five senses, the imagination, the discoursing mind, the hunger of desire do not belong in that starless sky.[41]

Peace and joy, in divine love. We know that Thurman and Heschel would agree. The varieties of mysticism share striking similarities, not only within the Judaeo-Christian tradition but also, as we initially noted, within the broader context of West and Far East. The Far East now claims our attention, as we consider Oriental forms of mysticism that have taken root in America.

CHAPTER 5

Vedánta

In the *Varieties*, William James illustrated his comments on Vedanta with quotations from the published addresses of Swami Vivekananda. This was appropriate, for Vivekananda had gained international fame in the nineties as India's Vedanta emissary to the West. The dynamic monk, a member of the Ramakrishna Order, combined in his magnetic personality the poise of the contemplative with the drive of the man of action. He first came to the United States in 1893 as a delegate to the Parliament of Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where his bold oratory electrified large audiences and launched him upon national lecture tours, which lasted until 1895 and were resumed during a second visit, 1899 to 1900. To many Americans the forceful swami in ocher turban and orange silk robe must have personified concepts of Oriental mysticism that they had previously encountered only in the pages of Emerson and his fellow transcendentalists.

Vivekananda has exerted a lasting influence upon mystical thought in America. From his lectures and organizational work of the nineties stems the present-day Vedanta movement in the United States, with its ten centers in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, and other cities, and its affiliation with the Ramakrishna Order, which has over a hundred centers in India and the rest of Asia, and one each in England, France, and Argentina.[1]

The American centers are devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta philosophy and religion, and are led by resident swamis trained in India by the Ramakrishna Order. In the twentieth century the swamis with literary proclivities have published translations from the sacred writings of India, biographies of Indian saints, and original interpretations of Indian thought. The growing audience for mystical ideas has been further widened by the publications of well-known authors like Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, and Christopher Isherwood who have associated themselves with the Los Angeles, or Hollywood, center.

"What is Vedanta?" asks Isherwood. He answers that it is "the philosophy of the Vedas," and more. "More generally speaking, the term 'Vedanta' covers not only the Vedas themselves but the whole body of literature which explains, elaborates and comments upon their teaching, right down to the present day." In terms of Indian philosophy, Vedanta, as it is taught and practiced in the American centers, embraces such mainstreams of Hindu thought as the Vedantic nondualism (*advaita* Vedanta) of Shankara and the Yoga of Patanjali.[2] The ideas which might be said to form its mystical core are set forth in two comprehensive books, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (1963), by Swami Prabhavananda of the Hollywood center, and *Hinduism: Its Meaning for the Liberation of the Spirit* (1958) by Swami Nikhilananda of New York. Fundamental is the idea that God is both transcendent and immanent. God transcendent, called Brahman, is absolute existence, knowledge, and bliss, beyond space, time, and causation, beyond the reach of finite sense experience. God immanent, called Atman, dwells within man as his real Self, or soul. Brahman and Atman are the one God: " 'Brahman and Atman are one.' "[3] Like the great Christian mystics of Europe, like the Quakers from George Fox to Rufus Jones, Vedanta declares that man is a bodily temple in which divine spirit dwells.

It is extremely difficult for man to know his real Self because it is veiled from him by maya, the phenomenal world of appearance, which includes his own body, mind, and ego, with which he mistakenly identifies himself. Yet the whole purpose of his

existence is to seek and find the Atman; and he is driven to this quest by the inescapable fact that in the phenomenal world he cannot attain lasting peace and happiness. The world affords him what Vedanta calls the pairs of opposites: good and evil, pleasure and pain, joy and suffering—a pattern of flux, of constant change. Eventually he wearies of all this and turns to God.

For individual man, this turning from the world to God is not the process of one lifetime, but of many lives. Vedanta incorporates the doctrine of karma and reincarnation. The individual is born, dies, and is reborn again and again, and his condition in each life is shaped by his karma, the cumulative effects of all his previous impulses, feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds. Karma, though powerful, does not entirely eliminate free will. "Indian philosophy is at no time, or in any sense, fatalistic," writes Prabhavananda. "The will as conceived by the Upanisads, and other Indian scriptures, has in it an element of complete freedom, a power sufficient to enable a man to act in direct opposition to the spontaneous tendency of his accumulated character—and therefore to control his future."[4]

In order to win freedom from the weary round of karma-fettered reincarnation, a man must rid himself of worldly desires, which act like magnets drawing him back to new births, and must penetrate the veil of maya and realize that his true, indwelling Self is one with God—"That thou art," in the profoundly simple Vedic phrase. He must, in other words, attain mystical consciousness, samadhi, as the Hindus call it. This superconsciousness is Vedanta's ultimate goal. Its all-important fruit is salvation. In samadhi the seer transcends the senses, transcends reason, and gains a higher knowledge than any spoken or written words, including even the scriptures, can yield. He proves for himself, by direct experience, the truth of the scriptural assurance, "That thou art."

"There are two kinds of samadhi," writes Nikhilananda. In the one, the aspirant "retains consciousness of the individual soul, the body, and the world, and at the same time sees them all as permeated by Brahman. . . ." In the other, "the I-consciousness

is totally obliterated, and there no longer remains any distinction between knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge."[5]

In all this the resemblance to Christian mysticism seems evident. Both Christian and Vedantic seers affirm the divinity of man, his mission to find God, and his capability, while still in this world, of finding Him through direct, transcendent experience. The German philosopher and theologian Rudolf Otto, in his *Mysticism East and West,* has analyzed the striking similarities between the doctrines of Meister Eckhart and Shankara. It is of course possible to draw distinctions between the common mystical concepts of Vedanta and Christianity. Otto discerns differences as well as conformity in the ideas of God and the soul advanced by Eckhart and Shankara. And Charles Eliot, writing from the viewpoint of the British historian, points out in his *Hinduism and Buddhism* that "our words, God and soul, do not cover quite the same ground as the Indian words which they are used to translate."[6] Granting the cogency of such distinctions, one might still conclude that in the broad view the similarities between Vedantic and Christian mysticism outweigh the differences, though inevitably there will be inexact correspondence between Sanskrit and Western words, and diversity among religious doctrines developed in different lands and centuries, by men struggling to express the ineffable.

The similarities appear in method as well as doctrine. The Indian aspirant who strives to free himself of worldly desires seems close to the Purgative Way of the European mystics, and centuries before St. John of the Cross experienced his meditative raptures the Vedic seers were developing contemplative techniques of God-seeking called yoga. The many meanings of the word "yoga" are set forth in Mircea Eliade's comprehensive study, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom.* From the Vedantist viewpoint Nikhilananda and Prabhavananda define the word as meaning union with God and the method of that union. They devote considerable space in their books to discussions of four forms of yoga as spiritual disciplines: bhakti yoga, seeking God through love for Him; karma yoga, the selfless performance of

work; jnana yoga, knowledge of Brahman through philosophical discrimination; and raja yoga, Self-realization through controlling the mind and practicing concentration and meditation in accordance with an eight-stage process systematized by Patanjali.

These forms are not mutually exclusive. Indeed in the Bhagavad-Gita, the "Bible of India," God incarnate as Krishna advocates harmonious practice of all of them, and Vedantists revere the Gita and follow Krishna's teaching. When engaged in meditation, which is fundamental to yoga as spiritual discipline, they may assume the "lotus posture" of crossed and interlocked legs, or they may—especially if they are Westerners—simply sit upright in a chair, since the one essential of posture is an erect spine. Yoga meditative posture, it might be added, is far removed from the strenuous bends and twists of hatha yoga, which seeks to perfect the body, and still farther removed from extreme yogic practices of the kind stressed by Arthur Koestler in *The Lotus and the Robot.*

Since both Nikhilananda and Prabhavananda are Vedantist monks, whose vocation in America is to find God and help others to find Him in the mystical manner, it may be assumed that mysticism to them is personal experience as well as religious doctrine. In *Hinduism* and the *Spiritual Heritage* they do not write of their own mystical experience, but Prabhavananda does present, in his preface, this personal testimony.

> My point of view is in one respect different from that of the Western scholar. I speak always as one born to the religious tradition of India, convinced of the profound truth of its essential message and familiar with its manifestations in the life of my people. Thus a religious phenomenon that to the Western scholar might well seem remote and merely curious, an item to be scientifically noted but not to be taken seriously—I refer to the transcendental consciousness—is to me a plain fact of supreme significance. I have dwelt in close association with most of the monastic disciples of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa, each of whom had attained that ultimate and blessed experience; and I have seen one of them, my spiritual master, Swami Brahmananda, living almost constantly—as a

direct result of that experience—in a state of ecstatic communion with God.[7]

Not only does this statement testify to the reality of the mystical experience; it sets forth, implicitly, the Vedic concept of the guru, a word that Prabhavananda might have used in place of the phrase "my spiritual master." The guru is a spiritual teacher who instructs his disciples out of knowledge gained partly from books but primarily from his mystical communion with God. Hence the disciple reveres his guru as no ordinary teacher but as a channel of the divine will.

At times, the Hindus believe, God undertakes the direct instruction and enlightment of mankind by incarnating as an avatar. According to Vedantists, Krishna and Buddha were avatars. So also was Christ. To exponents of Vedanta in the United States the mystical Vedic concepts are the keys that unlock the inner meanings of Christ's teachings. In the *Hindu View of Christ* (1949) Swami Akhilananda of the Vedanta Society of Boston argues that Jesus was an avatar and a yogi who emphasized bhakti yoga as the way to God. In *The Sermon on the Mount According to Vedanta* (1964) Prabhavananda also interprets the teachings of Jesus in terms of yoga. Christ's "birth in spirit to attain the Kingdom of God" he identifies with samadhi.[8]

In the introduction to his *Sermon on the Mount* he describes a personal mystical experience that occurred on Christmas Eve, 1914, in a monastery of the Ramakrishna Order near Calcutta, during the monks' annual special worship of Jesus.

> Many of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples attended the service, among them my master, who was the president of our order. While we were seated in silence, my master said: "Meditate on Christ within, and feel his living presence." An intense spiritual atmosphere pervaded the worship hall. Our minds were lifted up, and we felt ourselves transported into another consciousness. For the first time I realized that Christ was as much our own as Krishna, Buddha, and other great illumined teachers whom we revered. As a Hindu, I was taught from childhood to respect all religious ideals, to recognize the same divine inspiration in all the different faiths. Thus Christ as a manifest expression of divinity I could never have considered foreign. But for a living and personal experience

> of him I needed the tangible heightening of consciousness resulting from the worship on that memorable Christmas Eve.[9]

Just as Krishna, Buddha, and Christ were avatars, so also, according to Vedanta, was Ramakrishna, the Indian saint who during his lifetime (1836–1886) practiced successively the spiritual disciplines of all the Hindu sects and of Christian and Moslem meditation and prayer, attesting that he found each of these varied paths a true way to God-realization. Vedanta's emissary to America, Vivekananda, was Ramakrishna's leading disciple and the chief founder of the Ramakrishna Order. Hence the concept of Ramakrishna as avatar is intrinsic to Vedanta in the United States. Yet the idea, as Isherwood has pointed out, is not dogma to be accepted in blind faith; for Vedanta, with deep roots in philosophical disputation, welcomes the honest questioner. In his widely read biography, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (1959), Isherwood declares his own faith in less than absolute terms. "I myself am a devotee of Ramakrishna; I believe, or am at least strongly inclined to believe, that he was what his disciples declared that he was: an incarnation of God upon earth."

As an exponent of Vedanta, Isherwood, since his removal to America from England in 1939, has written or edited a number of books and essays designed to popularize at a high level of scholarly integrity the main ideas of his religious philosophy. He is also interested in Quakerism. "The Society of Friends," he writes, "is, as far as I am aware, the Christian sect which comes closest to agreement with the teachings of Vedanta. The Friends believe that a religious life can only be lived by constantly meditating upon and recollecting the presence of an 'Inner Light' within the heart. This Inner Light is what the Hindu would call the Atman, the Reality within the individual. Like the Atman, the Inner Light is impersonal; though it may in practice be regarded by nearly all Quakers as the light of Christ's teachings."[10]

Quaker and Vedantic mysticism underlie several scenes in

Isherwood's novel, *The World in the Evening* (1952). This is the story of the wealthy dilettante Stephen Monk, whose selfishness blights his two marriages, but who learns to see his faults, to forgive himself, and to look hopefully toward a "guided" future foreseen for him by a devout Quakeress, an old family friend whom he calls Aunt Sarah. The mystical scenes, involving persons whose religious awakening must struggle against agnosticism, are brief and understated. In one, Stephen lies in bed "in the almost mindless calm of first waking," while the "thousands of bits" that make up his past life are contemplated by an inner "consciousness that had no name, no face, no identity of any kind." Some of his past actions are shameful. "But consciousness wasn't ashamed, because consciousness wasn't I. . . . It knew no feelings, except the feeling of being itself; and that was the deepest, quietest, most mysterious kind of happiness." Such consciousness, it need hardly be added, closely resembles the Atman.

In another scene Stephen's invalid wife Elizabeth gains awareness of what again would seem to be the Atman when, all alone one evening, she is suddenly gripped by the thought that she is about to die. She writes her friend Mary Scriven, telling how the fear reduced her to "a terrified animal" and relating what followed. "It was then, Mary, that I suddenly knew what to do. I gathered the creature up into my arms, as it were, ever so gently, and nursed it, and soothed it. I don't really quite know what I mean by this, because I don't know exactly who the 'I' was, who did the nursing. . . . the doing of it made me feel, to an intense degree, the distinction between the physical part of me and the —oh dear, how I *hate* that word 'spiritual'!—let's call it the higher, or deeper will. I was two quite distinct people at that moment—that much I know—and one of them tended the weakness of its animal sister. . . ." She goes on in the letter to declare her faith in God—"or in my version of Him, which I prefer to call 'It.' At least, I'm sure now (I used not to be) that there's a source of life within me—and that It can't be destroyed. . . . every sparrow, and everything that ever was born, is part of It. I, like

everything else, am much more essentially in It than in I."

Elizabeth, walking alone in the valley of the shadow, has found mystical truth. Stephen and Gerda Mannheim, a young refugee from Nazi Germany, experience this truth through their association with Aunt Sarah. One night while the two women are sewing together Gerda thinks of her husband, a war prisoner in Germany, and tears so blind her that she cannot see her needle. Sarah does not move, does not speak. But from her there slowly emanates a knowing and silent communication, a "stillness" that assures Gerda that no matter what may happen, to her husband or to her, all is well.

Stephen's glimpse of the mystical truth within Sarah is the culmination of the story. It occurs on a sunny morning in her home near Philadelphia, just after she has told him that he will be guided, and that "Whatever you do, wherever you go—in the end it'll be all right." Stephen insists that she explain how she knows this. She answers that it cannot be explained "in so many words" but that she is "quite, quite sure." Stephen continues the narrative.

> It was then, suddenly and for the merest fraction of an instant, that I saw, or thought I saw, what Gerda had seen. There was something about the smiling little woman, at that moment; something that wasn't the Sarah I'd known. That wasn't Sarah at all. The look in her eyes wasn't hers. I had an uncanny feeling—it was very close to fear—that I was somehow "in the presence"—but of what? The whatever-it-was behind Sarah's eyes looked out at me through them, as if through the eyeholes in a mask. And its look meant: Yes, I am always here.
>
> I wanted to ask "what are you?" but I couldn't. I didn't dare admit that I had seen what I'd seen. That would be getting in too deep. The whatever-it-was was so vast that I daren't let myself go toward it. And, already, the instant had passed—before the clock could tick or the dust-motes move in the shaft of sunlight from the window.[11]

Thus once more Isherwood touches upon the timeless riddle of the inner Self, and again Vedantic mysticism finds expression in the novelist's art. Although such incidents as these are quantitatively but a fraction of *The World in the Evening*, they give it its deeper meaning and make it, essentially, a religious novel.

Vedanta is the main theme of *A Meeting by the River* (1967). In this short epistolary novel Isherwood dramatizes the conflict between two brothers; Oliver, who is about to take his final vows in a Hindu monastery on the Ganges, and Patrick, his charming, sybaritic elder, who visits the monastery and tries with unscrupulous ingenuity to tempt him back into the world. The necessity of dying to the false self is stressed by Oliver in a diary that he keeps, but of even greater importance to the working out of the plot is the concept of the guru and the mystical bond between guru and disciple. Oliver has been the disciple, in Munich, of a frail little swami who died before the young Englishman entered the monastery. When the temptations offered by Patrick become so great that Oliver fears he is about to abandon his religious goal he manages to hold to it by praying intensely to his departed guru. The result is a mystical experience of reunion with the swami, leading Oliver to reflect in his diary: "I knew that Swami was 'dead,' and I knew that nevertheless he was now with me—*and that he is with me always, wherever I am.*"[12] In this culminating episode, and especially in these words, Vedantic mysticism becomes the keystone of the novel.

