CHAPTER II

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1. Various Aspects of Mysticism in Romantic Era

To introduce mysticism in general, this chapter discusses various aspects of mysticism in Romantic era. It explains different definitions with reference to Blake's religious poems. Mysticism is defined as "Union with God." There are exact lines in Blake’s poetry that serve as examples of his own explanation of mysticism.

In this chapter, the researcher makes an effort to provide different definitions of the term "mysticism," then a very interesting and illuminating contrastive analysis is presented in which two great Romantic poets namely Blake and Wordsworth are again introduced with their own definitions of mysticism.

At the end of the chapter, Blake’s own expressions concerning "Union with God" and mystical experience are considered. Blake’s own techniques for the representation of his mystical experience will be studied in the fourth chapter.

2. The Psychology of Religious Mysticism

Experiences named "mystical" have played a conspicuous role almost at every level of culture; and yet, despite the vast literature devoted to them, the subject has remained until the recent time as dark as it is fascinating. Little could be expected from the writers who, neglecting a close and dispassionate study of the facts, devoted themselves to religious edification or to the defence of the traditional theories. The hortatory,
apologetic, and romantic character of most of the literature on religious mysticism accounts for its scientific insignificance.

Mysticism has suffered as much at the hands of its admirers as at the hands of its materialistic enemies. If the latter have been unable to see in mysticism anything else than aberrations and abnormalities, the former have gone to the other and equally fatal extreme; no descriptive adjective short of “sublime,” “infinite,” “divine” has seemed to them at all sufficient.

The best among the prominent mystics are persons of pure heart and stout will from whom it is not possible to withhold admiration. Their beliefs and practices – whatever we may have to say in condemnation of them – have been to these mystics a refuge against the conflicts and the loneliness of life, and a source of strength and courage in the pursuit of worthy purposes.¹

3. Different Definitions of Mysticism

Mysticism is defined by Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of philosophy as the following: Mysticism is claimed to be direct or unmediated experience of the divine, in which the human soul momentarily approaches union with God. Many of the great mystics have stressed that this is not primarily or essentially a matter of visions
or ecstasies, as is sometimes supposed, but of total submission of the human will and intellect to God.  

The term "mysticism" comes from a Greek word which designated those who had initiated into the esoteric rites of the Greek religion. Mysticism from the Greek word (mystikos) "an initiate" (of the Eleusinian Mysteries, mysteria meaning initiation) is the pursuit of achieving communion or identity with, or conscious awareness of, ultimate reality, the divine, the spiritual truth, or God through direct experience, intuition, or insight; the belief that such experience is an important source of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Traditions may include a belief in the literal existence of realities beyond empirical perception, or a belief that a true human perception of the world transcends logical reasoning or intellectual comprehension.

The term "mysticism" is often used to refer to beliefs which go beyond the purely exoteric practices of mainstream religion, while still being related to or based in a mainstream religious doctrine. For example, Kabbalah is a significant movement within Judaism, Sufism is a significant mystical movement within Islam, however Gnosticism can refer to either a mystical movement within Christianity or as various mystical sects which arose out of Christianity. Some have argued that Christianity itself was a mystical sect that arose out
of Judaism. While Eastern religion tends to find out the concept of mysticism redundant, non-traditional knowledge and ritual are considered as Esotericism, for example Buddhism’s Vajrayana. Vedanta is considered the mystical branch of Hinduism.

Mystical doctrines typically refer to religious texts that are non-canonical to the major branches, as well as more mainstream canon. Within particular religious frameworks, mystical traditions are by nature controversial, and may be considered heretical belief. Most mystical teachers typically have some type of history or connection with a mainstream branch-controversial or otherwise.

The term mysticism connotes stepping beyond traditional interpretation and mystical traditions are often considered to be more inclusive and universal, rejecting of particular doctrines, associated with traditionalist, exclusivist, fundamentalist, or extremist beliefs. As such, mystical traditions have historically provided a platform where cultural interchange of religious beliefs and concepts may occur, as well as to present for non-natives or otherwise culturally exclusive system in an explanatory manner.

Mystics generally hold that there is a deeper, more fundamental state of experience hidden beneath the appearances of day-to-day living which may become, to
the mystic, superficial or epiphenomenal. For the mystic, the intangible is the focus, and may be perceived in any of various ways, as God, ultimate reality, a universal presence, a force or principal, psychological emancipation can be experienced or realized directly. Such experiences are spoken of, variously, as ecstatic revelation, theosis, direct experience of the divine or of the universal principles, nirvana, enlightenment, satori, Samadhi, etc. They are sometimes characterized by a fading or a loss of self, or a perceived interconnection with all existence, and are often accompanied by feelings of peace, joy, or bliss, as well as severe cultural alienation.

Mysticism is usually understood in a religious context, but as William James (1902) points out, mystical experiences may happen to anyone, regardless of religious training or inclinations. Such experiences can occur unbidden and without preparation at any time, and might not be understood as religious experiences at all. They may be interpreted, perhaps, as artistic, scientific, or other forms of inspiration, or even dismissed as psychological disturbances. With that in mind, the word mysticism, is best used to point to conscious and systematic attempts to gain mystical experiences through studies and practice. Possible techniques include meditation, prayer, asceticism,
devotions, the chanting of holy names, and intellectual investigation. Mystics typically go beyond specific religious perspectives of dogmas in their teachings, espousing an inclusive and universal perspective that rises above sectarian differences.³

At present, however, it has at least two meanings. The wider and less definite of them signifies anything marvellous or weird, anything which seems to reach beyond human reason. We can take the term “mystical” in a narrower sense; it means for us any experience taken by the expericer to be a contact not through the senses, but “immediate”, “intuitive” or union of the self with a larger-than-self, be it called the World, Spirit, God, the Absolute, or otherwise. The following definitions selected from a large number of the same tenor, indicate that this use of the term is in substantial agreement with the generally accepted understanding of it in Protestantism: Mysticism is a deification of man, it is a merging of the individual will with the universal Will, a consciousness of immediate relation with the Divine, an intuitive certainty of contact with the supersensual world, etc. In this view, whatever tends to sharpen the demarcation between the self and the not-self, whatever leads to an isolation of the subject from the Principle of Life, is anti-mystical.
Among Roman Catholics, however the emphasis is not placed upon the union of the soul with the divine principle, but upon a superhuman knowledge. They say for instance: we give the name of mystic to supernatural state containing a knowledge of a kind that our own efforts and our own exertions could never succeed in producing. Mysticism is the final outcome of a congenital desire for knowledge, in particular of a knowledge which lies beyond the sphere of things and of the senses by which things are perceived.⁴

At this point, the reader who is longing for a union with God may ask what is the first step to reach such a union?

Christianity as expressed in its official creeds and books of worship is clearly an objective religion. According to ritual, the worshipper comes into the presence of his God to acknowledge his sins and to be cleansed from them, to receive protection from bodily and moral harm, to return gratefulness to the goodness of God, to praise him, and to rejoice in the assurance of his favour. But, just as an intercourse between sympathetic persons constantly tends to pass from externality to the intimacy of united feeling and will, so, in the Christian religion, the objective worship of a loving God tends ever to glide into the trustful, self-surrendering attitude which constitutes the first step towards complete mystical union.
Mysticism in its incipient stages at least, is encouraged in the Christian church, but when it assumes the amazing aspects with which the famous mystics have made us familiar, the church becomes uneasy and watchful. For, in his search for God, the mystic goes his own way. He is ready to brush aside rites and formulae, even the priest who would serve him as mediator and he issues from the divine union with a sense of superior, of divine, knowledge. Persons of this kind may obviously be dangerous to the stability of old institutions which have come to regard their truths as the only truths. But these god-intoxicated persons may also perform the invaluable function of innovators, revelators, and inspirers.  

