

The Two Streams of Mystic Consciousness

It is quite clear that there are at least two streams of Mystic consciousness, and while the grand features which differentiate the mystical from the ordinary type of consciousness are common to both of these, there yet remain important points of dissimilarity. I have called these two streams, respectively, time-mysticism and space mysticism. Other bases of differentia exist, but this one seems as fundamental as any.

Time-mysticism is that kind of inward penetration which achieves a unity with time and a sympathetic rapport with all that lies under time. Under time lie all such notions as life, becoming, volition, purpose, directedness, manifestation, achievement, progress, etc., both in their positive and negative senses. Ordinary consciousness is time-qualified of necessity, but the time-mystic consciousness involves a direct blending with life as a current having direction and thus involves a basic kind of awareness which may be called the intuition of the blood or of feeling, as distinguished from intellectual intuition. The normal expression of such mysticism is through art in some form, rather than through philosophy. It is weak in the logic of cognition but lives another kind of logic which may be called the logic of life-under-time. Apparently, by far the larger bulk of mystic penetration is of this type.

Space-mysticism achieves a unity with space in the abstract sense, of which all particular spaces are modifications. Space is the archetype of all notions such as, being, essence, eternity, primeval perfection, comprehension, etc. All manifestation is bound by space as well as being directed by time, but the spacial-mystic realizes himself as that which comprehends and sets bounds, but which is not itself comprehended or bound. The consciousness of the spacial-mystic may be called knowledge through identity and thus is of the nature of noetic conceptualism, rather than a felt consciousness. This mystic consciousness quite readily expresses itself through logic and thus becomes philosophic. It is not, however, blended with the logic of life. Representatives of this type are comparatively rare but they have originated the most important currents of philosophic thought.

There is a kind of tension between these two groups, which probably serves something of the value of a field of force which, by reason of being polarized, makes possible the play of worlds within a balance that ~~keeps~~ prevents disintegration. Each maintains his own superiority, even when recognizing the value of his complement. Neither can shake the other, as the effective language of one is not relevant or significant to the other in the deep sense. Each is both pessimistic and optimistic but in reverse senses. Thus the temporal mystic trusts life as direction through and through, but gives no hope that eternal completion is a possible realization. While the spacial mystic sees life in form as hopelessly cast in tragic form, but knows directly the joy of the eternally complete where no value ever is lost. Each has its peculiar powers.

Of one of these powers of the spacial mystic I shall speak. For him to whom Time is Lord, Death speaks the final word.

All that is born will sometime know the final hour. For Time, Death is terminal and therefore, inevitably tragic. He who would accept time as Lord must indeed be a hero. But Death lies within Space, and for him who has had the spacial realization serves but as a door to unlimited freedom. Birth and death bind all form, but leave space untouched. So the spacial mystic has extracted forever the sting of Death, and knows no more those sad words, 'It might have been'. For all that may be ever is, and this the spacial mystic knows as he knows himself. So he dreads birth and loves death, and calls the latter friend, knowing Him to be Initiator to the Joy and Freedom supernal.

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