the scientific one to deal with things like psi. My own feeling is that it may be useful to consider the counter-proposition that a change in the scientific method may be required.

The second issue I want to raise has to do with the business about regression. Is regression really the correct term to use when we speak about what happens in the experience of the mystic?

SERVADIO: No.

ROSEN: I was thinking about psychologist Ken Wilber's work. Wilber pointed out that our ordinary, dyadic way of thinking may need to be supplanted by a triadic approach. Applied to mystical experience, such a state of awareness would be associated neither with conventional, scientific-rational thought, nor with a regression to a pre-rational condition. Mystical experience would be understood as entailing a third, integrative category—what we might call “trans-rational.”

SERVADIO: I completely agree with what you said last about regression and the wrong use of this term and wanting something more appropriate. I never thought of denying or abandoning the scientific approach. After all, I have been for I do not know how many decades a member of the International Psychoanalytical Association. I have not resigned because I think that the scientific psychoanalytical approach is a good one. If I were a physicist, I would stick to my physics and certainly not abandon it, in spite of the fact that I might have read about mysticism and agreed with what I read and meditated upon. But it has been said with great authority, as you have pointed out, too, that something must change. There must be a change in the approach to some different kind of proof of reality. And the scientific method is one of the roads that can lead us to overcome the state that still exists in many realms of the scientific world that something is, more or less, either/or. I think this is a mistake, it is not either/or. Scientists can be very good scientists and at the same time do a half hour or one hour a day of meditation according to some Oriental or Western teachings. So in this sense I cannot agree with you.

HALL: I wonder, sir, if you could give us your thoughts about how



this mystical state of mind might be identified in dreams, in free association, in some way that might be brought into the laboratory in ordinary subjects?

SERVADIO: I think this is a very difficult proposition. First of all, we should establish a little more clearly what dreams actually are. According to the purely psychoanalytical approach, dreams are due to the inner conflicts and needs of the dreamer, with all that Freud has expounded and Freudians have developed after him. Freud even tackled the subject of so-called telepathic dreams and asked himself whether these are real dreams. If a sleeper sees clearly something that happens very far from him and nothing else, is that a dream or is it an ESP experience during sleep? I think that to look for particular evidence of mystical experiences in dreams is very convenient. But then we unavoidably reach the level where words can hardly convey the inner experience of a mystic. I have read a few mystical texts, but I think that if those were written here you would say yes, we wrote that, but this is still very different and very far from what we really have experienced. There are states of inner experience that cannot be expressed in words.

LIVERZIANI: I appreciate very much your paper on the relationship between mysticism and parapsychology. I would like only to underline the necessity of the particular distinction which seems to be very important, at least for me. In Upanishad Vedanta yoga perspective the human subject aims to get unified with Brahman. In Christian mysticism the human subject feels that he does not aim to obtain such a unification in this exact sense, but in a different sense. I think he specifically aims to submit and commit his will to God's will. So human will and personality remain as distinguished. The duality remains. It is not overcome, at least in the intention, in the purpose, in the perspective of the subject. So when we talk about a unification, perhaps we can work for a synthesis and this synthesis would be a very important aim. But we must maintain this distinction between these two kinds of mysticism.

SERVADIO: Dr. Liverziani, if you will read my paper again you will see that practically all you have said is contained in that paper. I made a distinction between mystical in a Western sense, such as a Catholic mystic, and people who do not think of a particular personal god. I quite agree with the idea that this first kind of mystic makes a continuous distinction between man and divinity, whereas in other ways of approach there is the aim to achieve, as I pointed out, a unity of Atman with Brahman finally. So if you read my paper you will see that this distinction is clearly written down.

PRICE: I hope we may go further in distinguishing Eastern and Western mystical experience and indeed say that there is no necessary connection between mystical experience and religion. Marghanita Laski, who is an atheist, managed to write a very big book called *Ecstasy* about mystical experience despite the fact that as an atheist, of course, she had no belief in any god to whom such experiences could be referred. Arthur Koestler had an experience of a mystical nature in prison, but this did not convert him into a theist or a religious man. Professor Bahrati, in his book *The Light at the Center*, has argued that mystical experience not only has no necessary connection with religion, but can be combined with a lifestyle that in many respects is a very secular lifestyle. Could it be that in the future a mystical experience will be more and more separated from religion and could possibly outlive religion while religion itself withers away?

SERVADIO: Yes, I agree completely. I think that one can have an experience which we call mystical, but is not necessarily linked with a particular religious belief. I know the people whom you have quoted and what they have written—I know them personally—and I am not afraid to state that I myself had two of those experiences which have been called “peak” experiences. These are experiences that do not belong necessarily to a mystical kind of person. Perhaps the term mysticism was used because it has been so long connected with religious beliefs. I know very well that this connection is not absolutely, not completely necessary.

GROSSO: Before we can begin to speak about the unification of science and mysticism, I think it is important that we specify clearly what their differences are. The role of science in the Western world and the role of mysticism in the world tradition that John spoke of, seem to me to be profoundly opposed to one another. In the Western scientific tradition the goal has been pretty much to master nature—as Bacon said, “To put nature to the rack.” The goal of the mystic is quite different. It is to transcend nature, to become one with the transcendent. This is really just a comment on the difficulty we face in this ambitious goal of unifying science and religion. It is a matter of fact that one out of every four scientists in the Soviet Union and in the United States is working for the military establishment. Therefore, we are confronting an enormously uphill effort in trying to transform or change science itself. It is a fundamental obstacle we face here.

SERVADIO: I think that the first transformation that should occur is the transformation of mentalities. There are still too many scientists

who, when you say something about mysticism, reply "Oh, that is all nonsense." And I am afraid there are quite a few mystics who are not only completely ignorant of, but also critical of science and they say "Well, what is science? Is it just trying to explore Maya and not searching for anything beyond Maya? And what are the results? The atomic bomb?" And so they stress these points ignoring completely all the achievements that have been reached by science. After all, I think that our present times would be very different if the press had not been invented by Mr. Gutenberg and then many mystical messages that millions of people can now have would have been limited to a very small number of people.