Amazingly, Blake is considered to be one of these god-intoxicated persons whose disregard of religious institutional structures often lends a quasi-revolutionary aspect to mystical teaching, and this occasionally leads to conflict with established religious and political structures, or the creation of splinter groups or new faiths.

Religious Experience also known as a spiritual, sacred, or mystical experience is an altered state of consciousness where an individual reports contact with a transcendent reality, an encounter or union with the divine. A religious experience is most commonly known as an occurrence that is uncommon in the sense that it does not fit in with the norm of everyday activities and
life experiences, its connection is with the individual’s perception of the divine. Putting religious experience into the shackles of objective scrutiny is an impossible task as it is primarily a subjective phenomenon among individuals, however in order to study it at an academic level many scholars have categorized religious experience to find common ground among experiences. Many religious and mystical traditions see religious experience as a real encounter with God or Gods or real contact with other realities, while the scientific view holds that religious experience is only a normal property of the human brain that evolved sometime in the human evolution.

4. Classical Definitions

Before giving various definitions of mysticism, there are some key terms related to mysticism which need to be defined first. These terms are numinous, ecstasy, enthusiasm, mystical, and spiritual awakening.

**Numinous:** The German thinker Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) argues that there is one common factor to all religious experience, independent of the cultural background. He identifies this experience as the numinous in his book *The Idea of the Holy* (1923). The numinous can only be evoked or awakened in the mind. The numinous is a realm or dimension of reality, which is mysterious, awe-inspiring and fascinating. He states
that the best expression for the numinous is a magnificent mystery. The mystery is beyond apprehension and comprehension. It is expressed in the idea of the wrath of God in the Old Testament and is connected with the consciousness of the absolute superiority and supremacy of a power other than oneself. He sees the numinous as the only possible religious experience.

Ecstasy: In ecstasy, the believer is understood to have a soul or spirit which can leave the body. In ecstasy, the focus is on the soul leaving the body and to experience transcendent realities.

Enthusiasm: In enthusiasm or possession, God is understood to be outside, other than or beyond the believer. A sacred power, being or will enter the body or mind of an individual and possesses it. A person capable of being possessed is sometimes called a medium. The deity, spirit or power uses such a person to communicate to the immanent world. Lewis argues that ecstasy and possession are basically one and the same experience, ecstasy being merely one form which possession may take.

Mystical: Mystical experiences are in many ways the opposite of numinous experiences. In the mystical experience, all 'otherness' disappear and the believer becomes one with the transcendent. The believer
discovers that he or she is not distinct from the cosmos, the deity or the other reality, but one with it.

**Spiritual Awakening:** A spiritual awakening is a religious experience involving a realization or opening to a sacred dimension of reality. Often a spiritual awakening has lasting effects upon one’s life. The term spiritual awakening may be used to refer to any of a wide range of experiences including being born again, near-death experiences, and mystical experiences such as liberation and enlightenment.⁷

5. Sufism

In Islam, the mystical path is often incorporated within Sufi. In fact Abrahamic religions conceive of a soul that lies within each individual, which is of great spiritual significance. Islam shares this conception of a distinct soul, but with less focus on miraculous powers; the Muslim world emphasizes remembrance: the recalling one’s original and innate connection to Allah’s grace. In traditional Islam this connection is maintained by angels, who carry out God’s will, though only prophets have the ability to see and hear them directly. Sufism, the mystical aspect of Islam holds that God can be experienced directly as a universal love that pervades the universe. Remembrance for Sufis, explicitly means remembrance of divine states of love, and Sufis are
particularly noted for the artistic turn their forms of worship often take. While all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God after the “Final Judgment”, Sufis also believe that it is possible to draw closer to God and to more fully embrace the Divine Presence in this life. Sufis believe in a tripartite way to God as explained by a tradition attributed to the holy Prophet. The Shariah are his words (aqwal), the tariqa are his actions (amal), and the haqiqa is his interior states (ahwal). They are called shariah, tariqa and haqiqa which are mutually interdependent. The tariqa, or the ‘path’ on which the mystics walk, has been defined as ‘the path which comes out of the Shariah, for the main road is called shar, the path, tariq’ No mystical experience can be realized if the binding injunctions of the Shariah are not followed faithfully first. The path, tariqa, however, is narrower and more difficult to walk. It leads the adept, called salik or wayfarer, in his wandering or suluk, through different stations or maqam until he reaches his goal, the perfect tauhid, the existential confession that God is One.

6- Scientific Studies of Religious Experience
Apart from traditional religions, there are excellent scientific studies of religious experience which try to study the experience
scientifically. There are many areas of science that explore the religious experience like Neurotheology, Transpersonal psychology, Psychology of religion, and Genetics.

Transpersonal Psychology

Transpersonal psychology is a school of psychology that studies the transpersonal, self-transcendent or spiritual aspects of the human experience. The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology describes transpersonal psychology as the study of humanity’s highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness. Issues considered in transpersonal psychology include spiritual self-development, peak experiences, mystical experiences, systematic trance and other metaphysical experiences of living. U.S. psychologist and philosopher William James (1842-1910) is regarded by most psychologists of religion as the founder of the field. His *Varieties of Religious Experience* is considered to be the classic work in the field, and references to James’ ideas are common at professional conferences. James distinguished between institutional religion and personal religion. Institutional religion refers to the religious group or organization,
and plays an important part in a society’s culture. Personal religion, in which the individual has mystical experience, can be experienced regardless of the culture.

7- Psychology of religion

Psychology of religion is the psychological study of religious experience, beliefs, and activities.

Carl Jung

Carl Jung’s work on himself and his patients convinced him that life has a spiritual purpose beyond material goals. Our main task, he believed, is to discover and fulfill our deep innate potential, much as the acorn contains the potential to become the oak, or the caterpillar to become the butterfly. Based on his study of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Taoism, and other traditions, Jung perceived that this journey of transformation is at the heart of all religions. It is a journey to meet the self and at the same time to meet the self and at the same time the Divine. Unlike Sigmund Freud, Jung thought spiritual experience was essential to our well-being.¹

Definitions:

William James’ Definitions
Psychologist and philosopher William James described four characteristics of religious or mystical experience in The Varieties of Religious Experience. According to James, such an experience is:

**Transient**: the experience is temporary; the individual soon returns to a normal frame of mind.

**Ineffable**: the experience can not be adequately put into words.

**Noetic**: the individual feels that he or she has learned something valuable from the experience.

**Passive**: the experience happens to the individual, largely without conscious control. Although there are activities, such as meditation, that can make religious experience more likely, it is not something that can be turned on and off at will.

Since James’ definition is of great importance for the present discussion, so we will return to it after giving other definitions.

Norman Habel’s Definitions:

Habel defines religious experiences as the structured way in which a believer enters into a relationship with, or gains an awareness of, the sacred within the context of a particular tradition. Religious experiences are by their very nature preternatural; that is, out of the ordinary or beyond the natural order of things. They may be difficult to distinguish observationally from psychopathological states such as
psychoses or other forms of altered awareness. Not all preternatural experiences are considered to be religious experiences. Moore and Habel identify two classes of religious experiences: the immediate and the mediated religious experience.

**Mediated**: In the mediated experience, the believer experiences the sacred through mediators such as rituals, special persons, religious groups, totemic objects or the natural world.

**Immediate**: The immediate experience comes to the believer without any intervening agency or mediator. The deity or divine is experienced directly.