Like Isherwood, his friends Heard and Huxley (who made their pilgrimage from England to America in 1937) have reached international reading audiences with numerous books exploring mystical ideas. Heard has advocated Vedanta in more than a few of the forty-seven volumes that he has published, chiefly in the fields of philosophy, history, science, and religion. "Most Westerners," he writes, "are looking for a religion that shall express and render to them an experience of the transcendent-immanent eternal life that physics has now deduced to be the nature of the universe. That Vedanta can give—all is Brahman: thyself art He."[13]

Within Vedanta, Heard includes the teachings of Buddha. His system of thought also embraces Christian mysticism and, indeed, mystical experience and ideas wherever and whenever they may be found in world history. All this he seeks to synthesize by means of his own version of emergent evolution. Presumably the writers who have influenced his evolutionary hypothesis include those whom he has named as advocates of the idea that life is a "hatching process"—Bergson, Hans Driesch, C. Lloyd Morgan, and others—but not Bucke, whose *Cosmic Consciousness* he does not mention.[14]

Like Bucke, Heard argues that man is still evolving, that he is emerging from the limits of self-consciousness into that heightened awareness which Bucke called "cosmic consciousness" and Heard identifies with mystical illumination, or samadhi. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the bulk of Heard's factual writing is a massive marshaling of argument and evidence in support of this thesis, which is clearly set forth in the book that most fully expresses his mystical ideas, *Pain, Sex and Time.* Published in 1939, this study warns that civilization is in peril, and ascribes the menace of totalitarianism to the "mass neurosis" that has resulted from mankind's imprisonment in individual self-consciousness. Salvation lies in continuing evolution. That man has the reserve energy to continue is evidenced by his capacity to suffer pain and indulge in sexual pleasure. The nature of his continuing evolution must be not physical but psychical.

Unlike Bucke, Heard is not content to wait upon psychical evolution, letting illumination come to whom it will. Surveying the history of evolving consciousness from the Egyptians through the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Middle Ages, he concludes that "there is an urge" within man "to dilate his awareness," and that effective methods of achieving this were developed by the more advanced medieval mystics, whose techniques are comparable to yoga. Man should now, he argues, further his psychical evolution by expanding his consciousness through yogic methods; proper diet, continence, and especially meditation. Society should be reorganized to achieve this all-important end—and Heard goes so far as to sketch his own Utopia, with centers of mystical teaching and practice, a cooperative economy, and an idealized Hindu caste system topped by advanced mystics or "Neo-Brahmins," selfless seers stand-

ing above nationalism and forming an "International Police Force."[15]

Heard restated this scheme in *Man the Master* (1942), but abandoned it in other books that develop his ideas on the evolution of consciousness and ways to achieve it. *The Creed of Christ* (1940) analyzes the Lord's Prayer as a ladder to mystical perfection. *The Code of Christ* (1941) presents a similar interpretation of the Beatitudes, pointing out their resemblance to "that other famous ascent to Understanding and Deliverance—the Eightfold Path of Buddha." In the *Creed* he suggests that Christ had evolved to so high a level of consciousness as to be "a new species," and that it is "man's task . . . to be so reborn as to become of that species." Christ "was the Son of Man, because, though greater than any of his generation, he was their junior, he was younger, he belonged, by the creative power which he allowed to keep flowing in renewal through him, to a generation of men who, even now after two thousand years, have yet to be born."[16]

In a later study, *The Eternal Gospel* (1946), Heard offers a variant of this idea. Christ manifested the power to redeem men from original sin—which Heard interprets in terms of karma-reincarnation—because, unlike ordinary beings, he had always succeeded in his spiritual evolution.

> There could be a stock, stem or phylum of Life which from the beginning never failed. At every level, however rudimentary, it did exercise to the full its capacity for creative acceptance and never shrank back into rejection and self-insulation. Hence it would be radically free: Its physique would in no wise thwart its wish to act without restraint: It would never be ignorant of its real relationship to all its fellows and to the Eternal Life. Hence it would not only be mobilized wholly to serve others—they could come to salvation through it. For this power, to transcend the illusory but stubborn limitations of physique-personality, would make it possible for it to transfuse its vitality-consciousness into any who would accept this unique service.

Heard cites John 1:12: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," and concludes, "This, too, is the Vedanta doctrine of the Avatar. . . ."[17]

The "exact translation" of the reference to evil in the Lord's Prayer, states Heard, is "Deliver us from The Evil." What is meant, he suggests, "is the evil of irresponsibility toward time," of postponing the effort to try now to find eternal life. Time and evil are closely linked in Heard's thought. His comment upon them can be found in a number of his books, including two not yet mentioned, *A Preface to Prayer* (1944), and *Is God in History?* (1950). Time, to Heard, is "illusion"—"that distortion and misapprehension under which individualized consciousness perceives reality." As the spiritual aspirant expands his consciousness and rises toward union with God in the Eternal Now, he gains freedom from time and also, Heard argues, from accidents, which occur only in time. Heard makes it clear that in coupling time with evil he is following Eckhart, and that he regards evil as the "supreme moral problem." Vedantic thinkers took the problem too lightly, he feels, when they explained evil as "due to God's 'play,' Lila," having "really . . . no actuality." This seems hardly to take account of the full intensity of evil as we encounter it in the unfriendly aspects of nature and in the malignancy that flaws the human heart (for Prabhavananda's view on this, see Appendix B). To redeem man from such intensity perhaps even God must suffer. Rather than the Vedantic resolution of the problem Heard prefers "the original Christian doctrine of the double nature and double will in Incarnation. The divine Redemptive Nature does not suffer, but the human nature that perfectly obeys the divine, does." Yet in the final analysis evil cannot be explained by rational argument, in terms that we can understand. Saints, by means of the mystical experience, may penetrate the riddle and see that all is well, but "they may not tell us in words why and how this is so and what in logical language evil is."[18]

The contemplative effort to achieve mystical experience is not, Heard insists, escapism. His stout defense of mystics against the charge that they are indulging in escapism runs through a number of his books. In *Pain, Sex and Time* he reverses the accusation, arguing that the true escapists are those who engage

in constant work and social activities without ever facing the ultimate questions as to the meaning of life that the mystics seek to solve. In *The Source of Civilization* (1937) he equates yogic meditation with the practice of the research scientist who cloisters himself in order to carry on his effort to discover scientific truth. In *A Preface to Prayer* he defines prayer as "a method of empirical discovery, a technique for contacting and learning to know Reality," and advocates contemplation as "man's highest activity." The contemplative, expanding his consciousness toward unity with God, is "the growing point of evolution and the pioneer of humanity." As the still, silent tree cleanses the air of carbon dioxide, so does the contemplative purify the spiritual atmosphere.[19]

Heard's advocacy of mysticism—which is clearly that of a practicing contemplative—continued into the 1960's. In *The Five Ages of Man* (1963) the mystical ideas are somewhat muted, and overshadowed by an encyclopedic compendium of psychological and anthropological data, as Heard investigates the means by which mankind, in successive periods of world history, has sought psychological wholeness. Yet there is exposition of yogic method; the basic concept is the familiar thesis of evolving consciousness; and the ultimate goal of the author is the one that has inspired so many of Heard's books—the mystical experience.

Literary critics have tended to couple Heard's ideas with those of his friend Aldous Huxley, and to suggest that it was Heard who converted the famous novelist, in the 1930's, from skepticism to mysticism. Leaving to biographers the question of just how and when each thinker influenced the other, we may note that during their thirty-two-year friendship they shared interests in science, pacifism, Vedanta, Buddhism, and the mystical elements of Christianity and other religions. And in Los Angeles, where they settled in 1937, they found a teacher of Vedanta in Swami Prabhavananda.

Long before, in the 1920's, Huxley had begun publishing novels, short stories, and essays that showed a persistent interest in mysticism. By the mid-thirties he had moved from the religious

position of a scientific-minded skeptic, through the "life-worship" doctrine of D. H. Lawrence, to the beliefs of a scientific-minded mystic. He had expressed his mystical faith in his novel *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) and in his philosophical study *Ends and Means* (1937). The meeting with Prabhavananda was another milestone. "This was a contact which had far-reaching effects on the lives of all three of us," says Isherwood. "In Huxley's case, it was widely represented as the selling-out of a once brilliant intellect. As a matter of fact, it actually enlarged Huxley's already vast intellectual horizons by introducing him to mystical experience as a fact, a phenomenon of existence." Heard recalls that Huxley not only wrote about yoga but "also set himself to test out and experiment with these traditional exercises." Huxley's own comment on his mystical practices was characteristically self-depreciating. "I came to this thing in a rather curious way, as a *reductio ad absurdum*," Isherwood recalls his remarking informally in 1942. "I have mainly lived in the world of intellectual life and art. But the world of knowing-about-things is unsatisfactory. It's no good knowing about the taste of strawberries out of a book." What he was trying to do, he suggested, was to experience consciously the "spiritual reality" with which artists unconsciously "establish some contact" when they imprison beauty "within the white spaces between the lines of a poem, between the notes of music. . . . Now, obviously," he ended with quiet intensity, "one could never possibly give it up."[20]

Nor, until his death in 1963, did he ever give up trying in one way or another to taste spiritual reality. His efforts yielded what he himself regarded as modest results. Looking back on his experiences from the vantage point of May 1953, he felt that he had "known contemplation only in its humbler, its more ordinary forms"—for example, "as a rapt absorption in poetry or painting or music . . . as occasional glimpses, in Nature, of Wordsworth's 'something far more deeply interfused'; as systematic silence leading, sometimes, to hints of an 'obscure knowledge.' "[21] Like Rufus Jones, however, he augmented per-

sonal experience with historical investigation. After his meeting with Prabhavananda, he undertook an intensive study of the lives and teachings of outstanding mystics in the major religions. And the ideas thus derived from study and practice flowed into writings dominated by the mystical concern—into essays for the magazine *Vedanta and the West,* edited by Prabhavananda;[22] into the novels *After Many a Summer* (1939) and *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944); into the brilliant anthology, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), that stirred Rufus Jones; and into the historical studies, *Grey Eminence* (1941) and *The Devils of Loudun* (1952).

To encounter these ideas in all the variety of form and literary artistry with which Huxley expresses them is to gain a first impression of great diversity. But actually they tend to coalesce around three subjects that lie at the heart of mysticism: the nature of God, achieving union with God, and obstacles to union. Emergent evolution, so fascinating to his friend Gerald Heard, is not one of Huxley's major themes. But the scientific approach was a part of his personal make-up, as well as of his family heritage, and when he formulated his basic mystical beliefs he called them "The Minimum Working Hypothesis."

Under this title he published in *Vedanta and the West* a brief essay which he later used in *Time Must Have a Stop* as a part of the notebook kept by the aspiring mystic, Sebastian Barnack. As research in natural science needs a working hypothesis, so also, the essay suggests, does religious research into "purely spiritual reality." In natural science, when there is no working hypothesis, research lacks proper motivation and guidance. "Contrariwise, too much working hypothesis means finding only what you *know,* dogmatically, to be there and ignoring all the rest." The same is true of religion. For religious research, then, the minimum working hypothesis would seem to be about as follows:

> That there is a Godhead or Ground, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestation.
>
> That the Ground is transcendent and immanent.

> That it is possible for human beings to love, know and, from virtually, to become actually identified with the Ground.
>
> That to achieve this unitive knowledge, to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence.
>
> That there is a Law or Dharma, which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way, which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end.
>
> That the more there is of I, me, mine, the less there is of the Ground; and that consequently the Tao is a Way of humility and compassion, the Dharma a Law of mortification and self-transcending awareness.[23]

The nature of God as here conceived is clearly evident. He is the ultimate God-without-form of Meister Eckhart and Vedanta, and of all high mysticism. Huxley did not rule out God-with-form, as manifested, for example, in the Christian Trinity of Persons and the Vedic concept of the avatar. But in *Ends and Means* he had concluded that the ultimate discovery of the mystical quest is not a personal but an impersonal God, and he affirmed this in *The Perennial Philosophy.*[24] The God of his working hypothesis is also both transcendent and immanent, both Brahman and Atman; and human beings can love Him, which implies that He also loves. Huxley elsewhere elaborates these ideas in terms of the invocation to the Lord's Prayer.

> "Our Father which *art* in heaven." God is, and is ours—immanent in each sentient being, the life of all lives, the spirit animating every soul. But this is not all. God is also the transcendent Creator and Law-Giver, the Father who loves and, because He loves, also educates His children. And finally, God is "in heaven." That is to say, He possesses a mode of existence which is incommensurable and incompatible with the mode of existence possessed by human beings in their natural, unspiritualized condition. Because He is ours and immanent, God is very close to us. But because He is also in heaven, most of us are very far from God. The saint is one who is as close to God as God is close to him.

It follows that for unsaintly, unspiritualized men the achievement of union with God, "the final end and purpose of human existence," is no easy task. The sure means is meditation, and Huxley, like Heard, esteems the contemplative life superior to the life of action. This view, he points out, runs counter to modern pragmatic philosophy which "regards action as the end

and thought as the means to that end." But it fully accords with "the Western mystical tradition," which holds that "action is safe only for proficients in the art of mental prayer." Even good works may distract spiritual beginners from God, and their good deeds may turn out not to be good after all. St. John of the Cross declares that such acts by well-intentioned persons without spiritual insight accomplish "little more than nothing, and sometimes nothing whatever, and sometimes even harm."[25]

Progress in the contemplative life entails mortification, dying to self. Huxley does not advocate severe physical austerities, and he condemns what might be called the pseudo mortification of the stern, stoical Puritan who practices such virtues as temperance and chastity while lacking humility and charity. "Mortification has to be carried to the pitch of non-attachment," he writes, "or (in the phrase of St. François de Sales) 'holy indifference'; otherwise it merely transfers self-will from one channel to another. . . ." In other words, the aspiring mystic must learn to deny the thoughts and desires of the ego, must gradually die to the false self and realize the divine nature of his real Self, the Atman. In *The Perennial Philosophy,* Huxley quotes from the Chandogya Upanishad, "Rising above physical consciousness, knowing the Self as distinct from the sense-organs and the mind, knowing Him in his true light, one rejoices and one is free," compares this with William Law's declaration that salvation is "the life of God, or Christ of God, quickened and born again in you," and comments that what Law calls the new birth of God within the soul "is essentially the same fact of experience as that which the Hindus, two thousand and more years before, described as the realisation of the Self as within and yet transcendently other than the individual ego."[26]

We find God not only through self-naughting and meditation but also and preeminently through love. "God is love, and there are blessed moments when even to unregenerate human beings it is granted to know Him as love," writes Huxley. "But it is only in the saints that this knowledge becomes secure and continuous." Others must know Him "predominantly as law. . . . The

law which we must obey, if we would know God as love, is itself a law of love. 'Thou shalt love God with all thy soul, and with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy strength. And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' " To those who obey the law come what St. Paul termed the three fruits of the spirit, peace, love, joy. The unitive life is " 'more abundant,' " a life of "beatitude. Necessarily so; for the Brahman, who is one with the Atman, is not only Being and Knowledge, but also Bliss. . . ."[27]

In the most mystical of all his novels, *Time Must Have a Stop,* Huxley portrays a modern, everyday saint who obeys the law of love and whose knowledge of God has become secure and continuous. To worldly eyes Bruno Rontini is a foolish, insignificant bookseller, but he lives an inward life of beatitude. A conversation in his shop reminds him of the great saints of his religion, including Christ and Buddha, and the unitive life is kindled. "As he named them to himself, the little flame in his heart seemed to expand, as it were, and aspire, until it touched that other light beyond it and within; and for a moment it was still in the timeless intensity of a yearning that was also consummation."[28]

Doubtless Huxley would have been the first to admit that this sentence, for all its deft artistry, falls short of what he wishes to convey. He often commented on the inadequacy of language as a means of expressing mystical experience. In *After Many a Summer* his mouthpiece William Propter discourses on this problem, citing the ambiguity of the word "love." "Love on the human level means—what? Practically everything from Mother to the Marquis de Sade." It is doubly confusing when we press it into service on the transcendent level, as in the statement, "God is love." This amounts to "creating God in our own image." We should make a distinction between the human and the divine; ". . . we should say that we were in love, but that God was *x*-love. In this way, people who had never had any first-hand experience on the level of eternity would at least be given a chance of knowing intellectually that what happens on that

level is not the same as what happens on the strictly human level."