The enthusiastic reader at this point may ask about the causes of religious experience. There are various causes of religious experience such as:

- Meditation, Praying, Rituals, Breathing exercise, Fasting, Music, Dance, such as Sufi whirling, Chanting of mantras or holy names, Worship, Dhikr or remembrance, Mortification of the flesh, Asceticism, and Stimulation of the brain with magnetic fields.¹⁰

A Definition by Robert S. Ellwood:

Mystical experience is an experience in a religious context that is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experiencer as an encounter with ultimate divine reality in a direct nonrational way that engenders a deep sense of unity and of living during the experience on a level of being other than the ordinary.
A Definition by Evelyn Underhill:

What then do we really mean by mysticism? In fact, mysticism in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it. Not to know about, but to Be, is the mark of the real initiate. The difficulty lies in determining the point at which supersensuous experience ceases to be merely a practical and interesting extention of sensual experience, and passes over into that boundless life where Subject and Object, desirous and desired, are one. No sharp line, but rather an infinite series of graduations separate the two states. Hence we must look carefully at all the pilgrims on the road: discover, if we can, the motive of their travels, the maps which they use, the luggage which they take, the end which they attain. Now we have said that the end which the mystic sets before him or her is conscious union with a living Absolute. That Divine Dark, the Abyss of the Godhead, of which he or she sometimes speaks as the goal of his quest, is just this Absolute, the Uncreated Light in which the Universe is bathed, and which transcending, as it does, all human powers of expression, he can only describe to us as dark. But there is, must be, contact in an intelligible where between every individual self and this Supreme Self, this Ultimate.
A Definition by Jess Hollenback:

From the moment we awake until the moment we fall asleep, the vast majority of us spend our time silently talking to ourselves. A few individuals whom we call mystics have mastered the difficult art of shutting off this habitual interior dialogue. This inner silence that mystics cultivate cannot develop unless the individual first learns how to tightly focus his or her attention so that the mind and imagination no longer wander aimlessly from one subject, thought, or feeling state to another. When this mental background noise ceases as a consequence of the mystic’s successful endeavors to focus his or her attention, a dramatic change in the mystic’s mode of consciousness takes place, a metamorphosis that is just as radical as that transformation that occurs during the shift from the waking state of awareness to the dream state. This dramatic metamorphosis of the waking consciousness caused by simultaneously focusing the attention and quieting the mind, together with the response in both thought and deed that it generates, is what I call “mysticism”. It is clear from this description that mysticism incorporates two important elements: a distinctive mode of experience or consciousness and the individual’s responses to that unusual modality of experience. It is evident, then that the term “mysticism” is not synonymous with “mystical experience”, for the latter refers only to the first of these two elements.
“Mysticism” is instead a comprehensive term incorporating both the mystical experience and the individual’s response to it. Because of this dual reference inherent in the term “mysticism”, a study of this phenomenon must accomplish two basic tasks. First, it must shed light on those particular attributes that distinguish the mystical mode of consciousness from other modes of consciousness. Second, it must delineate the manifold ways that men and women have responded in both thought and deed to those extraordinary types of experience. 11

8-Mysticism in English Literature

By

Caroline F.E. Spurgeon

Spurgeon in her long introduction to her book entitled, *Mysticism in English Literature* first makes an excellent effort to define mysticism, and then she categorizes English poets and writers into four classes in order to explain their particular definitions of mysticism and special techniques in their poems to convey their own mysticism. Therefore the reader who is by far well prepared to study Spurgeon’s definition of mysticism finds this introduction amazingly truthful. First, the researcher concentrates on the definition itself, and then the classification will be studied. It is interesting to note that both William Wordsworth and William Blake are compared and contrasted in the introduction.
Spurgeon starts with a definition of mystic by The Concise Oxford Dictionary, mystic is "one who believes in spiritual apprehension of truths beyond the understanding." The word mysticism itself, was originally taken over by the Neo-Platonists from Greek mysteries, where the word mystic given to the initiate, probably arose from the fact that he was one who was gaining a knowledge of divine things about which he or she must keep his or her mouth shut. Hence the association of secrecy or "mystery" which still clings round the word.

Two facts in connection with mysticism are undeniable whatever it may be, and whatever part it is destined to play in the development of thought and of knowledge. In the first place, it is the leading characteristic of the greatest thinkers of the world, of the founders of the Eastern religions of Plato and Plotinus, of Eckhart and Bruno, of Spinoza, Goethe, and Hegel. Secondly, no one has ever been a lukewarm, an indifferent, or an unhappy mystic. If a man has this particular temperament, his mysticism is the very centre of his being: it is the flame which feeds his whole life; and he is intensely and supremely happy just so far as he is steeped in it.

Mysticism is, in truth, a temper rather than a doctrine, an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy. Various mystical thinkers have contributed fresh aspects of Truth as they saw it, for they have caught glimpses of its face at different angles, transfigured by diverse emotions, so that their testimony, and in some respects their views, are dissimilar to the point of contradiction. Wordsworth, for
instance, gained his revelation of divinity through Nature, and through Nature alone; whereas to Blake “Nature was a hindrance” and imagination the only reality. But all alike agree in one respect, in one passionate assertion, and this is that unity underlies diversity. This, their starting-point and their goal, is the basic fact of mysticism, which, in its widest sense, may be described as an attitude of mind founded upon an intuitive or experienced conviction of unity, of oneness, of alikeness in all things. From this source springs all mystical thought, and the mystic, of whatever age or country, would say in the words of Krishna:

There is true knowledge. Learn thou it is this:

To see one changeless Life in all the Lives,

And in the Separate, One Inseparable.

-The Bhagavad- Gita- Book 18

This fundamental belief in unity leads naturally to the further belief that all things about us are but forms or manifestations of the one divine life, and that these phenomena are fleeting and impermanent, although the spirit which informs them is immortal and endures. In other words, it leads to the belief that the ideal is the only real.

Further, if unity lies at the root of things, man must have some share of the nature of God, for he is a spark of the Divine. Consequently, man is capable of knowing God through this godlike part of his own nature, that is, through his soul or spirit. For the mystic believes that the spirit is given to us to apprehend spiritual things. The methods of mental
and spiritual knowledge are entirely different. For we know a thing mentally by looking at it from outside, by comparing it with other things, by analysing and defining it, whereas we can know a thing spiritually only by becoming it. We must be the thing itself, and not merely talk about it or look at it. We must be in love if we are to know what love is; we must be musicians if we are to know what music is; we must be godlike if we are to know what God is. For in Porphyry’s words: “Like is known only by like, and the condition of all knowledge is that the subject should become like to the object.”¹⁵ So that to the mystic, whether he be philosopher, poet, artist, or priest, the aim of life is to become like God, and thus to attain to union with the Divine. Hence, for him, life is a continual advance, a ceaseless aspiration; and reality or truth is to the seeker after it a vista ever expanding and charged with ever deeper meaning. John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, has summed up the mystic position and desire in one brief sentence, when he says, “Such as men themselves are, such will God Himself seem to them to be.”¹⁶ For, as it takes two to communicate the truth, one to speak and one to hear, so our knowledge of God is precisely and accurately limited by our capacity to receive Him. Eckhart says, “Simple people conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so: God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him.”¹⁷

This sense of unity leads to another belief, though it is one not always consistently or definitely stated by all mystics. It is implied by Plato when he says, “All knowledge is recollection.”¹⁸ This is the belief in pre-existence or persistent life, the belief that our souls are immortal,
and no more came into existence when we were born than they will cease to exist when our bodies disintegrate. The idea is familiar in Wordsworth’s Ode on the Intimation of Immortality.

Finally, the mystic holds these views because he has lived through an experience which has forced him to this attitude of mind. This is his distinguishing mark, this is what differentiates him alike from the theologian, the logician, the rationalist philosopher, and the man of science, for he bases his belief, not on revelation, logic, reason, or demonstrated facts, but on feeling, on intuitive inner knowledge.

He has felt, he has seen, and he is therefore convinced; but his experience does not convince anyone else. The mystic is somewhat in the position of a man who, in a world of blind men, has suddenly been granted sight, and who, gazing at the sunrise, and overwhelmed by the glory of it, tries, however falteringly, to convey to his fellows what he sees. They, naturally, would be skeptical about it, and would be inclined to say that he is talking foolishly and incoherently. But the simile is not altogether parallel. There is this difference. The mystic is not alone; all through the ages we have the testimony of men and women to whom this vision has been granted, and the record of what they have seen is amazingly similar, considering the disparity of personality and circumstances. And further, the world is not peopled with totally blind men. The mystics would never hold the audience they do hold, were it not that the vast majority of people have in themselves what William James has called a “mystical germ” which makes response to their message.
James’s description of his own position in this matter, and his feeling for a “Beyond”, is one to which numberless “unmystical” people would subscribe. He compares it to a tune that is always singing in the back of his mind, but which he can never identify nor whistle nor get rid of. He says, “It is very vague, and impossible to describe or put into words….Especially at times of moral crisis it comes to me, as the sense of an unknown something backing me up. It is most indefinite, to be sure, and rather faint. And yet I know that if it should cease there would be a great rush, a great void in my life.”

This sensation, which many people experience vaguely and intermittently, and especially at times of emotional exaltation, would seem to be the first glimmering of that secret power which, with the mystics, is so finely developed and sustained that it becomes their definite faculty of vision. We have as yet no recognized name for this faculty, and it has been variously called “transcendental feeling”, “imagination”, “mystic reason”, “cosmic consciousness”, “divine sagacity”, “ecstasy”, or “vision”, all these meanings are the same thing. But although it lacks a common name, we have ample testimony to its existence, the testimony of the greatest teachers, philosophers, and poets of the world, who describe to us in strangely similar language:

That serene and blessed mood
In which…the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood,
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:

47
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.21

“Harmony” and “joy”, it may be noted, are the two words used most constantly by those who have experienced this vision.

The true mystic then, in the full sense of the term, is one who knows there is unity under diversity at the centre of all existence, and he knows it by the most perfect of all tests for the person concerned, because he has felt it. True mysticism, is an experience and a life. It is an experimental science, and as Patmore has said, it is as incommunicable to those who have not experienced it as is the odour of a violet to those who have never smelt one. In its highest consummation it is the supreme adventure of the soul: to use the matchless words of Plotinus, it is “the flight of the Alone to the Alone.”22

Therefore the essence of mysticism is to believe that everything we see and know is symbolic of something greater, so mysticism is on one side the poetry of life. Among English writers and poets the only two who fulfill this strict definition of a mystic are Wordsworth and Blake. These poets whose inmost principle is rooted in mysticism, or whose work is on the whole so permeated by mystical thought that their attitude of mind is not fully to be understood apart from it. As distinguished, therefore, from the mystical thinker or philosopher, the practical mystic has direct knowledge of a truth which for him is absolute. He consequently has invariably acted upon this knowledge, as inevitably as the
blind man to whom sight had been granted would make use of his eyes. These poets, namely, Wordsworth and Blake, who have consciously had a system and desired to impart it, have done so from the practical point of view, urging, like Wordsworth, the importance of contemplation and meditation, or, like Blake, the value of cultivating the imagination; and in both cases enforcing the necessity of cleansing the inner life, if we are to become conscious of our divine nature and our great heritage.

9- The Classification of English Mystics

Then after defining mysticism in her long introduction, Caroline Spurgeon makes an enthusiastic effort to classify mystic writers and poets. Thus she makes four classes which will briefly be enumerated. The first category is called love and beauty mystics which include Shelley, Rossetti, Browning, Coventry Patmore, and Keats. The second category is called nature mystics which include Henry Vaughan, William Wordsworth, and Richard Jefferies. The third category is called philosophical mystics which include poets namely, Donne, Traherne, Emily Bronte, and Tennyson. Also Prose writers namely, William Law, Burke, Coleridge, and Carlyle. The fourth category is called devotional and religious mystics which include the early English writers namely, Richard Rolle and
Caroline Spurgeon summarizes the mystic as being one who, having direct apprehension of some greater, absolute truth, acts upon this revelation. Geraldine Hodgson claims that no genuine mysticism exists or can exist outside the Roman communion. She goes on to provide her own understanding of the term:

It is that whole state which may be described as the desire for, the attitude and conduct which lead to, and the achievement in, an atmosphere of love, of direct intercourse between the human spirit and God who created it; it is, to use an image of mystical theology, the bursting into a little flame of that ‘spark at the apex of the soul,’ which all the while had its origin in the great flame of the divine Fire, and which, having burnt upward, is at last mingled with the Source.

It is time to have Evelyn Underhill who provides a decidedly more restrained exegesis of the concept mysticism, she says: “Broadly speaking, I understand mysticism to be the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards a complete harmony with the transcendental order.” So far, in these attempts to define mysticism, we have encountered absolute truth, revelation, spirit, God, divine Fire, Source, innate tendency, harmony, and transcendental order. This leaves us with a sizable pile of metaphysical baggage yet to unpack! Let’s turn, instead, to the sobering reflections of William James. With a measure of trepidation, James addresses mysticism towards the end of his work, the Varieties of Religious Experience. James’s collection of lectures attempts to explore the psychological underpinnings of religious
experience, and to discuss religious experience in terms of state-of-consciousness. He begins by acknowledging the reality of mystical states: “One may say truly, I think, that personal religious experience has its root and center in mystical states of consciousness.” His concern, then, is to determine what, broadly speaking, is a mystical state of consciousness? James goes on to list four qualities of the mystical state of consciousness, shown here in summary: such a state is ineffable, meaning it defies expression and must be directly experienced, a mystical state has a noetic quality, in that it seems to be a state of knowledge, or insight into truth.; it is transient, and difficult to maintain for more than a relatively brief duration; and finally, while the mystic may prepare herself for this state of consciousness to some extent, the experience itself enquires an element of passivity in the respondent. James concludes with identifying the mystical state of consciousness as a “deepened sense of the significance of a maxim or formula which occasionally sweeps over one.” Should we be troubled by James’s first criterion? The quality of ineffability in a mystical state of consciousness would seem to resist even poetry’s attempt to communicate, adequately, that deepened sense of a maxim, or Absolute truth, or what-have you.

We might argue that any mystical experience or transcendental revelation is highly personal, and virtually incoherent in translating.

William Blake says, “Lest I strike every mystic dumb with a single qualification.” It must be said that any attempt to convey the experience of a mystical state, though imperfect, should not be ruled
incoherent. And isn’t poetry the likeliest vehicle of mystical expression in this case? The researcher finds Gerald Bultett to be quite helpful here:

Both poet and mystic are concerned to find the universal in the particular, the eternal aspect of temporal things. Both are intent upon the Real... As mysticism is the inwardness of religion, so poetry is the language – and the only verbal language – of mysticism... Poetry, though it normally embodies plain statement, begins at the point where the statement ends; and though its form be ‘musical’ its spirit speaks in the silences that punctuate and in the stillness that follows the music. What poetry ‘says’ can therefore never be stated in other words, or in another manipulation of the same words; and what mysticism is, can never be expressed in a doctrinal formula.29

James points out that a mystical experience displays the world through a different lens than ordinary experience. The experience, in his words, is “ineffable” and “noetic”; placed beyond the descriptive abilities of language. While there is a debate over what this implies, and whether the experience actually transcends the phenomenal or material world of ordinary perception, or rather transcends the capacities of ordinary perception to bring the phenomenal and material world into full view. Such debates are not a mainstay of mystical teaching. Mystics focus on the experience itself, and rarely concern themselves with ontological discussions.
The mystic interprets the world through a different lens than is present in an ordinary experience; this can prove to be a significant obstacle to those who research mystical teachings and paths. Much like poetry, the words of mystics are often idiosyncratic and esoteric, can seem confusing and opaque, simultaneously over-simplified and full of subtle meanings hidden from the unenlightened. To a mystic, however, they are pragmatic statements, without subtext or weight; simple obvious truths of experience. One of the more famous lines from the Tao Te Ching, for instance, reads:

“My words are very easy to understand and very easy to put into practice. Yet no one in the world understands them or puts them into practice.”