Another aspect of the problem is that the word is not the thing but only its symbol. Psychologists who write of the mystical experience out of knowledge derived solely from verbal descriptions of it are like "professional aestheticians" who have "never been inside a picture gallery." Theologians, too, may mistake words for reality. Yet words must be used; despite the difficulties inherent in them, they are necessary. Mystics should use them as accurately and humbly as possible to "indirectly hint"—they can do no more—at the nature of their experience. Theologians should "work on the problem of finding the most adequate words in which to adumbrate the transcendent and inexpressible." In modern times "the language of spirituality" has declined in quality, and "lacking a proper vocabulary, people find it hard, not only to think about the most important issues of life, but even to realize that these issues exist. Words may cause confusion . . . but the absence of words begets a total darkness."[29]

Of all the words employed by the master craftsman Huxley in his writings on mysticism perhaps the one that recurs most often is "self." The troublesome ego becomes in his exposition the opposite of good, the substance of evil. "For the perennial Philosophy, good is the separate self 's conformity to, and finally annihilation in, the divine Ground which gives it being; evil, the intensification of separateness, the refusal to know that the Ground exists." Since man has free will, he can of course choose self instead of God. But this will lead inevitably to suffering; for, as the Buddha so succinctly put it, "The cause of pain is the craving for individual life." It will lead, as Vedanta teaches, to the wheel of karma-reincarnation, to the colossal suffering and sorrow of the world. Is there a solution to the problem of evil? Huxley does not pose and answer the question directly. But he does point out that love can fathom "divine justice," and that the "pure in heart," when they penetrate the indescribable realm of eternity, can catch glimpses of the solution and "say, with Juliana of Norwich, that all shall be well. . . ."[30]

Like Gerald Heard, Huxley follows Eckhart in linking evil and the self with time. In *The Perennial Philosophy* he quotes Eckhart's ringing statement, "There is no greater obstacle to God than time." As Mr. Propter, he explains that God's kingdom, which the mystic experiences, is "timeless good," and that "nothing within time can be actual good." Time, to the mystic, is "the medium in which evil propagates itself." For the desires of the self corrupt all temporal acts, even those of supposedly selfless men, such as idealistic scientists. Every ideal, after all, is "merely the projection, on an enormously enlarged scale, of some aspect of personality." The only exception is "the ideal of liberation—liberation from personality, liberation from time and craving, liberation into union with God. . . ."[31]

In *Vedanta and the West* Huxley also wrote of time, calling attention to the stress laid upon the Eternal Now by Christ and all the great mystics, and—in a striking essay that later went into Sebastian's notebook—interpreting Hotspur's lines,

> But thought's the slave of life, and life's time's fool,
> And time that takes survey of all the world
> Must have a stop.

"Thought's enslavement to life is one of our favorite themes," comments Huxley. "Bergson and the Pragmatists, Adler and Freud," the dialectical materialists and the behaviorists— "all tootle their variations on it." But the twentieth century has paid scant attention to the rest of Hotspur's summary. "Life's time's fool. By merely elapsing time makes nonsense of all life's conscious planning and scheming." Though twentieth-century Americans and Europeans cling to a faith in Progress and "the bigger and better Future," they have seen their hopes mocked by totalitarianism and war. And, as the dying Hotspur knows so well, time does stop; and in that moment what matter temporal goals? Let us, therefore, suggests Huxley, choose the spiritual way. "It is only by taking the fact of eternity into account that we can deliver thought from its slavery to life. And it is only by

deliberately paying our attention and our primary allegiance to eternity that we can prevent time from turning our lives into a pointless or diabolic foolery. The divine Ground is a timeless reality. Seek it first. . . ."[32]

Seek, and ye shall find; but not, Huxley reiterates, until you have overcome self. "The poet, the nature lover, the aesthete" may approach God by experiencing beauty in art or nature, but cannot go further without losing the ego. Wordsworth saw the mystical face of Nature but seems to have been content to put his feelings into poetry and to retain to the end his "enormous egotism." Thus he fell short of the unitive life. "If the poet remains content with his gift," Huxley sums up, "if he persists in worshipping the beauty in art and nature without going on to make himself capable, through selflessness, of apprehending Beauty as it is in the divine Ground, then he is only an idolater."[33]

An idolater, in Huxley's vocabulary, is a victim of self-love, no matter what form his idol takes; whether it be gross sensual indulgence, or Wordsworth's Nature, or the temporal scientific ideal decried by Mr. Propter, self-love is its pedestal. In this sense the Huxley novels might be described as veritable catalogs of idolatries. They are replete with hapless men and women who worship themselves through loveless sex, through art, science, scholarship, false religion, politics, social reform—the list from *Crome Yellow* (1921) to *Island* (1962) is almost as various as the content of Huxley's erudite mind. Among the idolaters in *Time Must Have a Stop* are Eustace and John Barnack, the uncle and father, respectively, of Sebastian. Eustace, an esthetic, cynical sensualist, dies of a heart attack, and then in a series of extraordinary chapters his disembodied consciousness is shown struggling against repentance and union with the Clear Light of the Void, finally choosing self instead of salvation. John, a vigorous, idealistic politician, never ceases to pursue social reform, but as the story ends Sebastian suddenly sees him as a frustrated sixty-five-year-old man whose faith in the future is belied by the second

world war and its aftermath, and who has become grotesque simply by remaining what he has always been.[34] John Barnack's worldly life is time's fool.

More memorable as an example of political idolatry than any fictional character of Huxley's is Father Joseph (François Leclerc du Tremblay), confidant and adviser to Cardinal Richelieu. In his biographical study *Grey Eminence* Huxley concludes that this talented aristocrat turned ascetic Capuchin monk was a genuine mystic who was diverted into power politics by his royalist, nationalistic impulses, which caused him to conceive of France as the instrument of God. His vicarious ambition, sublimated into preoccupation with national power, led him to rationalize even his efforts to prolong the Thirty Years' War as doing God's will. In the end he stultifies his spiritual attainments. The wages of sin is death to the unitive life.

In the Huxley inventory, then, the obstacles to union with God are numerous, diverse, and potent. Since other writers, too, usually find sin easier to handle than virtue, it is hardly surprising that the ferocious satirist of *Antic Hay* and *Brave New World,* when he deals with mysticism, gives much attention to stumbling blocks and the follies of stumblers. But his mystical faith, it should be remembered, is that divine good shall ultimately prevail over evil. This faith shines through even the darkness of *The Devils of Loudun,* wherein, amid harrowing accounts of superstition and torture in seventeenth-century France, Huxley avers that Atman is Brahman and that the "urge to self-transcendence" rivals the "urge to self-assertion." He believes also that the urge to self-transcendence is aroused and augmented by "graces . . . the free gifts of help bestowed by God upon each one of us, in order that we may be assisted to achieve . . . unitive knowledge of divine reality." Such experiences may seem almost commonplace, or they may resemble the onset of "cosmic consciousness" described by Bucke. Whatever their nature, if the recipient responds as he ought, using his free will to overcome self, he will receive more grace, and so progress toward salva-

tion.[35] Thus in its ultimate conclusions Huxley's thought is optimistic, in keeping with the positive outlook of Vedanta and of mysticism in general.

Optimism also characterizes Huxley's well-known experiments with psychedelic drugs. Since these experiments were non-Vedantist, and pertain to the controversy over drugs and mysticism, they will be considered in Chapter 7. They will further illustrate the scientific bent that is the hallmark of Huxley's approach to all religious questions. Of the major American writers who have advocated the religious philosophy that Vivekananda brought to the United States, it is Huxley who is preeminently the philosopher-scientist, more so than his fellow British pilgrim to the Hollywood center, Isherwood, more so even than that other scientific-minded pilgrim, Gerald Heard. All three, together with the swamis who have written books, have discussed their faith at the high intellectual level which is one of the chief characteristics of Vedantic thought in America. But their intellectual detachment should not be emphasized at the expense of the devotion that underlies their writings and is also very much a part of Vedanta. This religious philosophy has had its austerely logical Shankara, but also its intensely devotional Ramakrishna. Its thought and its love of God are not mutually exclusive, but reciprocal.

CHAPTER 6

Zen Buddhism

A distinguished participant in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, where Vivekananda expounded Vedanta in 1893, was the Abbot Soyen Shaku of Engaku Monastery in Kamakura, Japan, "the first Zen personage to make his way to the West."[1] He did not speak English, he was overshadowed by the eloquent Vivekananda, and one might say that his undramatic visit typifies the beginnings of Zen Buddhism in the United States. For more than half a century, the exponents of Zen who came to America found relatively few Americans interested in this form of mysticism. It would have been a prescient prophet indeed who could have foretold that by the 1950's Zen would become an excitement in American intellectual circles and a subject of considerable interest to the mass audiences of press, radio, and television.

Yet the years before the fifties did witness certain significant developments. In this seedtime era, exponents of both Soto and Rinzai, the two living Zen sects of modern Japan, came to Hawaii and the West Coast cities and implanted their ways of mystical meditation. Soyen Shaku, who represented the Rinzai sect, followed his Chicago visit with a longer one in 1905–1906, working with a small group of followers in San Francisco, touring the eastern states, and meeting President Theodore Roosevelt. The speeches that he delivered during this sojourn were

published in Chicago in 1906 as *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*, the first book to introduce Zen philosophy to America.[2]

The religious tone of the *Sermons* might surprise a present-day reader so imbued with secularistic interpretations of Zen that he would never imagine a Zen master speaking reverently of God. Soyen Shaku does so speak. In a typical passage he declares: ". . . the Buddha-intelligence is universal and works in every one of us to bring out the consciousness of oneness underlying all individual phenomena. We as individuals are all different. . . . But we must never lose sight of 'the same God that worketh all in all,' and 'in which we move and live and have our being,' for he is the source of eternal life and the fountain of love."[3] As we shall see, a similarly religious yet more impersonal philosophy characterizes the interpretations of leading Zenists of our own time.

After Soyen Shaku, three other exponents of Zen claim our attention—the monks Sokei-an Sasaki and Nyogen Senzaki, and the world-famous Buddhist scholar and lay theologian, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Sokei-an Sasaki came from Japan in 1906 as one of a group of Zenists wishing to found an American monastery. After that effort failed, he remained in the United States, eventually settling in the city of New York. In 1919 he went back to Japan for further study of Zen, but returned in 1928 and two years later founded in New York the First Zen Institute of America, which he directed until his death in 1945. His writings in English were published in 1947 in a volume entitled *Cat's Yawn*, the name of a short-lived periodical that Sokei-an had issued, 1940–41.[4]

Nyogen Senzaki, having studied under Soyen Shaku and other teachers in Japan, came to the United States in 1905 and for many years lived in California as a religious wanderer and occasional lecturer on Buddhism. In 1931 he established in Los Angeles a nonsectarian Zen center, serving as its spiritual leader until he died in 1958. Several small books which he published with Paul Reps were combined in one volume entitled *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (1957).[5]

Suzuki, too, was a disciple of Soyen Shaku, and if that eminent Zen master had never visited the United States nor published his *Sermons* he would still have a place in the history of Zen in America because of his association with his brilliant student. For Suzuki, though he moved at first in his master's shadow, became in time the foremost interpreter of Zen Buddhism to America and the West, the thinker and teacher who almost single-handedly initiated the Zen excitement of the fifties in the United States.

Although he lived most of his long life (1870–1966) in his native Japan, he resided in America from 1897 to 1909 and again from 1949 to 1957. During his first stay he lived in La Salle, Illinois, and worked as translator, copy editor, and writer for the Open Court Publishing Company, a position for which he had been recommended by Soyen Shaku. He served as interpreter to Soyen Shaku during his teacher's American tour of 1905–1906, and afterward edited and translated into English the *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*.[6]

Following his return to Japan in 1909 he became a university professor, first of English and then of the philosophy of religion, resumed his study of Zen with Soyen Shaku, married an American, Beatrice Lane, and founded a periodical, *The Eastern Buddhist*, for which he wrote articles that later served as bases for his books. A prolific writer, he published during his long career about one hundred books in Japanese and some thirty in English. His cornerstone work in English consists of his three volumes of *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, published as First Series (1927), Second Series (1933), and Third Series (1934). Other important works are *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra* (1930), *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* (1934), *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1934), *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (1935), *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* (1938), and *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (1957).

Suzuki's books earned him an international reputation. In 1936 he visited England, where he participated in the World Congress of Faiths and lectured on Zen at a number of universities, includ-

ing Oxford and Cambridge. Then came a temporary eclipse. Japan entered the second world war, and Suzuki, who had no enthusiasm for it, waited for the bloodshed to end. After the war, the Buddhist Society of London undertook the publication of his Collected Works, and in 1949 the seventy-nine-year-old scholar began his second American career, lecturing at numerous universities from Hawaii to the Atlantic seaboard, and taking up residence in 1951 in New York, where he remained until 1957 as a professor of religion at Columbia University.[7] By the time he returned to Japan, in 1958, the American boom in Zen was well under way.

Suzuki's message to America in the fifties was essentially what he had been saying for years in his scholarly works. In these writings, published unsystematically over a period of many years and understandably not without a few inconsistencies, he occasionally expresses uncertainty about classifying Zen as mysticism.[8] But generally, like other authorities, he does present Zen Buddhism as mysticism, inspired by the "Supreme Perfect Enlightenment" that came to Gautama the Buddha one day in India in the sixth century B.C. as he serenely meditated in the lotus posture. From the teachings of the Enlightened One arose Buddhism, which branched into various sects as it slowly spread through Asia. Tradition has it that Zen, which is a sect of Mahayana Buddhism, reached China in the sixth century and Japan in the twelfth. In China it was influenced by Taoism and Confucianism. Suzuki suggests that it was the pragmatic Chinese who gave Zen the terse, matter-of-fact directness that is one of its distinctive marks.[9]

The Japanese term "Zen," he explains, derives from the Chinese word *Ch'an*, an abbreviation of *Ch'anna*, which in turn derives from the Sanskrit word *dhyana* meaning meditation—that is, the deep contemplation that leads to mysticial experience. Zen followers spend much time practicing *zazen*, which means sitting in meditation, in the lotus posture preferably, with the spine erect, the breath regulated, and the mind stilled.[10] The Zen master may also assign his student a spiritual problem called

a *koan*. Meditating upon the koan, the student seeks to discover the truth it expresses. Rinzai Zen makes more use of the koan than does Soto, and Suzuki, as a follower of the Rinzai sect, has much to say about the koan exercise.

"A koan," he explains, "is generally some statement made by an old Zen master, or some answer of his given to a questioner." For example: "A monk asked, 'All things are said to be reducible to the One, but where is the One to be reduced?' Chao-chou answered, 'When I was in the district of Ch'ing I had a robe made that weighed seven *chin*.' "[11]

No amount of logical analysis will solve this koan, nor any other, Suzuki insists. The answer of the Zen master is the expression of an enlightened state of consciousness, beyond logic. To understand it, the student must, in the mystical manner, transcend logic and achieve enlightenment. Thus the koan functions as an aid to the attainment of this mystical experience—*satori*, as it is called in Japanese. Even so, the solution of a particular koan may require several years of intense meditative effort. Once the first satori has been attained and the first koan solved, the student finds that he can more readily solve other koans, expressing other aspects of Zen truth.[12]

Suzuki writes about satori with the zeal of the mystic, declaring it to be "the Alpha and Omega of Zen Buddhism. Zen devoid of satori is like a sun without its light and heat," he continues. "I want to emphasize this most fundamental fact concerning the very life of Zen; for there are some even among the students of Zen themselves who are blind to this central fact and are apt to think when Zen has been explained away logically or psychologically, or as one of the Buddhist philosophies which can be summed up by using highly technical and conceptual Buddhist phrases, Zen is exhausted. . . . But my contention is, the life of Zen begins with the opening of satori. . . ."[13]

This "most intimate individual experience" is ineffable. It "cannot be expressed in words or described in any manner. All that one can do in the way of communicating the experience to others is to suggest or indicate, and this only tentatively."[14] But

fortunately Suzuki does not let these difficulties force him into silence. He has much to tell us about satori.

He views it as the ripe spiritual fruit of disciplined, moral living, of which the life of the Zen Buddhist monk, with its combination of manual labor and meditation and its ideals of poverty, humility, and inner sanctification, is the model. The fruit may be long in ripening; several years, at least, of patient, hard effort under the guidance of the Zen master may be necessary before satori comes. Then it may come quite unexpectedly, precipitated, perhaps, by a blow with a stick or a slap in the face; for Zen masters, according to the traditional stories that Suzuki loves to tell, have often communicated immediate awareness of reality to their disciples by using physical force on them. Consider for instance the story of the disciple Hyakujo and his master Baso, who went out one day and saw a flock of wild geese flying.

"What are they?" asked Baso.

"They are wild geese, sir."

"Whither are they flying?"

"They have flown away, sir."

Baso seized Hyakujo's nose and twisted it.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the pain-stricken disciple.

"You say they have flown away," said Baso, "but all the same they have been here from the very beginning."

Cold perspiration wet Hyakujo's back. He had satori.[15]

The viewpoint of mystical Oneness from which Baso spoke, and to which he dragged Hyakujo by the nose, will be discussed a bit later. The point here is that the old Zen masters could sometimes be harsh in their efforts to give their students enlightenment. The additional point, which Suzuki never pauses to explain because it seems to him so obvious, is that such harshness is only the tip of the iceberg. Infinitely more important than the sudden pain which blocks intellection and finally triggers satori is the long practice of right living and zazen that precedes it.