Readers frequently encounter seemingly open-ended statements among studies of mysticism throughout its history.

Mysticism is often found in common with nondual worldviews and many mystics, from whichever religion or tradition they originally came, also describe in many ways a non-dual view of existence. Ramesh Balsekar comments on nonduality and mysticism, that it is in order for phenomena to occur, that the illusion of personal existence and doer-ship (ego) is present, and explains mysticism and nonduality in fairly accessible (conventional) terms:

Consciousness-at-rest is not aware of Itself. It becomes aware of Itself only when this sudden feeling, I am, arises, the impersonal sense of being aware. And that is when Consciousness-at-rest becomes Consciousness-in-movement, Potential energy becomes
actual energy. They are not two. Nothing separate comes out of Potential energy...That moment the sciences call Bing Bang, the mystic calls the sudden arising of awareness...

There are semi-artistic efforts to crystallize some particular description or aspect of the mystical experience in words: God is Love (Christian and Sufi in particular), Atman is Brahman (Advaitan), Zen haiku, Rumi’s love poems (Sufism). Often these are taken as slogans or as art, and so lose their core meaning as depictions of practical experience.

On the other hand it is essential to make an effort to understand the Source, or the Spirit, or what we call God. “He is neither one not unity, nor divinity, nor goodness; nor is He spirit, as we understand spirit; He is neither Sonship nor fatherhood nor anything else known to us or any other being, either of the things that are or the things that are not; nor does anything that is, know Him as He is, nor does He know anything that is as it is. He has neither word nor name nor knowledge. He is neither darkness nor, light nor truth nor error; He can neither be affirmed nor denied; nay, though we may affirm or deny the things that are beneath Him, we can neither affirm nor deny Him, for the perfect and sole cause of all is above all affirmation, and that which
transcends all is above all affirmation, absolutely separate, and beyond all that is.33

However, a mystic is trying to experience a union with God but the fundamental psychological condition of union is passivity. It is only when the human will ceases to strive and surrenders to the divine Will that it becomes possible for God to communicate himself. Mere passivity leads to union with God; it may culminate in an ecstatic trance with remarkable attendant phenomena. The Christian mystic looks forward not to mere sleep, not even simply to the blessed Nirvana of the Buddhist; he goes to meet a personal God who loves him and whom he loves; and he has in mind a more or less definite conception of what this meeting will mean to him. Thus, the mystical ecstasy is in part the outcome of the mystic’s expectations and, therefore, may be regarded as a product of auto – suggestion.34

The amazing contact which is called union with God can be considered as the final goal for a mystic. “However if ecstasy is, as mystics think, union with God, then the more deep or complete it is, the more perfect is that union: the depth of trance measures therefore the nearness to perfection, and complete trance – unconsciousness means complete union of the individual with the divine will.”35
Mystical ecstasy in English poetry is best expressed in two Williams: Blake and Wordsworth. The latter is acknowledged as being one of the founding voices of the Romantic movement in English verse; the former’s writing has resisted many efforts to definitively categorize it. Northrop Frye contends that, however we might classify Blake’s work, it would make an awkward fit as part of the Romantic repertoire: “Blake’s identification of religion and art is utterly different from the Romantic identification of the religious and aesthetic experiences. There is no place in his thought for aesthetics, or general theories of abstract beauty.” Both poets were aware of each other’s work, though efforts to arrange a meeting of the two were, lamentably, unsuccessful. Wordsworth’s estimation of Blake reveals a modicum of professional admiration: “There is no doubt this poor man was mad, but there is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott!” While it appears that Wordsworth had a fairly limited acquaintance with Blake’s poetry, Blake seems to have pursued more than a passing interest in the younger Wordsworth’s career. Blake pronounced
Wordsworth “the only poet of the age, for having composed such pieces as Ode on Intimations of Immortality”.38

What might a comparison of the two poets yield? Keeping in view that Blake was largely self-educated and is remembered today as a professional engraver whereas Wordsworth had acquired the eminence of a father – figure to second generation writers such as Keats, Byron and Shelley. By 1843 he was appointed poet Laureate, and was awarded honourary degrees from Durham and Oxford in the final years before his death in 1850. Blake’s poetry and visual art remained an obscure curiosity until his death in 1827.

In much of Wordsworth, we find the deeply peaceful philosophical musings of a mind immersed in the rural scenery of northern England’s Lake District. His preface to the Lyrical Ballads can be viewed as nothing less than an early articulation of the Romantic manifesto, and the first shot fired in what would amount to a poetic revolution:

The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these poems, was to choose incidents and solutions from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way.39

In Blake, a Londoner for most of his lifetime, we bear witness to a radically visionary imagination, one that would become consumed with developing the densely symbolic cosmology of the later Prophecies.
Relentlessly hostile to the religious deism emerging in late Eighteenth-Century England, Blake directed much of his creative energies towards a critique of the clockmaker God, and to a reaffirmation of the Human divine:

Conclusion: If it were not for the poetic or prophetic character, the philosophic and experimental would soon be the ratio of all thing, and stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same old dull round over again.

Applicition. He who sees the infinite in all things, sees God. He who sees the ratio only, sees himself only.

Therefore, God becomes as we are, that we may be as He is.

Given this cursory comparison, the divergences between the two poets are evident. So what of the parallels? In response to this question, I will focus on the mysticism prevalent in the poetry of both Wordsworth and Blake. Taking this approach, I feel that many of the differences between the two poets will be exposed as relatively superficial and that, more compellingly, “they were at one in essentials, they both strongly repudiated the mechanistic conception of man and nature which prevailed in their day, seeking to replace it in the minds of men by a philosophy that differed from primitive animism in its subtlety of apprehension, its intellectual discipline, and above all its recognition of a unity in all things.”
At least one observer has suggested that, among all the English writers and poets, only William Wordsworth and William Blake meet the strict definition of ‘mystic’. Since we have already tried to give a brief ‘unloading’ of the term ‘mysticism’; their poetry will be considered.

Surely Bullett rightly states, “Poetry is the ultimate language of mysticism”⁴², let us now examine Blake and Wordsworth in the light of the mystical elements evident in their writing:

I was only then
Contented when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of being spread
O’er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,
O’er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O’er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; O’er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea in the wave itself
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If such my transports were, for in all things.
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.⁴³

We find this passage in the earliest version of Wordsworth’s The Prelude. The poem is in part a record of Wordsworth’s childhood at Hawkshead. These lines recreate vivid images of the young
Wordsworth, the poet as a boy developing an early love of a nature which afforded him space and freedom to range, to climb and to swim, to discover. His reverence for nature most definitely found its mature genesis here. These important years also likely contributed to Wordsworth’s capacity to overcome the limitation of a Rousseauian concept of Nature; the last traces of Rousseau’s deism vanish in a Nature conceived of by Wordsworth as being, “a living manifestation of a divine life or spirit”44: “The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul of all my mortal being.”45

Wordsworth’s Nature breathes with us and in us; there is nothing of the mechanical in this segment, also from The Prelude, describing a boy’s illicit indiscretion:

Sometimes strong desire,
Resistless, overpowered me, and the bird
Which was the captive of another’s toils
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of indistinguishable motions, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.46

Wordsworth’s propensity to observe, through Nature, a sense of wholeness, resonates in William Jame’s citation of a Canadian psychiatrist, Dr. R.M. Bucke: “The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is a consciousness of the cosmos, that is of the life and
order of the universe." This consciousness is attended by not only a sense of intellectual enlightenment and moral exaltation, but also by the immanence of eternal life now. In Tintern Abbey, we find an invocation of the cosmic consciousness in “That blessed mood,” a moment that transcends the rational consciousness, and in which,

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul,
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

Evelyn Underhill proposes that we assemble a composite portrait of the mystic as a standard of comparison: “The first thing we notice about this composite portrait is that the typical mystic seems to move towards his goal through a series of strongly marked oscillations between ‘states of pleasure’ and ‘states of pain.’” She goes on to outline five phases of the mystical life:

1. **Awakening of Self to consciousness of Divine Reality:** Abrupt and well-marked; intense feelings of joy and exaltation.

2. **Purgation:** Self, aware for the first time of the distance separating it from the One, attempts to eliminate this distance by discipline; state of pain and effort.
3. **Illumination:** Knowledge of Reality, certain apprehension of the Absolute but not a true union with it; state of happiness.

4. **Dark Night of the Soul:** most terrible of the phases; final and complete purification of the self; intense sense of the Divine Absence; human instinct for personal happiness must be obliterated. Surrendering of the Self, movement towards sublime passivity.

5. **Union:** goal of the mystic quest. One with the Absolute. Ecstasy.\(^51\)

Bearing Underhill’s composite portrait in mind, we might read Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey* with an eye for delineated mystical phases. Taken in its entirety, the poem leaves one with the impression that Wordsworth is straddling a precipitous chasm, between Purgation and Illumination. In its parts, *Tintern Abbey* does not reveal a clear progression through the mystical phases; for example, we must infer an Awakening moment, given that poem is composed in such a reflective tone. Certainly, a ‘consciousness of Divine Reality’ moves throughout his verse, yet nowhere in the poem does Wordsworth emerge abruptly into epiphanies of mystical enlightenment.

“That time is past, / and all its aching joys are now no more, / and all its dizzy raptures.”\(^52\) We have entered Purgation here. Since *Tintern Abbey* reaches for a “blessed mood,” yet the question is that, does it truly describe a moment of perfect union? Some critics interpret the last part of it “as a collapse of the mystical moment.”\(^53\)
Bullett suggests that poetry happens, that it is “Something given, something that comes by grace.” And so we come to the poetry of William Blake, a man who Bullet describes as “The most thoroughgoing of all English mystics. For him the whole universe of experience is a complex imaginative act.”

To see a world in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.

Northrop Frye, who finds the term visionary more accurate than mystic while referring to Blake, goes on to say:

The “visionary” is the man who has passed through sight into vision, never the man who has avoided seeing, who has not trained himself to see clearly, or who generalizes among his stock of visual memories. If there is a reality beyond our perception we must increase the power and coherence of our perception, for we shall never reach reality in any other way. If the reality turns out to be infinite, perception must be infinite too. To visualize, therefore, is to realize.

A discussion of Blake’s vision is altogether impoverished if we fail to account for the technique with which he illuminated his poetry; in this sense, he is very much a complete artist, who revealed his mystical
insights in astounding multi-media fusions of word and image. If Blake visualizes to realize, then art is his vehicle of realization, and in art the unified vision shall always surpass the strictly sensory world in degrees of coherence and oneness. For Blake, there are three worlds: those of vision, sight, and memory. These worlds are not distinct and separate, though after childhood the majority of us tend to confine ourselves within the spheres of sight and memory. We live predominantly in the rational world of sight, of base perception, and we retreat often to that abstract and reflective world of memory. The problem, as Blake sees it, is that these are but aspects of reality, aspects that we have mistaken as being a complete experience; yet this results in only a partial, and poor, experience of the world. Perception requires the Imagination to bring real meaning to experience. The world of vision, then, is the world we create, the world seen through the active Imagination:

I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination: Imagination, the real and eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow, and in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies when these vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more.
Some critics who failed to understand Blake’s mysticism tried to connect it to madness; Wordsworth may be considered to be the first in this regard. On the subject of Blake’s sanity, and the coherence of his poetry as a whole, perhaps Frye comes closer to the truth: “The point is, not that the word ‘mad’ applied to Blake is false, but that it is untranslatable.” He goes on to say, “What Blake demonstrates is the sanity of genius and the madness of the commonplace mind, and it is here that he has something very apposite to say to the twentieth century, with its interest in the arts of neurosis and the politics of paranoia.”

Reading Blake’s Jerusalem, then, is not an exercise in “reading through the eyes of a lunatic, or seeking mystical illumination; Frye contends that the end of a golden string promised us by Blake refers, rather, to a lost art of reading.”

Is it something of a false start to attempt a comparison of mystical qualities in Blake and Wordsworth’s poetry? Certainly, it appears as though Blake never qualified himself as a ‘mystic’. Frye’s discussion of Blake as visionary is most informative in terms of the scrutiny he brings to the impetus behind the man’s art. Yet to deny the mystical qualities of this individual, one who was prone to experiencing visions from childhood onwards, seems to overlook entirely an important facet of Blake’s life. For the purposes of the conclusion of this discussion, then, one shall reside, content, in the opinions of Underhill, Korteling, and Bullet, all three of whom attribute both writers with impeccable mystical credentials.