While the Soto school tends to emphasize the gradual attainment of mystical experience, Suzuki, writing from the Rinzai viewpoint, stresses the abrupt nature of satori. "All true mystics are followers of the 'abrupt' school," he declares. "The flight from the alone to the alone is not, and cannot be, a gradual process." When satori finally comes, it is like "a bolt of lightning," or "an explosion shaking the very foundations of the earth."[16] Or so Suzuki describes it in the first series of *Essays.* In the second series he is less dramatic and more analytical. In the manner of William James, he presents the "chief characteristics of satori":

1. *Irrationality.* By this I mean that satori is not a conclusion to be reached by reasoning, and defies all intellectual determination. Those who have experienced it are always at a loss to explain it coherently or logically. . . . The satori experience is thus always characterized by irrationality, inexplicability, and incommunicability.

2. *Intuitive insight.* That there is noetic quality in mystic experiences has been pointed out by James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience,* and this applies also to the Zen experience known as satori. . . . It is noteworthy that the knowledge contained in satori is concerned with something universal and at the same time with the individual aspect of existence.

3. *Authoritativeness.* By this I mean that the knowledge realized by satori is final, that no amount of logical argument can refute it.

4. *Affirmation.* What is authoritative and final can never be negative. . . . Though the satori experience is sometimes expressed in negative terms, it is essentially an affirmative attitude towards all things that exist. . . .

5. *Sense of the Beyond.* Terminology may differ in different religions, and in satori there is always what we may call a sense of the Beyond; the experience indeed is my own but I feel it to be rooted elsewhere. The individual shell in which my personality is so solidly encased explodes at the moment of satori. . . . my individuality, which I found rigidly held together and definitely kept separate from other individual existences . . . melts away into something indescribable, something which is of quite a different order from what I am accustomed to. The feeling that follows is that of a complete release or a complete rest—the feeling that one has arrived finally at the destination.

6. *Impersonal Tone.* Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Zen experience is that it has no personal note in it as is observable in Christian mystic experiences. There is no reference whatever in Bud-

dhist satori to . . . Father, God, the Son of God, God's child, etc. . . . Is this owing to the peculiar character of Buddhist philosophy? Does the experience itself take its colours from the philosophy or theology?

7. *Feeling of Exaltation.* That this feeling inevitably accompanies satori is due to the fact that it is the breaking up of the restriction imposed on one as an individual being, and this breaking up is not a mere negative incident but quite a positive one fraught with signification because it means an infinite expansion of the individual.

8. *Momentariness.* Satori comes upon one abruptly and is a momentary experience. In fact, if it is not abrupt and momentary, it is not satori.[17]

Such are the chief characteristics of satori as Suzuki sees them. He also tells us that "there is a gradation in satori as to its intensity." Later satoris, resulting from continuing zazen, may be more intense than the first. But ideally the first satori is not "lukewarm" but "a fiery baptism of the spirit," which, in the colorful Zen metaphor, transforms "a common cur" into "a golden-haired lion." This mystical experience should not be confused with autosuggestion, nor can it be regarded as "a morbid state of mind, a fit subject for abnormal psychology." On the contrary, it enhances morality and strength of character. After satori you remain "normal as ever," but you live a richer life. The world is more beautiful. "All your mental activities are now working to a different key, which is more satisfying, more peaceful, and fuller of joy than anything you ever had."[18]

This passage and others in Suzuki's writings—especially his discussion of the "sense of the Beyond"—seem to reflect his personal mystical experience. Though he is reticent when it comes to speaking explicitly of his own satori, he has occasionally commented on it. Once, it is said, when he was asked "how it feels to have attained satori" he replied, "Just like ordinary everyday experience, except about two inches off the ground!"[19] On another occasion he told how in 1896 he achieved *kensho* (the first satori) during the December *sesshin* (week of intense meditation) at Engaku monastery. It was the culmination of "four years of struggle, a struggle mental, physical, moral and intellectual," during which he had become so frustrated trying

to solve the first koan that Soyen Shaku had given him that he often talked of suicide. He knew in 1896 that he was going to America, and he felt that the December meditation was his last chance.

"I must have put all my spiritual strength into that sesshin," he recalled.

About the fifth day, he experienced selflessness, oneness with the koan, mystical awakening—kensho. "I said, 'I see. This is it.' " He presented himself to Soyen Shaku and successfully answered all test questions on the koan but one, which he answered the following morning. "I remember that night as I walked back from the monastery to my quarters in the Kigenin temple, seeing the trees in the moonlight. They looked transparent and I was transparent too.

"I would like to stress the importance of becoming conscious of what it is that one has experienced," he added. "After kensho I was still not fully conscious of my experience. I was still in a kind of dream. This greater depth of realization came later while I was in America"—where doubtless he continued practicing zazen. After he had achieved the deeper realization, he "did not find passing koans at all difficult. Of course other koans are needed to clarify kensho, the first experience," he concluded, "but it is the first experience which is the most important. The others simply serve to make it more complete and to enable one to understand it more deeply and clearly."[20]

What effect did his mystical experiences have upon Suzuki? According to his friend and editor Christmas Humphreys, president of the Buddhist Society, London, they molded a notable character and personality. In his editor's foreword to the Collected Works, Humphreys wrote of Suzuki: "Though not a priest of any Buddhist sect, he is honoured in every temple in Japan, for his knowledge of spiritual things, as all who have sat at his feet bear witness, is direct and profound. When he speaks of the higher stages of consciousness he speaks as a man who dwells therein, and the impression he makes on those who enter the fringes of his mind is that of a man who seeks for the intellectual

symbols wherewith to describe a state of awareness which lies indeed 'beyond the intellect.' "[21]

When Suzuki interprets the mystical experience of Zen he draws, as one would expect, upon the religious philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism. Indeed, as we have seen, he suggests that satori itself may possibly "take its colours" from Buddhist philosophy. A tradition of Zen, to be sure, is that it has no philosophy, its essence being summed up in these lines:

> A special transmission outside the Scriptures;
> No dependence upon words and letters;
> Direct pointing to the soul of man;
> Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.[22]

But Suzuki makes it clear that while Zen does not officially enshrine any verbal teaching—cherishing, rather, an iconoclastic tradition—its followers nevertheless study Buddhist scriptures and interpret their mystical experience by means of Buddhist concepts.

Certain of these, deriving from the ancient Indian religion, are close to those of Vedanta. Zenists, like Vedantists—and, indeed, most of the peoples of the Far East—believe in karma and reincarnation, and seek freedom from the painful wheel of birth-and-death. It is ultimately to attain this freedom that they practice their right living and zazen, and seek satori. This mystical "seeing into one's nature" delivers the Zenist from the delusion of ego and reveals to him his true Self, the Buddha-nature within. Hence, like Vedanta, Zen might be described as a way of Self-realization. Moreover, the Zen master resembles the Vedantist guru in that ideally he is a man of deep mystical experience, the authenticity of which has been certified by his own master, the two of them forming links in a long chain of master-disciple relationships.

Suzuki, as we have noted, compares the mysticism of Zen not with Vedanta but with Christianity, remarking that satori is "impersonal"—unrelated in any way to the Christian concept of a personal God. Elaborating on this point he writes: "Satori is not

seeing God as he is, as may be contended by some Christian mystics. Zen has from the very beginning made clear its principal thesis, which is to see into the work of creation and not interview the creator himself. The latter may be found then busy moulding his universe, but Zen can go along with its own work even when he is not found there. . . ."

"Zen," he continues, "wants absolute freedom, even from God." Its effort to be free from all limiting concepts accounts for its blunt saying, "Cleanse your mouth even when you utter the word 'Buddha.' " "It is not that Zen wants to be morbidly unholy and godless," explains Suzuki, "but that it knows the incompleteness of a name."[23]

If not God, what ultimate reality does the Zen mystic experience when he has satori? When Suzuki discusses that reality, what words does he use, what ideas does he express? He uses, synonymously, a number of terms, such as "Buddha-nature," "self-nature," "Suchness," and especially *sunyata*, "Emptiness," which is realized through *prajna*, intuitive wisdom. Western scholars, studying the Mahayana notion of Emptiness, or "Void," in the writings of the Indian philosopher Nagarjuna and his followers, have sometimes viewed it as nihilistic,[24] but Suzuki insists in the language of mystical paradox that on the contrary the sunyata doctrine hints at "an ultimate reality," an "Absolute Emptiness" transcending logic, time, and space, "a void of inexhaustible contents," which "holds in it infinite rays of light and swallows all the multiplicities there are in this world."[25]

In the Kegon school of Japanese Buddhism, which has influenced Zen thought, the idea of sunyata is elaborated in the doctrine of interpenetration. The world, viewed spiritually, is pure light. Everything in it is interpenetrating and mutually conditioning, each object being not only itself but also every other object. Thus "all things are one, and that one is the Supreme Reality."[26]

Because of his enlightened consciousness of this Oneness, Baso could affirm that the wild geese had not flown away. To

such consciousness, the logical formula runs, "A is at once A and not-A," and almost any statement, however it may violate ordinary logic, is possible. In the homely language that Zen often uses, "When Mr. Chang drinks Mr. Li grows tipsy." In more poetic expression:

> Empty-handed I go and yet the spade is in my hands;
> I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox I am riding:
> When I pass over the bridge,
> Lo, the water floweth not, but the bridge doth flow.[27]

Suzuki does not fail to note that Western mystics also affirm Oneness. Indeed sunyata finds expression, he suggests, in the philosophy of Meister Eckhart, who declares that "God and Godhead are as different as active and inactive," and speaks of the Godhead in such terms as "still desert" and "nothingness." This notion of the Godhead, Suzuki suggests, is "in perfect accord" with the doctrine of Emptiness.[28]

Buddha-nature is of course synonymous with sunyata, since in the Mahayana philosophy all Buddhas, though infinite in number, are ultimately One, and that One is the Only Reality. Hence the Buddha-nature is in all; every man is Buddha; and every man is in Nirvana, the perfect spiritual freedom of Buddha, which is One with the everyday, phenomenal world. Yet, holds the Zenist, each man must not merely accept all this intellectually but realize it for himself in the mystical manner, as he follows the path to enlightenment.

One who has attained enlightenment, but has postponed the supreme enlightenment of fully perfected Buddhahood in order to keep a vow to help all beings attain spiritual freedom, is called a Bodhisattva. His heart overflows with compassion and love for all that lives. He is his brother's keeper; he knows that in Oneness he *is* his brother. "The Mahayana is preeminently the religion of the Bodhisattva," writes Suzuki, "and the Bodhisattva's life of devotion (*bodhisattvacaryā*) is the ideal of the Zen life."[29]

Such, then, in brief compass, is Suzuki's mystical message to the West. It is not likely that many Americans read the three

volumes of *Essays,* but certain of the shorter works, such as *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* and *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist,* reached wider audiences, in both hardcover and paperback editions.

Those who did not learn of Zen from Suzuki could turn to Alan Wilson Watts, whose role as a leader in the Zen boom of the fifties was second only to that of the Japanese scholar. Watts, an English editor and author, immigrated in 1938 to the United States, where he has been, successively, a theological student, an Episcopal priest and chaplain, a college professor and dean, and, since 1957, an independent writer and lecturer. In an autobiographical essay, "This Is It," he has described two experiences which he had at unspecified times (but evidently early in his career) and which he regards as mystical. In the essay he applies to them Bucke's phrase, "cosmic consciousness."

> Shortly after I had first begun to study Indian and Chinese philosophy [he writes of the first experience], I was sitting one night by the fire, trying to make out what was the right attitude of mind for meditation as it is practiced in Hindu and Buddhist disciplines. It seemed to me that several attitudes were possible, but as they appeared mutually exclusive and contradictory I was trying to fit them into one—all to no purpose. Finally, in sheer disgust, I decided to reject them all and to have no special attitude of mind whatsoever. In the force of throwing them away it seemed that I threw myself away as well, for quite suddenly the weight of my own body disappeared. I felt that I owned nothing, not even a self, and that nothing owned me. The whole world became as transparent and unobstructed as my own mind; the "problem of life" simply ceased to exist, and for about eighteen hours I and everything around me felt like the wind blowing leaves across a field on an autumn day.

The second experience came "a few years later . . . after a period when I had been attempting to practice what Buddhists call 'recollection' (*smriti*) or constant awareness of the immediate present. . . ." Discussing this with him one evening, someone suggested that there was no need for such effort, since "we are always completely *in* the present" regardless of our thoughts. "This, actually quite obvious, remark again brought on the sudden sensation of having no weight," says Watts.

At the same time, the present seemed to become a kind of moving stillness, an eternal stream from which neither I nor anything could deviate. I saw that everything, just as it is now, is IT—is the whole point of there being life and a universe. I saw that when the *Upanishads* said, "That art thou!" or "All this world is Brahman," they meant just exactly what they said. Each thing, each event, each experience in its inescapable nowness and in all its own particular individuality was precisely what it should be, and so much so that it acquired a divine authority and originality. It struck me with the fullest clarity that none of this depended on my seeing it to be so; that was the way things were, whether I understood it or not, and if I did not understand, that was IT too. Furthermore, I felt that I now understood what Christianity might mean by the love of God—namely, that despite the commonsensical imperfection of things, they were nonetheless loved by God just as they are, and that this loving of them was at the same time the godding of them. This time the vivid sensation of lightness and clarity lasted a full week."[30]

When Watts adds that "these experiences, reinforced by others that have followed, have been the enlivening force of all my work in writing and in philosophy since that time,"[31] one understands why a concern with mysticism characterizes his numerous books, which have made his name known in England and Europe as well as in America. Though he has written of both Eastern and Western mysticism, the interest in the East that he revealed in his first book— *The Spirit of Zen* (1936), a popularization of Suzuki's works—has never waned. In *Behold the Spirit* (1947), his main argument was for a revival of Christianity through renewed emphasis upon the mystical meaning of the Incarnation, yet he also advocated the spiritual wisdom of Zen, remarking that "the metaphysical background of Zen is the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism," and that "there can be no doubt whatever that this kind of Buddhist *mysticism* is as genuine an experience of God as that ineffable mystery known in Christian mysticism as the 'Cloud of Unknowing' or the 'luminous darkness.' " In *The Supreme Identity*, published in 1950, the year that he left the Episcopal Church, he pointed out similarities in the mysticism of East and West, and placed his emphasis upon the Eastern doctrines, especially Vedanta, declaring "the

true end of man" to be "the realization of the Supreme Identity of *atma* and *Brahma*, of the Self and the infinite." During the fifties and sixties he continued to advocate the Eastern teachings. In *Beyond Theology* (1964) he argued that the best way to understand Christianity was to examine it "in the context of the world-view of the Hindus."[32]

While maintaining his interest in Oriental mysticism, he changed his interpretation of mystical experience. In *Behold the Spirit* and *The Supreme Identity* he had interpreted it in the traditional manner as supernatural experience, but after 1950 he modified his views so that they accorded with modern scientific theories of man and the universe, such as relativity and field theory. By 1960 he was writing of the mystic: "His sphere of experience is the unspeakable. Yet this need mean no more than that it is the sphere of physical nature, of all that is not simply conceptions, numbers, or words." Putting it another way, he suggested that mystical experience "might best be described as insight, as the word is now used in psychiatry." He was "more and more persuaded," he said in 1961, that "so-called mystical consciousness" is not "supernatural or metaphysical in the usual sense."[33]

His changed view of mystical experience was evident in his main work on Zen Buddhism, *The Way of Zen*, which appeared in 1957. His comment on satori, for instance, seemed designed to bring Suzuki down to earth. It should not be assumed, he wrote,

that *satori* is a single, sudden leap from the common consciousness to "complete, unexcelled awakening". . . . *Satori* really designates the sudden and intuitive way of seeing into anything, whether it be remembering a forgotten name or seeing into the deepest principles of Buddhism. One seeks and seeks, but cannot find. One then gives up, and the answer comes by itself. Thus there may be many occasions of *satori* in the course of training, great *satori* and little *satori*, and the solution of many of the *koan* depends upon nothing more sensational than a kind of "knack" for understanding the Zen style of handling Buddhist principles.

He did not claim personal experience of satori. Neither did he represent himself "as a Zenist, or even as a Buddhist." Rather, he preferred to take a "friendly neutral position" toward institutionalized Zen—that is, the kind with which Suzuki and other Japanese and American Zenists were associated. His *Way* emphasized the Taoist origins of Zen, and repeatedly he called attention to its humanistic aspects, which derive from its identification of Nirvana with the phenomenal world. "The perfection of Zen," he declared, "is to be perfectly and simply human. The difference of the adept in Zen from the ordinary run of men is that the latter are, in one way or another, at odds with their own humanity, and are attempting to be angels or demons."[34] Though he did not neglect such mystical Zen teachings as timelessness and the unreality of the ego, on the whole his way seems considerably more mundane than Suzuki's.

Yet in Suzuki's writings as well as in Watts's, readers could find a way so complex and enigmatic that it might easily appeal both to those who sought salvation in heaven and those who sought it on earth. And in the America of the fifties there were many seekers. War and the threat of war, and the atomic bomb with its potentiality for destroying the human race, had spurred intensified questioning of Western man's model of the universe, based upon faith in science and technology. What was the individual's relation to this mysterious, dangerous universe? Intellectuals asked the old question anew, and some sought answers in the religious existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard, or in Sartre's atheistic anguish, while others found solace in orthodox Christianity. Still others, as we have seen, turned to Vedanta, and increasing numbers were drawn to Zen Buddhism —not, for the most part, as devotees, yet often as serious inquirers.

Zen was likely to be especially attractive to those who as members of the American armed forces had encountered it in Korea or Japan, perhaps gaining some firsthand knowledge of how deeply this one minority sect of Buddhism has influenced not only religion and philosophy but also art, literature, architecture, and other facets of culture in that part of the world. In addition, it could appeal to the Western mind, long accustomed to Freudian introspection, as a kind of Oriental psychotherapy. C. G. Jung and Erich Fromm, among others, compared it with psychotherapy in the West.[35] Their interest in Zen helped to bring it to the attention of the general public.

Popular interest in Zen reached a peak in America during the late fifties. Watts, like Suzuki, both wrote and lectured, and he did not neglect the audiences of radio and television. In popular magazines, articles on Watts and Suzuki and Zen Buddhism multiplied. In academic quarterlies, scholars compared Zen thought with Western philosophy and Zen art with Western painting. In music, the composer John Cage drew inspiration, so he said, from Zenist silence. And in the bohemian districts of the nation's cities, from New York to San Francisco, unconventional young people known as the "Beat Generation" or "Beats" mixed Zen with poetry, painting, free love, alcohol, and marijuana. Their chief spokesman, Jack Kerouac, used Zen ideas in his widely read novel, *The Dharma Bums* (1958).

Both Watts and Suzuki expressed doubt that what the Beats practiced was really Zen. Watts published a provocative essay, "Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen," in which he criticized not only the "Bohemian affectations" of the Beats but also the traditional Zen of Japan, which he regarded as overly formal and fussy—in a word, "square." As he had previously indicated in his *Way of Zen*, he preferred the life-style of "the old Chinese Zen masters," who were "steeped in Taoism," and whose "Zen was *wu-shih*, which means approximately 'nothing special' or 'no fuss.' " Suzuki suggested that the Zen from which the Beat artists professed to draw inspiration was not authentic. To Kerouac's proclamation that the Beat poets were "CHILDREN . . . childlike graybeard Homers singing in the street," he replied, "Yes, there is enough of childishness but not much of childlikeness. Spontaneity is not everything, it must be 'rooted.' " In his opinion, the Beats needed to develop "the primary feeling for the

Self."[36] Apparently they never did, and soon their enthusiasm for Zen faded from public view along with the short-lived Beat movement.

Meanwhile a fresh current of traditional Zen mysticism was entering American thought. Native Americans who had received Zen training in Japan were beginning to speak out. The first voice was that of Ruth Fuller Sasaki, widow of Sokei-an Sasaki, who, it will be remembered, had founded the First Zen Institute of America. Long interested in Buddhist enlightenment, she had visited Japan in the early thirties and studied Zen in a Kyoto monastery; later in New York she had been a disciple of Sokei-an, whom she married in 1944. After his death she resumed her studies in Kyoto, where in the late fifties she established a branch of the First Zen Institute as a center for American Zenists studying in Japan. The center became a subtemple of Daitoku-ji Monastery, and in May 1958, at the age of sixty-five, Ruth Sasaki was ordained its priest, thus becoming, in the words of *Time* magazine, "the first American in history to be admitted to the Japanese Buddhist priesthood and installed as head priest of a Japanese temple."[37] That same year she published a brief monograph, *Zen: A Religion,* following it with *Zen: A Method for Religious Awakening* (1959), an address which she had delivered in the fall of 1958 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1966, as co-author with the Zen master Miura Isshu, she published an authoritative book, *Zen Dust: The History of the Koan and Koan Study in Rinzai (Lin-Chi) Zen.* It contained her history of the koan and her translation of lectures in Japanese that Miura Isshu had given in New York in 1955 at the First Zen Institute.

In these writings Ruth Sasaki stresses the religious, the mystical, and the moral nature of Zen Buddhism. Zazen practice, in her view, is fundamental, and "morality is the foundation stone of practice; without morality there can be no true practice and therefore no true attainment." Right living, zazen, and koan study lead to satori, the experience of the undifferentiated realm

of the mystic, in which "God—if I may borrow that word for a moment—the universe, and man are one indissoluble existence, one total whole."[38]

This traditional view of Zen found another voice in America when in 1964 Paul Wienpahl published *The Matter of Zen: A Brief Account of Zazen.* Wienpahl, a professor of philosophy at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who had studied Zen in Kyoto under Ruth Sasaki's direction, dwelt at length upon the importance of zazen, and indicated that he himself had attained at least some degree of the egoless, unitive experience in which "the moral precept to 'love thy neighbor as thyself' suddenly appears . . . as a description of fact and no longer as a command." "Plato was right," he concluded. "There is knowledge of the Good."[39]

The most eloquent advocate of traditional Japanese Zen, Philip Kapleau, is a former American businessman who in 1965 became a Zen priest. His book *The Three Pillars of Zen: Teaching, Practice, and Enlightenment,* published in Tokyo in 1965 and in New York in 1966, is an extraordinary compilation of lectures by his Zen teacher, Yasutani-roshi, of interviews between the master and his students, and of autobiographical narratives in which Japanese and American Zenists describe their enlightenment experiences. Kapleau makes necessary translations from the Japanese, and binds the whole together with editorial introductions that add up to a trenchant commentary on Zen Buddhism. One of the enlightenment narratives is his. Told in extracts from his diary, it is a revealing story of spiritual quest and transformation.

In 1953 Kapleau, a forty-year-old bachelor, was prospering in the court reporting business and finding life meaningless. Regularly he commuted from his home in New Haven, Connecticut, to New York City to attend the Columbia University lectures of Suzuki, whom he had met briefly in Japan during the American occupation, while serving as court reporter with the International Military Tribunal at Tokyo. Suzuki's expositions of Zen

philosophy intrigued but puzzled him, affording no relief from his personal problems. He suffered from allergies and stomach ulcers, and could not sleep without drugs. "So miserable wish I had the guts to end it all," he wrote in his diary.[40]

Instead of committing suicide he quit his business, went back to Japan, and plunged into five arduous years of Zen practice under the guidance of three successive *roshis*, or spiritual teachers, the last being Yasutani-roshi. Frustrations piled on top of disappointments, but he persisted in his quest, and there came a sesshin in August, 1958, when Yasutani-roshi warned him to hold fast to his zazen and his koan, for he was near Self-realization. Through the night of August 4 and on into the next day he practiced, losing all sense of self, absorbed in meditation even while eating or sweeping floors. In his diary he recorded what happened that afternoon when he had his formal interview with Zen master Yasutani.

> Hawklike, the roshi scrutinized me as I entered his room, walked toward him, prostrated myself, and sat before him with my mind alert and exhilarated. . . .
>
> "The universe is One," he began, each word tearing into my mind like a bullet. "The moon of Truth—" All at once the roshi, the room, every single thing disappeared in a dazzling stream of illumination and I felt myself bathed in a delicious, unspeakable delight. . . . For a fleeting eternity I was alone—I alone was. . . . Then the roshi swam into view. Our eyes met and flowed into each other, and we burst out laughing. . . .
>
> "I have it! I know! There is nothing, absolutely nothing. I am everything and everything is nothing!" I exclaimed more to myself than to the roshi, and got up and walked out. . . .

At the evening interview Yasutani-roshi questioned him on his koan and confirmed his kensho. "Although your realization is clear," he explained, "you can expand and deepen it infinitely. . . ." Kapleau resumed his zazen.

On August 9 he noted the after-effects of his experience: "Feel free as a fish swimming in an ocean of cool, clear water after being stuck in a tank of glue. . . . and so grateful for everything. . . . grateful to everyone who encouraged and sustained me

in spite of my immature personality and stubborn nature.

"But mostly I am grateful for my human body, for the privilege as a human being to know this Joy, like no other."[41]

Kapleau's Buddhist interpretation of enlightenment accords with that of Suzuki and Ruth Sasaki. With enlightenment, he writes, comes "the realization that the substratum of existence is a Voidness out of which all things ceaselessly arise and into which they endlessly return, that this Emptiness is positive and alive and in fact not other than the vividness of a sunset or the harmonies of a great symphony.

"This bursting into consciousness of the effulgent Buddha-nature is the 'swallowing up' of the universe, the obliteration of every feeling of opposition and separateness. In this state of unconditioned subjectivity I, *selfless* I, am supreme."

His main concern, however, is not philosophy but practice. He stresses the moral, religious nature of Zen and its inseparability from zazen, which may be practiced as sitting (the chief form), walking, chanting, or manual labor. "At its profoundest level Zen, like every other great religion, transcends its own teachings and practices," he concedes, "yet at the same time there is no Zen apart from these practices. The attempt in the West to isolate Zen in a vacuum of the intellect, cut off from the very disciplines which are its *raison d'être*, has nourished a pseudo-Zen which is little more than a mind-tickling diversion of highbrows and a plaything of beatniks."[42]

Wishing to correct such "distortion," he takes issue with other writers who, in his opinion, have obscured true Zen. Suzuki seems to be one target of the remark that "certain exponents of Zen, Asians as well as Westerners, have misled their readers" by overly indulging their "relish for drama" and giving disproportionate space to "the beatings and kickings of the ancient Chinese masters," together with their paradoxical outbursts, such as, " 'You must kill the Buddha!' " Watts is criticized as being too theoretical, and for questioning, in his *Way of Zen*, the importance of sitting in zazen. As for the "beatnik," his actions reveal his lack of enlightenment. "The freedom of the liberated Zen

man is a far cry from the 'freedom' of the Zen beatnik, driven as the latter is by his uncontrolled selfish desires. The inseparable bond with his fellow men which the truly enlightened feels precludes any such self-centered behavior as the beatnik's."[43]

In making these criticisms, Kapleau does not mean to present himself as an exceptional American, happily escaped from a land fit only for pseudo Zen. On the contrary, he sees affinity between the Zen way and the American spirit. "In Zen's emphasis on self-reliance, in its clear awareness of the dangers of intellectualism, in its empirical appeal to personal experience and not philosophic speculation as the means of verifying ultimate truth, in its pragmatic concern with mind and suffering, and in its direct, practical methods for body-mind emancipation, Americans find much that is congenial to their native temperament, their historical conditioning, and their particular *Weltanschauung.*"

Of course Zen is not merely for Japanese and Americans, but for all. It offers salvation to everyone in this modern age of anxiety. As Kapleau, with the optimism of the mystic, puts it: ". . . the fact that ordinary people through satori can discover meaning and joy in life, as well as a sense of their own uniqueness and solidarity with all mankind, surely spells hope for men everywhere."[44]

That men everywhere, and in America in particular, have not yet in large numbers found Zen to be their most congenial way of salvation is obvious. By the time Kapleau's book appeared, the American vogue for Zen was over. Yet serious Zenists in the United States, guided by visiting or immigrant Japanese teachers, continued to practice the traditional disciplines and occasionally to establish new centers. Kapleau returned, after thirteen years in Japan, and in 1966 founded and became spiritual director of the Zen Meditation Center of Rochester, New York, where he sought to Americanize traditional rituals. In 1967, the Zen Center of San Francisco established its Zen Mountain Center, including a Soto monastery for both men and women, at Tassajara in central California. By 1969 a number of active centers could be found in the United States, not only in New York

City, Rochester, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, but also in Philadelphia, Washington, Cambridge, and Honolulu.[45] As the decade ended, it seemed evident that the mysticism first brought by Soyen Shaku and Suzuki had entered permanently into American thought and, through the quietly growing Zen movement, into American practice.

CHAPTER 7

Psychology and Psychedelic Experience

In this chapter the psychological approach to mysticism that we have touched on intermittently from William James to Suzuki becomes our main theme. Three aspects of this approach concern us: the expression of mysticism within the psychological frame of thought, the continuing interest of psychologists in mystical experience, and the upsurge in the fifties and sixties of psychedelic experimentation inspired by a dramatic revival of the argument that chemical agents can induce mystical states of consciousness.

We have noticed that Western mystics like Rufus Jones have occasionally taken sharp issue with the psychological approach —witness Jones' debate with James Leuba over the validity of mystical experience and the competence of psychologists to judge it. Neither have the Oriental mystics who have spoken to America been much at ease with Western psychology. Rather they hold to Eastern traditions that blend the mystical with the psychological. Vedantic mysticism, as we have seen, embraces Patanjali's system of yoga, which has been called "one of the great psychological achievements of all time."[1] This system, Swami Prabhavananda points out, "deals specifically with the process of mind control," and accepts not only "the subconscious mind" but also "the superconscious state." The harmony of Indian psychology and mysticism is a recurrent theme of

Prabhavananda's *Spiritual Heritage of India.*[2]

Swami Akhilananda—author, it will be remembered, of the *Hindu View of Christ*—has published two books expressing mystical thought as psychology. His *Hindu Psychology: Its Meaning for the West* was introduced to American readers in 1946 by Gordon W. Allport of the Harvard psychology department and Edgar Sheffield Brightman of the philosophy department of Boston University. It mingles learned discussion of Western and Hindu psychological theory with unreserved acceptance of the mystical "superconscious state." Akhilananda takes issue with Jung for identifying superconscious experiences with the "deep unconscious state," describing them as "vast but dim," and declaring that they are "scarcely to be recommended anywhere north of the Tropic of Cancer." Jung's comment is "unscientific," he argues. "Any man who has had these realizations will laugh at such conclusions." The superconscious state, samadhi, is not dim, but "vivid and definite." North of the Tropic of Cancer it has been recommended by "Judaeo-Christian types" like St. Teresa and Meister Eckhart who, unlike Jung, speak from experience. And far from its being identical with the unconscious state, it is, in its profound awareness, the very opposite. "To identify the superconscious state with the unconscious state is to mix darkness and light. In one case man is completely oblivious of the existence of God; in the other case man is fully aware of the existence of God, nay, identified with Him."[3]

Mysticism also permeates Akhilananda's *Mental Health and Hindu Psychology* (1951). In this study he declares that Hindu psychology grew out of spiritual experience, and is closely related to the mental health field, since the Hindus "fully realize that until and unless the mind is wholly unified and integrated there is no possibility of spiritual realization or mystical experiences."[4] He goes on to argue that the fears and anxieties, the conflicts and frustrations that make for mental illness can be overcome by yogic meditation and mystical attainment. Meditation strengthens the will, stabilizes the emotions, and calms the mind, and when mystical experience results it is even more

conducive to mental health. The man who truly realizes his oneness with God lives free of negative tensions—in peace and love.

Like Akhilananda, Suzuki has been well aware of the psychological implications of his mystical way, and has called attention to them. He writes of "the psychological aspect of satori" and, as we noted, follows William James in setting forth distinguishing marks of this mystical state. Perhaps James also influenced Suzuki's suggestion, in his first series of *Essays*, that "the power to see into the nature of one's own being" may lie hidden in "an unknown region in our consciousness" that is "sometimes called the Unconscious or the Subconscious."[5] This sounds like the *Varieties*. But Suzuki elsewhere gives a different meaning to "the Unconscious." In his third series of *Essays* and again in *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* (1949), he applies the term to the mystical state which the Chinese Zen Master Hui-neng designated by the terms *Wu-nien* or *Wu-hsin*, meaning literally "no-thought" or "no-mind," and connoting "no-consciousness." For the broad Chinese meaning, explains Suzuki, "it is difficult to find an English equivalent except the Unconscious, though even this must be used in a definitely limited sense. It is not the Unconscious in its usual psychological sense, nor in the sense given it by the analytical psychologists, who find it very much deeper than mere lack of consciousness, but probably in the sense of the 'abysmal ground' of the mediaeval mystics, or in the sense of the Divine Will even before its utterance of the Word."[6]

It seems, then, that Suzuki, like Rufus Jones, was initially intrigued by James' treatment of the unconscious in the *Varieties*, but eventually moved away from that theory to more thoroughly mystical ground. In view of his shifting position, and his occasional ambiguity as to whether he is referring to the Freudian or the mystical unconscious, it is not surprising that psychotherapists have found their own theories in his writings. When in 1949 Jung wrote the Foreword to a new edition of Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, he suggested that satori was "the final break-through of unconscious contents into the

the conscious,"[7] and that in this regard Zen had much in common with psychotherapy. When in 1960 Erich Fromm collaborated with Suzuki in the publication of *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, Fromm attempted to show similarities between Zen and psychoanalysis, arguing that both aim at "the transformation of unconsciousness into consciousness."[8]

Fromm's argument turns upon Suzuki's discussion, in the same book, of the Zen effort "to become . . . conscious of the unconscious,"[9] and evidently the psychoanalyst assumes that the Zenist is using "the unconscious" in the Freudian sense. Actually Suzuki seems to be using it in the mystical sense. For in his lectures on Zen which comprise the first portion of the book—lectures which he delivered in 1957 to a conference of some fifty psychiatrists and psychologists, including Fromm—he states, "What I mean by 'the unconscious' and what psychoanalysts mean by it may be different. . . ." What he means by it, he goes on to say, might be termed "metascientific," or "antescientific," or even "antiscientific." He couples it with "no-mind," and likens it to St. Augustine's selfless love of God. Perhaps, he suggests, "this kind of unconscious" might be called "the Cosmic Unconscious."[10] These and other similar remarks sprinkled through his discourse indicate that he is not discussing Zen as a form of Oriental psychoanalysis, but as mysticism.