One can find affinities between the mystical visions of Blake and Wordsworth. The representation of innocence through the figure of the
child is used frequently by both the poets, and both conceive of the child as having a privileged mystical sensitivity. And when Wordsworth writes, in *The Prelude*,

```
Thou, my friend, art one
More deeply read in thy own thoughts, no slave
Of that false secondary power by which
In weakness we create distinctions, then
Believe our puny boundaries are things
Which we perceive, and not which we have made.
To thee, unblended by these outward shows,
The unity of all has been revealed.
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One can envision Blake being, as easily as Coleridge, the recipient of such lines. Indeed the sentiment expressed here is truly evocative of much of what one finds in Blake’s own work. Both writers seek a wholeness in experience, a unity that transcends what is given to the “single vision”. Where Wordsworth searches for the Absolute in Nature, Blake finds it in the unity of the fully-realized, Imaginative Man. And herein lies the force behind much of Blake’s criticisms of Wordsworth. When Wordsworth writes, “Influence of Natural Objects/ In calling forth and strengthening the Imagination/ in Boyhood and early Youth.” in his Preface, Blake responds with: “Natural Objects always did and now do weaken, deaden and obliterate Imagination in Me. Wordsworth must know that what he Writes Valuable is Not to be found in Nature.” And to these lines of Wordsworth:

66
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted.—and how exquisitely too,
Theme this but little heard of among Men
The external World is fitted to the Mind.  

Blake replies simply, "You shall not bring me down to believe such
fitting and fitted". Yet, as has been stated earlier, Blake also
recognized kindred qualities in the Wordsworthian sensibility; for every
terse rejoinder Blake has directed at Wordsworth in the marginalia of
jotted notes left to us, he leaves equal praise. The passage opening this
discussion of Blake’s writing, “To see a World in a Grain of Sand/ And
a Heaven in a Wild Flower,” is, as Frye points out, merely an
extension of what is expressed in these lines from “The Prelude”:

The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity. 

Bullett makes the observation, “if Blake had had a
little of Wordsworth’s sobriety, and Wordsworth a little
of Blake’s madness, both would have been better poets.” I think this comment carries a deceptive charm, but we are likely better off passing such a remark with amused indifference. For surely, we have a mood for Wordsworth’s deep quietude, and another, wholly separate, for Blake’s relentlessly invigorating visions. Though distinct, they are both equally blessed mood.

The various definitions which have already studied are somewhat explanatory but the next section is descriptive; it is a post-modern description of the mystical experience. The researcher finds it amazing because it is as truthful as possible. It is very similar to what William James has already announced about a tune that is always singing in the back of his mind. The reader should follow the text carefully in order to understand it deeply. The unexperienced person may find it difficult to comprehend the text which is going to be followed, but if one tries hard to get the point, it will always glimmer in the back of the reader’s mind like the spark of the mystical experience itself.

11- Post- Modern Definition of Mysticism

It is time to continue this chapter with a brilliant commentary written by Bob Fergeson, entitled, What do you love? “If a thing loves, it is infinite,” William Blake says.
Progress on the spiritual path can be thought of in terms of value, or love. What is most important to us is what we value the most, what we really love. The path of self-discovery can be seen in these terms. We observe ourselves, and discover what our true motivations are, leading us to see what we value. Another way to see this is by checking our fact status. What we actually do every day tells us much about what we value, and perhaps shows us the gap between our personal storyline and our actions. If this fact checking and self-observation are carried far enough, we may begin to get a look at something called our ‘self’ or personality, and begin to see its illusive nature. We may be forced to admit to its exalted status as our real true love, despite our ego’s protestations to the contrary. Using this shock as further fuel for the search, we become a bit more honest in our future assessments. If self-inquiry is carried even further, through this process of elimination we may find something more real to love than this ‘self’. Back beyond our mind’s motion, something still and silent lies. If you find a love of truth, rather than fiction, it may take you there.

Finding this still-point depends largely on our state of satisfaction with our beloved ‘self’. If the state becomes one of dissatisfaction, we have the incentive to look more stable. Hearing from others that have gone
before that there is something somewhere ‘within’, and that it is worth any effort to find it, also adds to our incentive. By looking at what we love, we can come to love the truth, and find there is something worthwhile inside us other than mind-motion and change. Let’s take a look at how this path might turn out, and some of the pitfalls and signposts along the way from love of ‘self’ to Love Itself.

We hear of this so-called still-point, called by such names as silence, stillness, the center, the Source, what we really are, etc., and wonder. If our intuition is not clouded by the dissipations of relentless pleasure seeking and the resultant fear, we may discover a longing, a nostalgia deep within that tells us we may have once known this silence, and still love it more than we might know. This longing is fed too, perhaps, by being tired of the jostling effects of life, its traumas and endless no-win scenario, leading only to death and dissolution.

So, we read the books and search the Internet, finding many who tell of the way back to this stillness. They vary from the intellectual work of Hubert Benoit, to the practical experiments of Douglas Harding. We find the paths back to this center also called by many names: ‘the inner movement’, ‘self-remembering’, a ‘double-pointed arrow of attention, one directed in, one out’, ‘observing the observer’, ‘looking back at what we
are looking out of”. Many speak of ‘silence’, and even the many forms of silence. From this information alone, we may not come any closer to really knowing this still-point, but if we persist in looking, we may get lucky and discover much that it is not. We begin to see that it cannot be something of the mind, for we find the mind is motion. We may be fooled into thinking that the stillness is something we can manufacture, that it’s found only in ashrams or monasteries, or that we can force it onto the relative world through controlling the environment. Or we may decide to create it within by controlling our mind, forcing it to think only what we have been told we should think, and discover that this too, is folly.

When this still-point is finally reached, even if only for a moment, it is unmistakable. If we have allowed ourselves to hone our intuition and clear our thinking, we will find that this silent place within is not just a concept, but very real. The movement necessary to turn our attention back away from the outer and inner movies of the mind and senses is found to be also something real, and not a thought or concept at all. We find too, that we forget, and are carried back into the mind at every instant. But if our love for the silence is true, it will turn us back into it again and again, provided our previous experience with the mind and its motion has been enough, or too much.
This is where, what we value or really love comes in. If our meaning is taken from the changing scene of the relative world, we will keep our attention directed towards it. We will turn away from the silence within, and our longing will be for the excitement and changes of the mind. We may declare our love for the center, but our attention will long for the agony and ecstasy of the world of form. Boredom with silence too, means our value has not yet moved inward from the world of truth, but remains trapped by the colourful kaleidoscope of the mind, and the energy releases of the body.

This part of the journey is a journey within. We retreat from our former love for motion and change, and move inwards towards simplicity and truth. After the still-point has been found, and correctly valued, our attention is then turned round, and we begin a new phase, one of our new love being tested. While we continue to hold a part of our gaze on the sill-point, it being what we really are, we also turn round and engage in the world of action. This is to test our love, to see if the trials and tribulations of the outer world can knock us off course, and change our point of reference. If we come back to the center, time and time again, during and despite every trial, we find we are becoming less of the world and more of the silence. In any situation in life, no matter how difficult or how often we forget, if we
eventually return to the still-point as our anchor, we find we are becoming one with it. We become that which we love.73

12- Mysticism as a State of Consciousness

Since William James’ comments on mysticism are of great importance for the present research, a summary of his lectures will follow the discussion. Sandra Stahlman in her Commentary on William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experiences* and *A Suggestion about Mysticism*, again emphasizes the most important fourfold elements in a mystical experience. In these lectures, James attempts to define mystical state of consciousness as “real” experiences, that is to say a valid topic of investigation and study, and to show them as available to most people. He begins with the crucial point of definition; without a clear idea of what is being discussed, misunderstandings are bound to occur. Many things can be referred to as mystical, but James uses the term “mystical states of consciousness” to encompass a spectrum of experiences, from the non-religious to the most religiously profound.

Beginning with the “simplest” sort of mystical experience, James notes the strong sense of significance and knowledge associated with the experience, it’s “noetic” quality. It is one of four qualities that James uses to define mystical states of consciousness. “Ineffable” is another characteristic which marks an experience as mystical; the experience
defies expression. Due to its subjective nature, the experience is much like state of feeling. James asserts that these two qualities “entitle any state to be called mystical.” However, there are other qualities usually associated with the experience. He explains that the experiences are generally transient. Fading quickly, it is hard to recall the quality of the experience in memory; they remain just out of reach. But, some memory content always remains, and this can be used to “modify the inner life of the subject between the time of their recurrence.” When having a mystical experience, however, individuals do not seem to actively process the information. Instead, it is a passive experience, James’ fourth characteristic mark. Even though many people actively study and/or practise techniques to produce mystical states of consciousness, once occurring the experience seems to happen without their will.

Later, James goes on to suggest that these experiences occur as our “field of consciousness” increases. One can assert these “simple” experiences connote a slight widening of this field, whereas the more profound experiences come when consciousness expands to include items usually filtered, hidden, or just out of reach. Such could include memories and sensations. As awareness increases to include more external and internal information, a sense of self, a boundary between self and environment expands and seems to dissipate. The experience is one of unity with information formerly defined as non-self. This expansion of the self, often referred to as loss of self, may not be beneficial for someone who does not have a “strong” sense of self to begin with. To these people, a mystical experience can be frightening and confusing, to say the least. James call this a “diabolical