If Suzuki has not completely subscribed to the basic tenets of depth psychology, neither has the well-known sociologist, Pitirim A. Sorokin. Although Sorokin is a scientist-philosopher with religious faith rather than a mystic,[11] he has been markedly sympathetic toward mysticism, and as director of the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism has conducted studies of unselfish love that have involved the investigation of mysticism from the standpoint of psychology. On the basis of these studies he declared in 1954 that "the 'depth psychology' of the prevalent theories of personality is in fact quite shallow. It either flattens the mental structure almost exclusively to the level of the unconscious or subconscious, with a sort of epiphenomenal and vague 'ego' and 'superego,' or just depicts it as a 'two-story building'—

the unconscious (subconscious) and the conscious (rational)." He suggested that the structure be viewed as fourfold. "Four different forms of energies—four mental levels and activities—can be distinguished in our total personality and behavior: 1) the biologically unconscious (subconscious); 2) the biologically conscious; 3) the socioculturally conscious; and 4) the supraconscious."

"The supraconscious," he explains, "is egoless: it transcends ego entirely and unconditionally." It is a mystical state of consciousness, such as the "divine madness" of Plato, the satori of Zen Buddhism, or the samadhi of the yogi. Its importance can hardly be exaggerated, for it "seems to be the fountainhead of the greatest achievements and discoveries in all fields of human creative activity: science, religion, philosophy, technology, ethics, law, the fine arts, economics, and politics."[12]

In an effort to demonstrate the reality of the supraconscious, Thérèse Brosse, writer on yoga and sometime head of the cardiological clinic of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris University, went to India under the auspices of Sorokin's Research Center and made electrocardiograms and other instrumental recordings of the effects of yogic exercises designed to produce samadhi. As her subjects moved from ordinary consciousness into what they reported as the mystical state, her instruments recorded variations in the subjects' respiration and heart action. What these variations revealed about yoga she hesitated to say; she concluded that her study was "fragmentary" and that "much research will be necessary to lift even a corner of the veil." Sorokin less cautiously decided that Dr. Brosse's "pioneer study instrumentally confirmed the tangible effects of the supraconscious upon the activities of heart, lungs, and other organs. . . ."[13]

In the fifties, as Sorokin published these theories and investigations of the mystical consciousness and sought to broaden the organizational base of his many-sided research into creative altruism, he won the approval of scholarly mystics as well as nonmystical scholars. Akhilananda contributed to one of the Research Center volumes an essay on the Vedantist way to

mental health.[14] He also joined Sorokin and others in organizing, in 1955, the Research Society in Creative Altruism. The Society then convened, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a Conference on New Knowledge in Human Values attended by "several hundred scientists and scholars," including Suzuki. But the Society did not last. "Mainly because of lack of necessary funds," explained Sorokin, it could not realize its plans "and, after a few years of quiet existence, died."[15] The Research Center also declined for lack of funds, after publishing some eleven volumes written or edited by Sorokin. On retiring as professor emeritus in 1959 he transferred it from Harvard to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and reduced its research to his own studies.

For a time, then, Sorokin threw his special scientific spotlight upon the mystical consciousness. But the psychological approach to mysticism that stirred up the greatest amount of public excitement in the fifties and sixties was not his; neither was it anything sanctioned by Zen or Vedanta. Beyond doubt it was psychedelic experimentation—more technically advanced than, yet similar to, the earlier chemical ventures of Benjamin Blood and William James.

Aldous Huxley heralded the new psychedelic enthusiasm when in 1954 he published *The Doors of Perception.* Taking his title from William Blake's declaration, "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite," he first sketched for his readers the latest scientific research on psychedelic drugs, including mescaline and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), and then told how "one bright May morning" in 1953 in his Hollywood home he "swallowed four-tenths of a gram of mescalin dissolved in half a glass of water and sat down to wait for the results." When they came they seemed fraught with mystical significance. His "I" became "Not-self," as he expressed it, and it appeared to him that ordinary objects around him such as the furniture, the flowers in a vase, and the books on his study shelves were glowing with jewel-like colors and manifesting an inner meaning that he compared to the "Is-

ness" of Meister Eckhart's philosophy and the Suchness of Zen Buddhism. This, he decided, was "contemplation at its height. At its height, but not yet in its fullness." The fullness was lacking because mescaline "gives access to . . . a contemplation that is incompatible with action and even with the will to action, the very thought of action. In the intervals between his revelations the mescalin taker is apt to feel that, though in one way everything is supremely as it should be, in another there is something wrong. His problem is essentially the same as that which confronts the quietist. . . ." However, every form of contemplation, "even the most quietistic," has "its ethical values," and contemplatives are not likely to engage in evil activities.

Together with this favorable view of his first psychedelic experience Huxley set forth a few reservations. He pointed out that mescaline is not "the ideal drug," since its effects last inconveniently long and it can plunge "a minority" of takers into hell instead of heaven. He also declared, "I am not so foolish as to equate what happens under the influence of mescalin or of any other drug, prepared or in the future preparable, with the realization of the end and ultimate purpose of human life: Enlightenment, the Beatific Vision. All I am suggesting is that the mescalin experience is what Catholic theologians call 'a gratuitous grace,' not necessary to salvation but potentially helpful and to be accepted thankfully, if made available." Still he went on to suggest that overly rational, overly verbal intellectuals ought to be "urged and even, if necessary, compelled to take an occasional trip through some chemical Door in the Wall into the world of transcendental experience."

As for "the aspiring mystic," Huxley advised him in a sequel essay, *Heaven and Hell* (1956) to shun old-fashioned methods like fasting, to learn "the chemical conditions of transcendental experience," and to "turn for technical help to the specialists—in pharmacology, in biochemistry, in physiology and neurology, in psychology and psychiatry, and parapsychology." The chemical method that he advocated was the ingestion of "either mescalin or lysergic acid." These two drugs he equated with

hypnosis as means of altering consciousness that "are sufficiently reliable, sufficiently easy and sufficiently safe to justify their employment by those who know what they are doing."[16]

In 1958, writing for the *Saturday Evening Post*, he again emphasized the mystical significance of mescaline and LSD. "It lowers the barrier between conscious and subconscious," he wrote of LSD, "and permits the patient to look more deeply and understandingly into the recesses of his own mind. The deepening of self-knowledge takes place against a background of visionary and even mystical experience." Again, he declared that "a person who takes LSD or mescaline may suddenly understand —not only intellectually but organically, experientially—the meaning of such tremendous religious affirmations as 'God is love,' or 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' " He looked forward to a near future when this kind of "temporary self-transcendence," which "is no guarantee of permanent enlightenment," would become widely available through low-cost drugs. Then, "instead of being rare, premystical and mystical experiences will become common."[17]

Quite obviously his advocacy of these powerful drugs was not cautious. It should be remembered that he wrote before the emergence into print of much that is now known about their negative effects. Could he have read, for example, the medical warnings in Dr. Sidney Cohen's *The Beyond Within: The LSD Story* (1964), or in Dr. Donald B. Louria's *The Drug Scene* (1968), he doubtless would have tempered his enthusiasm.

His optimistic view of the drugs was of course shaped by his continuing experience with them. This seems to have been wholly satisfactory. Gerald Heard states that after using mescaline Huxley found that LSD "served him even better," and that his long study and practice of meditation enabled him to employ the drug effectively. "For him, then, LSD was a sacrament, a perfect psycho-physical aid to sustain the mind at its utmost reach."[18]

A sacrament—this the psychedelic experience clearly is in Huxley's last novel, *Island* (1962), which describes a Utopia

named Pala. In Pala the religion is a Huxleyan distillation of Mahayana Buddhism, and the children are initiated into adolescence by a mountain-climbing ordeal followed by a temple rite in which they attain mystical experience by taking a psychedelic drug made from mushrooms. In the end Will Farnaby, the cynical British journalist who accidentally discovers Pala, also takes the drug and has experiences paralleling those described by Huxley in *The Doors of Perception.* So convinced is he of the existence of God and the rightness of the universe that he remains serene, contemplating a flowering hibiscus transformed into a burning bush, while a neighboring dictator seizes Pala in a midnight coup d'état.[19] Reading this, one cannot help thinking what Huxley evidently does not intend to imply, that Farnaby's attitude toward the murder and subjugation of his friends is extremely quietistic.

Actually, the mystical philosophy that Huxley explicitly advocates in *Island* is the opposite of quietism. Its heart, as one of the islanders explains to Farnaby, is *"tat tvam asi,* 'thou art That' "; but the realization of this truth, by means of the mushroom drug and various forms of yoga, does not justify trying "to escape into a Nirvana apart from life." Here the novelist expresses a growing belief of his later years, the conviction that the Bodhisattva ideal of service in the world is best and that there ought to be, in the words of his wife Laura Archera Huxley, "no dropping out from Love and Work, even from an unsatisfactory society, into the personal isolated security of Pure Light with or without psychedelics."[20]

As mysticism sanctifies daily life in Pala, so does it illuminate the act of dying. Farnaby witnesses the death of an elderly woman stricken with cancer. Her husband sits beside her bed, speaking lovingly to her and helping her to pass peacefully into the Light, in the manner described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. The scene is drawn from Huxley's personal experience. In 1955, when his first wife, Maria, died of cancer, he bent over her and continuously whispered to her words of peace and love. In an account of her death written for a few friends, he told how

he helped her to visualize "the One Reality" as light by reminding her of the light that had been associated with "a number of genuinely mystical experiences" that had come to her in previous years while they were living in the Mojave Desert. Because of these experiences, he felt, she "had lived with an abiding sense of divine immanence, of Reality totally present, moment by moment in every object, person and event." And so they shared the same mystical goal as he whispered, "Peace, love, joy *now.* Being *now.* . . . Let go, let go. Forget the body, leave it lying here; it is of no importance now. Go forward into the light." When finally "the breathing ceased," he wrote, "it was without any struggle."[21]

Thus fact inspired the fiction of *Island.* Nor was this all. In November 1963, in his Hollywood residence, Huxley himself lay dying of neck cancer with his second wife, Laura, at his bedside. He had been reluctant to admit, openly, that his severe illness might prove fatal, and several times in the two previous months had declined LSD that Laura had offered him, saying that he would wait until his health improved. On the morning of November 22 he scrawled a note to her on his writing tablet: "LSD—Try it 100 mm intramuscular." She went to another room to get the drug, saw the doctor, the nurse, and other members of the household gathered around the television set, and learned that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. Tragedy —but there was no time to think about it. Declining the doctor's offer of assistance, she returned and administered the LSD herself, following it an hour later with a second injection after Huxley had indicated his willingness to accept it. She knew that with the aid of the drug that he regarded as a sacrament he was preparing for death, and she began to speak to him of going into the light, as he had once spoken to Maria.

Hours passed. Now and then her emotion would overcome her and she would quickly leave the bedside, returning when she was able to speak calmly. Once she asked him, "Do you hear me?" and he squeezed her hand. Death came at 5:20 P.M. with a gradual slowing, a gentle cessation, of breath. Aldous Huxley

died peacefully, listening to "forward . . . into the light."

When in 1968 Laura Huxley revealed these intimate details in her memoir of her husband's last years, *This Timeless Moment*, she expressed concern over what she regarded as "the public abuse" of psychedelic drugs. "In the years between 1953 and 1963," she wrote, "Aldous had about ten or twelve chemically induced psychedelic experiences: *the total amount of chemical taken during those ten years was not as much as many people take today in a single week, sometimes in a single dose.*"[22]

The note of alarm in this statement was frequently sounded by knowledgeable persons in the late sixties, when ominous clouds had gathered in the psychedelic sky. At first, however, optimism prevailed, and popular and scholarly periodicals rivaled the Sunday supplements in publishing generally favorable articles on the "magic mushroom" from which psilocybin is derived; on the ritual use of peyote (the natural source of mescaline) among North American Indian tribes; and on the mystical and psychotherapeutic implications of the powerful synthetic, LSD. In the scientific literature, these and similar consciousness-changing agents were usually referred to as "psychotomimetic" drugs, meaning that they mimicked psychosis; but in the popular accounts they were more often called "hallucinogens" (producers of hallucinations) or "psychedelic" (mind-manifesting) drugs, the latter word having been coined by Humphry Osmond (Aldous Huxley's mentor) because he considered the other terms inaccurate. As radio and television joined the other mass media in stimulating public interest, a boom in psychedelic drug-taking developed, overlapping the Zen boom of the late fifties and continuing with growing momentum in the early sixties.

Prominent among those who followed Huxley as advocates of psychedelic experience was Timothy Leary, lecturer on clinical psychology at Harvard. In August 1960, while vacationing in Mexico, Leary ate seven psychedelic mushrooms and had what he later described as an experience of deep religious significance. On returning to Harvard he began experimenting with psilocybin on himself, his friends, and various volunteers, eventually

using LSD instead of the mushroom drug. A Harvard colleague, Richard Alpert, became his partner in research. Aldous Huxley, who happened to be spending the fall of 1960 in Cambridge, helped plan the first experiments, and as the research progressed many another well-known figure found his way to Leary's door. The Beat poet Allen Ginsberg came to visit and have his psychedelic experience; so also did Gerald Heard and Alan Watts.[23]

By 1963 Leary's unconventional ways had produced sensational publicity in the press, and he and Alpert were dismissed from Harvard, after which they began careers as proselytizers for a revolutionary, religious way of life involving the use of psychedelic drugs as sacraments. In 1964, with Ralph Metzner and Alpert, Leary published *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead.* In 1968 he brought out two more books, *The Politics of Ecstasy*, a compilation of his articles, speeches, and interviews, and *High Priest*, an autobiographical account of his initial psychedelic adventures. In these flamboyant writings he argued for psychedelic experience in eclectic scientific and religious terms, including references to Vedantist and Zenist mysticism. As author, lecturer, and defendant in the courts against various charges of violating the drug laws, he became the most influential and controversial figure of the psychedelic boom.

This spreading usage of consciousness-changing drugs was an unprecedented social phenomenon in America. It could be partly explained by the appeal of Oriental mysticism, linked with psychedelic experience by Huxley, Watts, Leary, and other authors, including popular songsters. It could be further explained by the massive publicity that, in an era of instant communication and accelerating social change, drummed incessantly upon the exciting new wonders of LSD and the activities and arguments of its more colorful advocates. Leary, for instance, drew much attention in 1966 when he declared in an interview in *Playboy* magazine, "There is no question that LSD is the most powerful aphrodisiac ever discovered by man," a statement promptly challenged by Dr. Louria and others as being contrary to fact.[24]

Social analysts seeking additional causes of the boom pointed out that it was chiefly—though of course not entirely—a young people's movement, that about half of the nation's population was under the age of twenty-five, and that the college population, which seemed especially interested in psychedelics, numbered nearly six million. They suggested that many of these young people felt socially alienated, for a variety of reasons: the war in Vietnam, the impact of racial prejudice, conflict with parents, discontent with the affluent society, despair over life in its slums—the list ran the gamut of America's social problems. Neither did the analysts overlook the appeal of psychedelics to the mentally unstable, the examples in alcoholism and lawlessness set the young by their elders, or the affinity between introspective psychedelic devotees and introspective radicals of the New Left.[25] Indeed it seemed possible to adduce an almost endless series of interrelated factors, depending upon how thoroughly one wished to pursue the analysis.

As to the number of young people actually using psychedelics, estimates varied widely. Dr. Louria, long associated with Bellevue Hospital and president of the New York State Council on Drug Addiction, suggested: ". . . a reasonable guess for 1966–1967 would be that, countrywide, in the range of .5 per cent to 2 per cent of college students had used LSD or a similar potent hallucinogen such as dimethyltryptamine (DMT), psilocybin or mescaline." Marijuana usage among college students he estimated at 15 per cent, and he noted that most marijuana users merely experimented with it a few times and quit. But its use was spreading in the nation's high schools and in the Armed Forces.[26]

Conspicuous among devotees of psychedelic drugs were the "Hippies," young bohemians who in the mid-sixties gravitated to low-rent metropolitan areas like the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco and the East Village of New York. More joyous than their Beat predecessors, they proclaimed a philosophy of communal living, peace, love, and religious seeking. Picturesquely dressed, with beads and bells and flowers in their long

hair, they danced in the streets, were photographed by the news media, and drew great numbers of other "flower children," many of them runaways from middle-class homes, to join them. "Summer 1967," *Newsweek* reported, "brought an influx of about 50,000 young people" to Haight-Ashbury.[27] With this mass pilgrimage the psychedelic boom seemed to reach its peak of optimism.

To be sure, critical voices had long since been raised against the new enthusiasm, and among intellectuals interested in psychedelics and mysticism sharp debate had arisen over this key question: Could chemical agents, particularly psychedelic drugs, induce genuine mystical experience? If the answer was Yes, then seekers had good reason to use psychedelics, and traditional views of mysticism would have to be revised to take account of chemically induced ecstasy. If the answer was No, then the traditional views would stand unchanged, and mysticism should not be invoked to justify drug-taking.

A resounding No was registered in 1957 when R. C. Zaehner, professor of Eastern religions and ethics at Oxford, took issue in his *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* with the mystical claims for mescaline that Huxley had advanced in *The Doors of Perception.* Arguing from an avowed Roman Catholic standpoint, Zaehner branded as "absurd arrogance" Huxley's belief that his mescaline experience was "contemplation at its height," and contended that the novelist's drug-heightened perception of form and color was nothing more than "the natural mystical experience," which had no connection with "the direct experience of God in his unutterable holiness."[28] Zaehner had experimentally tested Huxley's hypothesis by taking mescaline himself; he reported that the experience was trivial.

His argument won the approval of churchmen and theologians, but did not deter other writers from joining Huxley, Leary, Alpert, and Metzner on the *yes* side of the controversy. None was more eloquent than Alan Watts, whose *Joyous Cosmology* (1962), a Zen-flavored exposition of his psychedelic experiences and their esthetic and spiritual values, immediately took its place

beside *The Doors of Perception* as a persuasive celebration of the chemically changed consciousness. "Despite the widespread and undiscriminating prejudice against drugs as such," he wrote, "and despite the claims of certain religious disciplines to be the sole means to genuine mystical insight, I can find no essential difference between the experiences induced, under favorable conditions, by these chemicals [LSD, mescaline, psilocybin] and the states of 'cosmic consciousness' recorded by R. M. Bucke, William James, Evelyn Underhill, Raynor Johnson, and other investigators of mysticism." In a later essay, published in 1969, he held to the same view. With reference to LSD experience that he had in 1959 under the supervision of Drs. Sterling Bunnell and Michael Agron of the Langley-Porter Clinic in San Francisco, he declared:

"In the course of two experiments I was amazed and somewhat embarrassed to find myself going through states of consciousness which corresponded precisely with every description of major mystical experiences that I had ever read. Furthermore, they exceeded both in depth and in a peculiar quality of unexpectedness the three 'natural and spontaneous' experiences of this kind which had happened to me in previous years."[29]

While writers like Watts provided this kind of personal testimony, others presented evidence gained from experimenting with psychedelics on volunteer subjects. In 1962, with the cooperation of Leary, Walter N. Pahnke, a doctoral candidate at Harvard, gave ten theological students psilocybin during a Good Friday service and obtained evidence of mystical experiences, reported by the subjects, that he regarded as statistically significant.[30] In 1964, when Sidney Cohen published his *Beyond Within*, he devoted one chapter to the question, "Model Psychosis or Instant Zen?" and concluded on the basis of his research with LSD that it could produce either a psychotic or a "visionary state"—either hell or heaven, as Huxley had indicated. Two years later R. E. L. Masters and Jean Houston reported in their *Varieties of Psychedelic Experience* that out of

a total of 206 psychedelic drug subjects with whom they had experimented, six had attained "the authentic and introvertive mystical state as described by Stace."[31]

If such experiments provided an abundance of ammunition for the affirmative, those on the negative side of the debate could also draw upon a growing arsenal of research and opinion published by medical authorities and social scientists. Richard Blum, consultant to the Institute for the Study of Human Problems at Stanford University, led a research team that observed and interviewed users of LSD in an effort to chart their beliefs and behavior. When he revealed his findings in *Utopiates* (1964), he presented a variety of viewpoints, including an essay by Leary, Alpert, and Metzner. But on balance the comments of the team —questioning the motives and methods of psychedelic experimenters, and speculating on the toilet training of hippie-types who shunned soap and called marijuana "pot"—weighed against the transcendental view of the psychedelics. In the end Blum remarked, "It does not appear that LSD is a short cut to personality reconstruction or to nirvana."[32]

With this Dr. Donald Louria completely agreed. Long a critic of the psychedelic enthusiasm, he summed up his indictment of it in *The Drug Scene* (1968). Medical records, he said, showed that LSD users risked such negative effects as overwhelming panic, persistent or recurrent psychosis, self-mutilation, suicide, and murder. They might, in the opinion of some researchers, incur chromosomal abnormalities. As for marijuana, a mild form of cannabis, it was less dangerous than the more potent psychedelics, yet not entirely harmless; it occasionally caused panic or psychosis. Hashish, a more powerful form of cannabis, was far more likely to produce these negative reactions. The marijuana smoker also ran the risk of becoming, not physically addicted, but psychologically dependent on the drug.

The "original notion" that LSD could induce transcendent religious experience, "has for the most part not withstood the test of time," said Louria.

It certainly is true that LSD experiences are often characterized by hallucinations and illusions which have religious overtones, but once the LSD experience is over, there is no evidence that the religous aspect of the experience has had any lasting beneficial effects on the user. By definition a transcendental experience must have profound and long-lasting influence and effect specific and positive changes in behavioral patterns. Since this has not occurred under the influence of LSD, it would seem fair to conclude that the religious aspects of the LSD trip may well be pleasurable—and to certain individuals, especially those with religious training, meaningful—but they are not, in the conventional understanding of the term, transcendental.

As a case study in the debilitating effects of drug use, Louria pointed to Haight-Ashbury. And few would deny that by 1968 the flowers had wilted: crime and disease had blighted the most famous of the Hippie centers, and many of the original dwellers were scattering to rural regions to experiment with tribal living in agrarian communes. Others were joining the international stream of Hippies migrating annually from America, England, and European countries to the Near East and India, particularly to Katmandu, whence came nightmarish stories of Hippie drug excesses and death.[33]

By this time the journalistic view of the psychedelics had taken a decidedly negative turn, and legislators had tightened the federal and state drug laws. It could not be said, at the end of the decade, that the laws were entirely wise or that the use of psychedelics, particularly marijuana, was declining. It did seem evident that many Americans regarded LSD no longer as benign but as dangerous, and that by and large they would support medical men who wanted psychedelic experimentation continued, but only by qualified, responsible researchers, under strict controls.[34]

Yet the debate over drugs and mysticism continued. In the fall of 1969 Walter Houston Clark, professor of the psychology of religion at Andover Newton Theological School, and author of the highly regarded *Psychology of Religion,* published an earnest argument for the affirmative, *Chemical Ecstasy.* Seven years previously he had requested and received LSD from Leary

and had written in his report of the experiment, "I would describe the experience as a conversion experience of the most radical nature rather than a mystical experience of the classical variety as Stace has defined it. Yet, though without many of the indications of mystical experience, I know I will understand the mystics much better, having had the experience."[35] Later, in his presidential address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, "The Mystical Consciousness and World Understanding," he suggested that the West could gain insight into Eastern faiths through psychedelic drugs, which "activate in many people experiences that cannot be distinguished from more regular cases of mysticism."[36] In *Chemical Ecstasy* he wrote: ". . . the drugs provide the most ready access to what William James declared was the root of religion, namely mystical experience, the most captivating and transforming experience known to man. I do not say categorically that the discovery of LSD ranks with the Copernican revolution; only that it might."

"I have tried both LSD and psilocybin several times myself," he stated. And while he conceded that psychedelics could be dangerous, he argued that the dangers had been exaggerated by those who had not investigated thoroughly and who, "above all, *have never tried the drugs themselves.* They have been content with scientific hearsay; they have refused to look through Galileo's telescope!"

Having made his own "eight-year study of the psychedelics" he was convinced that the benefits to be derived from them in religion, the rehabilitation of criminals and of alcoholics, and the treatment of mental and of terminal illness outweighed all risks and justified his plea for more flexible laws governing use of the drugs. He documented his book with scientific reports and accounts of experiments like Pahnke's Good Friday session, which he had helped to supervise, and in the end he declared, "I am not a pharmacologist but a psychologist of religion. Neither am I a mystic, but a scholar of religion and a believer in the importance of mysticism." In all it was a forceful argument by a bold thinker, yet those without Clark's firm faith in the drugs might

see in it a tendency to draw sweeping conclusions from insufficient evidence. Examples of this were the metaphor of Galileo's telescope, the suggestion that the notorious Hell's Angels of Haight-Ashbury had been permanently gentled by LSD, a brief essay on the saintliness of Leary, and in similar key this passage:

"Fortunately, Socrates, Moses, Gautama, St. Francis, St. Paul and Jesus did not have a representative of the American Medical Association at their elbows when the spirit came. Perhaps the time may come when we will feel the same way about Timothy Leary."[37]

Whatever else might be said of the debate over drugs and mysticism, no one could deny that it stirred emotion.

And now, having tried to present a fair sampling of varying viewpoints in the controversy, I must state plainly what the reader must already have realized. I do not believe that chemical agents, whether those used by James and Blood, or the psychedelic drugs of the present day, can induce mystical experience as defined in the first chapter of this study. I express this view with no thought of settling the issue, but in order to explain my treatment of psychedelic experience. That is, I have devoted relatively little space to the experience and thought of Blood, Leary, and numerous other psychedelic experimenters because I do not regard it as mysticism.

I have not arrived at this position without much reflection upon Huxley's advocacy of the psychedelics, for in the course of studying his writings I have developed considerable admiration for this remarkable man. It is possible, however, that in judging these drugs he was overly influenced by his desire for deeper spiritual experience and his keen interest in new scientific discoveries. As for others in the Vedanta movement, Christopher Isherwood has not identified psychedelic experience with mystical experience, and Gerald Heard, though sympathetic toward the drugs, also stops short of doing so in his *Five Ages of Man.*[38] Prabhavananda holds that drugs cannot induce mystical experience. His statement, written for this book at my invitation, is included as Appendix A.

When certain proponents of psychedelic ecstasy, including experimental subjects who report their experiences, state that these drugs induce what they term "mystical experience," they seem to mean merely heightened sensual perception, psychological insight, or religious feeling, or a blend of the three. By my definition these are not, either singly or together, mystical experience, although it is nearly always *accompanied*, to be sure, by religious feeling. Hence I would suggest that these proponents are not speaking of mystical experience but of other forms of experience, which may, of course, be deeply moving.

Other proponents, such as Clark, identify psychedelic ecstasy with the kind of models, drawn from the writings of the world's great mystics, on which I have based my definitions of mystical experience and mysticism. I would suggest, however, that psychedelic ecstasy and mystical experience are not identical, but that they differ in significant ways.

To begin with a point noted in the first chapter, visions and voices as mystical experience are suspect. Yet personal narratives of psychedelic ecstasy—as found in the previously mentioned books of Clark, Masters and Houston, Leary, Cohen, and in *The Ecstatic Adventure* (1968), edited by Ralph Metzner—exhibit visions and voices in profusion. The subjects see myriads of visions of everything from jeweled serpents to Oriental harems to the heavenly angels and Christ. They engage in conversations and emotional debates with the figures in the visions; they enact complete dramas as they visit their childhood, their evolutionary past, Greek mythology, or the great scenes of history, especially religious history. Such happenings are presented in overwhelming detail in *Exploring Inner Space* (1961), in which "Jane Dunlap" (the pseudonym of a well-known American nutritionist) narrates her LSD experiences. She compares these to a Technicolor movie "so dramatic and emotionally packed that it claims every instant of your attention."[39]

All this leads to another distinguishing mark of the psychedelic ecstasy—its kaleidoscopic nature. The visions, voices, scenes, and moods shift constantly, and often with bewildering

rapidity. Now the subject is in hell, now in heaven, now back again in hell. True, the kaleidoscope does congeal at times into experiences that the subject describes in mystical phraseology. Consider, for instance, this excerpt from the narrative of the Reverend Mary Hart, "ordained minister in a Midwest Protestant parish," whose experience under LSD is presented by both Clark and Metzner.

"Oneness. All one. In-Godness. Indescribable. Utmost. Emotionless. No self. No sensations. Self was within and without. Time gone. Space gone. Nowhere, but infinitely everywhere. No time, but eternally now. Vast oneness. In-God." And so on.

Judging by such phraseology alone, one might suppose that the Reverend Hart had mystical experience. But this is only a part of the whole. Before what seems to have been a rather extended religious and "mystical" phase, she noted, "Psychotic phase. Forms became immense machines, steel structures. . . . threatening. . . . Strong sense of insanity." Then, *after* the religious and "mystical" phase, she fell "back into the psychotic level. Far more acute than the descent into it the first time." This merged into disturbing sexual scenes, during which she expressed loathing for her guide, a veteran of psychedelic sessions who was there to help her get safely through her experience. She passed from a vision of "a brothel" into "an agony of self-loathing, shame, disgrace and guilt. I retched a dry retch. I felt slovenly and wanton. . . . My guide sensed my need. He became my priest. He forgave me and gave me absolution. I felt restored. . . . I loved him profoundly."

Then she "asked God to love him" and experienced peace and joy. She gradually emerged into reality feeling "a sense of extreme fatigue." It might also be noted that somewhere within the kaleidoscope, at an unspecified point in the sequence of phases, she found herself "in a commingling union, a conversation with William James. I loved him. I thanked him profoundly for his great book *Varieties*, which he had given me while on earth."[40]

Now, this is not an exceptional but a fairly typical narrative of psychedelic ecstasy, and I think it differs markedly, in its

kaleidoscopic quality (not to mention the visions and voices), from the typical pattern of mystical experience. Compare it with the serene simplicity of Thomas Merton's descriptions of mystical experience, or with Howard Thurman's quiet meditations. Or compare the fourteenth-century Dutch mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck, who writes, "For in this unfathomable abyss of the Simplicity, all things are wrapped in fruitive bliss. . . ."[41] Simplicity —not kaleidoscopic whirl; this is one of the differences.

Alan Watts recognized this in 1958, before he became a proponent of psychedelic ecstasy. In *Nature, Man and Woman* he commented:

> From personal, though limited, experimentation with a research group working with lysergic acid, I would judge that the state of consciousness induced is confused with a mystical state because of similarities of language used in describing the two. The experience is multidimensional, as if everything were inside, or implied, everything else, requiring a description which is paradoxical from the standpoint of ordinary logic. But whereas the drug gives a vision of nature which is infinitely complex, the mystical state is clarifying, and gives a vision which is as infinitely simple. The drug seems to give the intelligence a kaleidoscopic quality which "patterns" the perception of relations in accordance with its own peculiar structure.[42]

Advocates of chemical ecstasy generally agree on the need for a guide, like the man who helped Mary Hart. Otherwise the subject may have a "bad trip"—that is, experience little else besides paranoia and other wretched states. Surely this is a significant difference between psychedelic and mystical experience. The mystic does not need a companion at his elbow to keep him from lapsing into psychosis.

One reason why the psychedelic tripper needs a guide is that he is so extremely vulnerable to suggestion. The drugs seem to magnify the slightest thought, and if that happens to be religious —well and good; the drug may expand it into a magnificent vision of Christ or Buddha. But if then the memory of some unpleasant incident, or a sudden noise, or a shadow on the wall, or some other ordinarily insignificant thing should happen to trigger a negative thought, the vision may shift with quicksilver

suddenness from heaven to hell, and the subject find himself struggling against psychotic fear or anger.

Quite the opposite is true of the mystical experience. It is not a state of heightened suggestibility. Instead of making the mystic vulnerable to negative thoughts, it strengthens him against them. Howard Thurman has testified eloquently to this, and, far more important, demonstrated it in his daily life. Thomas Kelly demonstrated it in the terror-laden atmosphere of Nazi Germany.

Which brings us to effects, to the test, "By their fruits ye shall know them." That mystical experience results in unselfishness, humility, moral living, loving-kindness, and constructive accomplishment has been demonstrated in the lives of men like Thurman and Kelly and Rufus Jones, not to mention the great mystics of world history. Can as much be said for psychedelic experience? Certainly not yet, it seems to me. This is not to brush aside the claims made for the therapeutic and character-building results of chemical ecstasy, but simply to say that they have not yet met the test of time. Moreover, the negative results of drug-taking as compiled by Louria and indicated by the troubles of the Hippies seem not to augur well for good fruits in the future. Neither does Leary's frenetic *High Priest*, with its opening sentence, "In the beginning was the TURN ON," its aura of alcohol, sex, and unrestrained drug usage, and its final episode, in which Leary, driving a car after a psychedelic drug session, has to resist the impulse to swerve, with his two passengers, over a cliff.

It is almost as though Leary is saying, despite himself, that the fruits of psychedelic experience can be bitter indeed.

CHAPTER 8

The Mystical Strand

"There is a widespread idea current in the world that 'America' is a word synonymous with 'practicality,'" Rufus Jones remarked in 1930. "It is assumed that we are dollar-chasers pure and simple, and are interested only in what we can get our hands on, to have and to hold. There are such Americans no doubt, and there are persons with like propensities in other countries and on other continents." But nobody knew the United States who viewed it simply as a land of greedy materialism: in the "composite blood" of its people were also idealism and spirituality. Indeed, Jones went on to argue, "there has always been an important mystical strand in the life and thought of America."[1]

The importance of this strand in the twentieth century is shown, I think, by the writings of all the mystics, from Charles A. Bennett to Philip Kapleau, that we have studied in the preceding chapters. In these final pages I shall try to sum up our findings and to suggest in some measure the influence of mystical seeking upon life in modern America.

It seems to me that quantitatively these writings form a more considerable body of literature than has been generally realized, even though I have tried to select only the more important writers, and only those who appear to be within the mainstream of mysticism. If we were to pursue this subject into realms where mysticism blurs into New Thought or poetry into verse, where

books become booklets or pamphlets, or take the form of little-known reminiscences or forgotten studies, we should find many another mystical gleam. This transcendent brightness, so to speak, flashes out from the pages of Margaret Prescott Montague's brief essay on her mystical experience, *Twenty Minutes of Reality* (1917), and touches occasional passages in Irene Hunter's anthology, *American Mystical Verse* (1925). It gleams also in William Atzbaugh's *Seek Ye the Christ* (1949), in Frank C. Laubach's *Letters by a Modern Mystic* (1937), and in Charles Morris Addison's engaging though now seldom-read study, *The Theory and Practice of Mysticism* (1918).

Quantity alone would be relatively unimportant were it not for the quality, the high intellectual level, that on the whole distinguishes the main body of mystical literature that we have examined. True, its producers cannot be called thinkers or mystics of the first rank. Among them we find no Shankara, no Eckhart. But we do find exceptionally gifted intellectuals, cogent philosophers, sensitive artists in language. When men of this caliber write mystical thought, it is well worth reading and pondering.

The rationalist, of course, will never approve of the fact that these unorthodox thinkers advocate mystical insight as the way to ultimate truth. But we have noted repeatedly that in doing so they do not scorn reason. On the contrary they test and interpret mystical insight in the light of reason, and they argue their theology and their social criticism with forceful logic. They give final allegiance not to the irrational but to what Rudolf Otto, in his *Idea of the Holy*, calls "the non-rational or supra-rational elements in religion."[2] This is well worth remembering when voices of unreason rise around us, and words like "mystic" or "mystical" are misused to explain or justify irrational acts of violence. Such acts are foreign to the nature of the mystic. As we have seen, he is both religious—Rufus Jones knew what he was about when he identified mysticism with religion—and ethical. The mystic characteristically engages in moral preparation for his transcendent experience and follows it with efforts to attain ever higher moral standards. His experience of the divine

seems to flower within this moral context and to vanish outside it. To be sure, the experience is no guarantee that he will never fall into violence or other forms of evil toward others, but it does seem to strengthen his desire not to do so.

No doubt the reader has noticed that the great majority of the mystics we have studied were born outside the United States: immigration has enriched mysticism in America just as, continuously, through the centuries, it has enhanced other aspects of American culture. Yet the lives and the thought of Rufus Jones and Thomas Kelly, of Howard Thurman, Ruth Sasaki, and Philip Kapleau, remind us that the mystic is also indigenous to twentieth-century America. Considering that outstanding mystics have immigrated to this country, or sojourned here at length as in the case of Suzuki, considering that other mystics have sprung from the native soil, and that native, immigrant, and sojourner alike have flourished here, one might well reach the conclusion that America since 1900 has been rather hospitable toward mysticism. My own view, paralleling that of Rufus Jones, is that the complex civilization of the United States cannot be summed up in a word like "materialistic"—nor in many words. Here, as in other lands, materialist and mystic and adherents of numerous other creeds live side by side. The mystical strand is certainly not dominant, but it is very much in evidence. It forms, I think, a dimension of American intellectual and religious life that is well worth further study by historians.

Some day we may hope to have much fuller historical knowledge than is now available on the organizations that have advanced Oriental mysticism in the United States. Since this study deals essentially with mystical ideas rather than mystical movements, I have no more than suggested the organizational dimensions of Vedanta and Zen. Vedanta, especially, has had a more complex history in the United States than I have indicated; for while there has been, strictly speaking, only one Vedanta movement, initiated by Vivekananda and carried on today by Vedanta centers like the one in Hollywood, there have been other organizations teaching basically Vedantic religious philosophy.[3] The

most important of these is the Self-Realization Fellowship.

Established in Los Angeles in 1925 by Swami, later Paramahansa, Yogananda, author of the extraordinary *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), the Fellowship teaches Vedanta with an admixture of Christianity. Its Mount Washington Center in Los Angeles is today the international headquarters of a far-flung organization; it has an Indian branch, the Yogoda Satsanga Society, founded in India by Yogananda in 1917, and its centers and meditation groups can be found in major cities around the world. In Southern California, the Fellowship also maintains four churches, two in Los Angeles, one in Fullerton, and another in San Diego. The religious services emphasize the importance of yogic meditation.[4]

In this context of the institutional basis of mysticism we might also note a development in American Catholicism that occurred at the end of the second world war when, in the words of John Tracy Ellis, "hundreds of young Americans began pouring into contemplative monasteries, many of the newcomers fresh from their service with the armed forces." Thomas Merton in his *Waters of Siloe* called attention to this movement, and Ellis suggested that it might have gained some impetus from Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*. "What is perhaps more remarkable," he commented in 1956, "is the fact that after a decade the trend shows no signs of abating, and today the eleven Trappist monasteries in the United States are crowded with a membership of over 1,000 monks. Moreover, five years ago the first house of American Carthusians, the strictest of all the Church's religious orders, was opened near Whitingham, Vermont." After a second decade and more had passed, *Time* magazine reported, in February 1968, that the upward trend had changed into decline. As reasons for this it pointed to newcomers' impatience with the strict rules of the orders, and the development of what superiors of the contemplative societies called "today's 'Peace Corps mentality'—the desire of many young Catholics to serve God by good deeds in the world rather than through a life of prayer." The decline was also evident in France. It may have been related,

in some degree, to the more general crisis that beset the Church in the sixties.[5]

Doubtless the most unlikely institution to harbor mysticism in this decade was the American college. Long had it been a citadel of secularization. Then, rather suddenly it seemed, college and university students interested in Zen and Vedanta and the novels of Hermann Hesse began taking informal, student-taught courses in mystical meditation and forming groups to practice what they learned. College teachers responded with courses in mysticism, and even meditation entered the curriculum. Those involved in all this were still, of course, a minority; yet it seemed that never before had the mystical strand been so discernible in American college and university life.

Collegiate interest in the mystical way began to take on aspects of a new fad in the late sixties, when Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of India drew an outburst of publicity as the "guru" of famous figures in the popular entertainment world, including the American motion-picture actress Mia Farrow and the British singing group, the Beatles. The Maharishi taught a simple technique of inner seeking that he called "Transcendental Meditation," and offered the American collegian the opportunity to learn it by paying a "donation" of $35 and joining his Students' International Meditation Society, which had national headquarters in Los Angeles. By February 1968, *Look* magazine said, "over 5,000 students" in the United States had "turned into transcendental meditators." By August, a nationally syndicated news service put the number at 12,000. Though the Maharishi required remarkably little self-discipline, proclaiming rather a hedonistic philosophy, "Enjoy what you are," he did state that abstention from drug-taking was essential to his method. Perhaps not surprisingly, a number of students who replaced LSD or marijuana with silent, relaxed introspection reported that they were feeling better and functioning more efficiently.[6]

Collegians were not the only element in what one newswriter called "the meditation explosion." The nation's affluent adolescents, constantly pressured by astute advertisers and publicity

agents toward conformist behavior, had previously been led toward psychedelic drugs by the Beatles and other rock music artists, and now many young teen-agers followed their leaders into the lotus posture. Nor were their elders immune to the new excitement. The glare of publicity suddenly revealed any number of lesser Maharishis in places like New York City, many of them attracting disciples from a variety of age groups. *Life* magazine, after surveying the international scene from India to London, to Boston, New York and Los Angeles, was moved in February 1968 to proclaim the "Year of the Guru."[7]

It was difficult to determine—as it has always been difficult to determine such matters, whether in America or India—which of these self-proclaimed gurus were honest teachers of Hindu wisdom and which were charlatans. Time might winnow them to some extent. Meanwhile it was easy to laugh at all of them, as the press tended to do, and to dismiss the total mass of their followers as faddists. Yet surely, among the followers at least, there were sincere religious seekers. And while in one sense their enthusiasm demonstrated the power of publicity, in another it might be considered further evidence of the persistent American quest for the mystical. Though what was found might not be truly mystical, authentic mystical experience was what many sought. Clearly, too, they sought it within Oriental mystical traditions (which may have seemed exotically new) rather than within those of the West. It might well be a significant coincidence that on the very same day, February 9, 1968, that *Life* proclaimed the "Year of the Guru," *Time* reported the decline of numbers in the Catholic contemplative orders.

The Protestant faiths, to be sure, had their own issues in the sixties. One group of American theologians announced that God was dead, but the resultant controversy did not seem to affect interest in mysticism. Neither did the arguments of theologians who held that long-continuing trends such as urbanization had thoroughly secularized America.[8] Granted that proponents of this view advanced it with perceptive sociological analysis, it might still be suggested that they paid insufficient attention to

the mystical strand in American life and thought.

In this chapter I have given the term "mystical strand" a broader meaning, perhaps, than Rufus Jones intended, and have applied it to diverse elements. Within it, so to speak, we find in twentieth-century America the near-mystical and the pseudo-mystical, the initiators and followers of the fads and the popular enthusiasms. We also find philosophers and theologians who comment upon mysticism, and literary artists who employ mystical ideas for esthetic purposes—poets like Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, writers of fiction like J. D. Salinger. All these, in their various ways, help to disseminate mystical ideas, thus broadening the cultural impact of mysticism.

At the very center of the strand the true mystic lives and moves and has his being. If he is a gifted thinker and writer he may produce books like those that form the main body of literature that we have explored. If he is not, he may remain silent. Rufus Jones declared: "There are hundreds of mute and unnamed mystics for every one who writes a book. In fact, the most important interpreters of mysticism in all periods are those persons who quietly practice the presence of God in their daily lives without even being conscious that they are rare and unusual persons and often without knowing the meaning of the word 'mystic.' "[9] Jones delighted in meeting such persons, and, as we have seen, so also did Thomas Kelly.

But of course it is the articulate mystic, the writer like Jones himself, who has done most to make America aware of mysticism. And undeniably this kind of mystical intellectual is an extraordinary being, not only a speaker of paradox but an embodiment of paradox. In one respect, his lack of provincialism—his sensitivity to international currents of thought, his vision of the worldwide brotherhood of man—he is quite up-to-date; but in other ways, from the viewpoint of the sophisticated skeptic, he is an anachronism. While the tides of secularization rise all around him, he sits quietly seeking spiritual awakening. While louder voices than his preach self-indulgence, he continues to advocate self-naughting, self-discipline, even a certain degree of

asceticism. Surely he must be doomed to extinction! Surely the center of the mystical strand will fall apart, and the secular city of the future will see no more Kellys or Mertons, no more Heschels or Thurmans or Prabhavanandas.

So the skeptic might think. But he might be wrong. History suggests that the mystic is as old as man, and that as he has endured in the past so will he continue to endure, in America as elsewhere. And because times of war and social turmoil like the present reveal with shocking clarity the transience of material things and turn men to inner seeking, we may see more, not less, mysticism. In any event, I hazard the guess that as long as there is a corner in which to meditate the mystic will be there. Silently he will go within, and joyfully he will emerge with his perennial message: all is Love; all is well.

APPENDIX A

God and Drugs

By Swami Prabhavananda

Psychedelic drugs have been known to the people of India for centuries. Although the use of such drugs is generally tolerated there, those who take them are looked down upon by the public and universally shunned by holy men and women. Of course, it is no secret that these drugs do produce psychic visions and experiences—even certain powers. In fact, Patanjali, the father of Indian Yoga, has explicitly stated that "psychic powers may be obtained by means of drugs." But he also strongly warned that the use of such means can obstruct spiritual progress and block genuine spiritual experiences. However, it is easy to be fooled into thinking that hallucinogenic drugs can produce a true experience of God. The user of LSD may actually see a light enveloping the universe or sense the presence of God or a divine being. But as soon as the effects of the drug wear off, he finds himself spiritually dry and empty. His experience is of no more consequence than a dream. God is as distant as ever. The simple but powerful language of the Bible expresses it succinctly: "By their fruits ye shall know them." This is the basis for the evaluation of a spiritual experience.

Samadhi or transcendental consciousness totally transforms a

man. In that ecstatic moment, experienced by one whose heart is purified, man's very Self is revealed. He at last realizes that highest wisdom known to the world's saints and sages. Are we then so naïve and foolish as to believe that such a profound experience as this can be produced by swallowing a drug? May God be bought so cheaply? In this same sense, Swami Vivekananda once compared deep (dreamless) sleep and samadhi: "If a fool goes into deep sleep, he comes out a fool; but if a fool goes into samadhi, he comes out a wise man." And in describing his own experience of samadhi, the ancient seer-philosopher Shankara wrote: "The ocean of Brahman is full of nectar—the joy of the Atman. The treasure I have found there cannot be described in words. The mind cannot conceive of it. My mind fell like a hailstone into that vast expanse of Brahman's ocean. Touching one drop of it, I melted away and became one with Brahman. And now, *though I return to human consciousness, I abide in the joy of the Atman* [italics mine]."

Even a sincere aspirant may be deceived into thinking he has experienced God. Once a friend of mine renounced the world and went to a place of retreat in the Himalayas. After being there for a few months, he wrote me a letter in which he said he had experienced samadhi. I happened to be with my Master at the time, who knew this man. I told him about the letter. "Why, I saw him only ten days ago," my Master said. "I remember looking at his eyes; there was no evidence of any samadhi. He must have seen some light and thought that vision to be samadhi." He looked at me and added, "Is it so easy to attain samadhi?" Then he quoted a verse from the Upanishads: "The knot of the heart, which is ignorance, is loosed, all doubts are dissolved, all effects of deeds destroyed, when he who is both far and near is realized."

To my mind, that statement best expresses the distinction between truth and error, between knowledge of God and the experience of psychic phenomena.

In conclusion , let me quote from the Katha Upanishad: "The mortal in whose heart desire is dead becomes immortal. The

mortal in whose heart the knots of ignorance are untied becomes immortal. These are the highest truths taught in the Scriptures." Now I ask, can anyone who gains any experience through the use of drugs, claim such a transformation? Many cases are known in which a man, as he continues to use drugs, deteriorates physically and mentally. This certainly is not characteristic of a genuine spiritual experience.

APPENDIX B

Vedanta and the Problem of Evil

By Swami Prabhavananda

According to Advaita Vedanta, the universe of appearance has only an empirical reality. Our experience of this universe with all its joys and sorrows, with all its so-called good and evil is a misreading of the Reality which is Brahman. Brahman appearing through time, space, and relativity (maya) appears as this universe. To quote Shankara: "Brahman is the ground and the reality. This appearance of a universe is only seen through our deluded eyes. When true knowledge arises, Brahman, which is one with Atman, is revealed as existence itself, and the apparent universe cannot be seen apart from it. You may mistake a rope for a snake, if you are deluded. But, when the delusion passes, you realize that the imagined snake was none other than the rope. So also this universe is none other than Brahman."

As one enters into samadhi the universe of appearance vanishes. The seer then declares in the words of Shankara: "Where is this universe? Who took it away? Has it merged into something else? A while ago, I beheld it—now it exists no longer. Here is the Ocean of Brahman, full of endless joy. How can I accept or reject anything? Is there anything apart from Brahman?"

Once in course of a discussion with a brother disciple of mine, I remarked that Brahman is only experienced in samadhi, and not when one comes back to the normal plane. My master overheard our discussion and he came out of his room and said to me, "Ah! You have become omniscient!" I enquired, "But is it possible to see God while in the normal state also?" To that he replied out of the fullness of his own experience, "Show me the line of demarcation where matter ends and Spirit begins."

In this connection, let me again quote Shankara: "Our perception of the universe is a continuous perception of Brahman, though the ignorant man is not aware of this. Indeed, this universe is nothing but Brahman. See Brahman everywhere, under all circumstances, with the eye of the spirit and a tranquil heart. How can the physical eyes see anything but physical objects? How can the mind of the enlightened man think of anything other than the Reality?"

Swami Vivekananda once remarked to a disciple: The first experience in samadhi is "the world is not, God is." Then comes the experience, "God is all." In the words of Shankara, "with the eye of the spirit, he sees all as Brahman."