mysticism”; there being half of mysticism. He explains that it is not a religious mysticism, but in some cases where “mystical ideas” are seen as symptoms of insanity. He refers to these as “lower mysticisms”, springing forth from the same psychological mechanisms as the classic, religious sort. However, the messages and emotions are experienced as negative.

James points out the importance of keeping the definition of mystical states of consciousness value-neutral. All mystical experiences, he explains, whether experiences as positive or negative, deserve recognition as available states of consciousness. He does not debate whether they are a superior form of consciousness; instead he suggests that, like our rational states, mystical states encompass both truth and deception, pleasure and pain.

13-The Theology of William Blake

In fact, J.G.Davies in his remarkable book, *The Theology of William Blake* has included a very informative chapter entitled Blake and Mysticism which is a brilliant conclusion of second chapter. Most of the questions concerning with Blake’s mysticism will be carefully answered and the reader is going to be well prepared to start reading next chapter which is a critical study of Blake’s selected mystical and religious poems.
It is quite difficult to understand the works of great mystics because they have a language and a method of expression peculiar to themselves. Their approach to reality, though it can still be interpreted theologically, is at once more devotional and more intense than that of the dogmatic theologian. It is more devotional because it springs directly from personal experience, and owes little or nothing to theory. It is more intense for the self-same reason; having contacted with the absolute, they strain their vocabulary to the utmost in an endeavour to convey some glimpses of what they have so vividly apprehended. Hence their great emphasis, and sometimes from the dogmatist’s point of view their over-emphasis on those aspects of the truth which they have absorbed the most and which they can, therefore, the most easily expressed. Hence also the use made so frequently of symbolism; the divine vision is such that the words of everyday speech, with their plethora of mundane associations, are inadequate to present the full truth, and so a resort is made to symbolism, in an attempt to escape the constriction and inexactitude of ordinary language.

Mystical writers are of two kinds. On the one hand, there is the type, exemplified by St. Teresa, that is chiefly concerned with the interior experiences of the soul, and the psychological factors regulating the states of contemplation. On the other hand, there is the type, of which St. Augustine is the supreme example, that is not satisfied with this subjectivism and manifests a metaphysical passion issuing in an earnest attempt to give an exact description coupled with a philosophical and theological interpretation of the reality perceived. In case of the great mystics, these two elements are conjoined, and there is a constant
interplay between an adoring communion with God and an objective reading of the experience.

These considerations have severely to be borne in mind when seeking to interpret the theology of any mystic. The same applies to William Blake, if he be a mystic, and therefore, before we can finally set out to formulate his doctrines, it is necessary to find out the answers to three questions. What is mysticism? To what extent was Blake a mystic? And what effect, if any, had his mysticism on his theological ideas and the forms under which he expressed them?

14-William Blake’s Definition of Mysticism

In attempting to define mysticism, one must beware of being influenced by preconceived ideas. That is to say, that if we have any reason to think Blake as a mystic, we must not give a meaning to the word ‘mysticism’ that will automatically entitle him to be classified as such. To avoid this, and rather than to reproduce one or more of the many definitions which have been given of mysticism, it would be as well to turn to the mystics themselves and consider their own testimony as to their purpose and aim. “The end I have in view is the divine Embracing, the union of the soul with the Divine substance. In this loving, obscure knowledge, God unites Himself with the soul eminently and divinely.”80 “This knowledge consists in a certain contact of the soul with the Divinity, and it is God Himself Who is then felt and tasted, though not manifestly and distinctly, as it will be in glory.”81 Thus far St.John of the Cross, and from Pseudo-Dionysius:

“Do thou, in the intent practice of mystic contemplation, leave
behind the senses and the operations of the intellect, and all things that the senses or the intellect can perceive, and all things which are not and all things which are, and strain upwards in unknowing, as far as may be, towards the union with Him Who is above all being and knowledge."

St. Gregory says “The sweetness of contemplation is worthy of love exceedingly, for it carries away the soul above itself, it opens out things heavenly, and shows that things earthly are to be despised; it reveals things spiritual to the eyes of the mind, and hides things bodily.”

“Nought more profitable, nought merrier than grace of contemplation, the which lifteth us from low things and presenteth us to God,” Richard Rolle declares. We conclude from these passages that mysticism, or contemplation, is an experience and perception of the Being and Presence of God, and that above all it is union with God.

In the West, contemplation has always been linked with asceticism. “No one can be enlightened unless he be first cleansed or purified and stripped,” said the author of the Theologia Germanica in words which exactly express the thought of all the great Catholic mystics. But this conjunction cannot be regarded as always essential. There have been ascetics who were not mystics, and there have been mystics who were not ascetics. Especially this is to be noted of those who were mystics and at the same time artists. These men, of whom Blake is a leading example, have always to face the problem of creativity. “Creativeness requires that a man should forget about his own moral progress and sacrifice his personality….. If a man feels nothing but humility and a perpetual sense of sin, he can do no creative work. Unity and Morality are
secondary considerations, and belong to Philosophy and not to Poetry."\(^86\) said Blake. It is paradoxical that asceticism absorbs a man in himself, making him concentrate on his own moral improvement, whereas creativeness makes him forget himself. Hence, "the greatness of creative genius is not correlative to moral perfection. Creative genius is not concerned with salvation or perdition."\(^87\) But if the only true path is that of holiness, what of the man who devotes himself to art? The crux of the problem lies in the answer we give to the question whether humility is the only foundation of the spiritual life, or whether there is another on which creative energy may base itself. The poet or artist does not start from humility, inveighing against the burden of sin and the weakness of his nature; his spiritual condition is rather that of a superabundance of creative energy. At the moment of creation man feels a victory over sin; humility and asceticism have no further place, inspiration predominates. But, "Creation may acquire a religious meaning and justification, if, in the phenomenon of inspiration, man is responding to a divine call to co-operate with divine creation."\(^88\) Thus the way of asceticism and that of creativeness are seen to lead ultimately to the same goal; both achieve a liberation from the selfhood, the one by purgation, the other by entire self-transcendence and self-forgetfulness in the act of creation, and so "the path of creativeness is also a path to moral and religious perfection, a way of realizing the fullness of life."\(^89\) It was this problem that Blake, as a mystic and an artist, had to face. At the outset of his career, believing that asceticism and
contemplation are indivisibly connected, he determined to regiment himself and forced his character into the true ascetic mould. His notes on Lavater reveal a moral sensitivity which even the desert fathers would have commended. "Uneasy; this I know not, Very Uneasy indeed, but truth, Uneasy: this I lament that I have done. Uneasy, but I hope to mend. Uneasy, yet I hope I should not do it." To stimulate himself to repentance and to further moral effort, he repeatedly recalled to his mind his "past sins, for these a man should never avert his thoughts from." Such behaviour was entirely opposed to Blake's genius; he soon learned from experience that asceticism was not the way for him. He could not resist his genius and so he finally rejected asceticism.

Unfortunately, having put it aside as unsuitable to himself, he was not able to see that it may well be adapted to others unendowed with creative genius, and therefore he condemned it completely, believing that Mohammedanism had been providentially ordained to counteract the withering effect of ascetic Christianity. To his mind the condemnation of asceticism involved the condemnation of Christianity as a whole. His situation was intolerable; believing the Gospel to be true, he was yet compelled to reject it. No wonder he declared that:

"Men understand not the distress and the labour and sorrow That in the Interior Worlds is carried on in fear and trembling" For who, among his friends and contemporaries, could have understood his difficulties, quite apart from being able to give him any aid?
Blake’s final solution was twofold. In the first place, he persisted in his rejection of asceticism. Towards the end of his life he summed up his experience in writing to his friend Linnell: “No discipline will turn one Man into another, even in the least particle, and such discipline I call Presumption and Folly. I have tried it too much not to know this, and am very sorry for all such who may be led to such ostentatious Exertion against their Eternal Existence itself, because it is Mental Rebellion against the Holy Spirit, and fit only for a Soldier of Satan to perform.”93 Having thus rejected all asceticism, Blake disassociated it from Christianity, regarding it as an alien strand in the Gospel, and affirmed that “Christianity is Art”94, that is to say that the way of creativeness is the way of salvation. By this means, he was enabled to find a basis for creativity in Christianity. His solution was, however, only partial, for asceticism has a place in Christian life; Blake’s failure to appreciate this was largely occasioned by his isolation from the Church, communion with which would have counterbalanced the exaggerated emphases to which he was led by his sturdy independence.

In view of these considerations, it is unlikely that we shall find that Blake’s mysticism followed the traditional pattern of the Catholic mystics.

The various symbolic forms adopted by the mystics to describe their efforts to attain union with God have this in common, that they all outline certain distinct stages in their quest; this is true whether their imagery be that of a pilgrimage as in Dante or Bunyan, or whether it be that of a marriage as in St.Bernard or Richard of St.Victor. The number of stages differ from mystic to mystic, each has his or her individual
plan; Evelyn Underhill considers mysticism under five heads. They are as follows: Awakening of the self to consciousness of Divine Reality, Purgation, Illumination, Dark night of the soul, and finally Union, as the goal of the mystic quest. With the exercise of much ingenuity, this last classification has been applied to Blake, even to the extent of detailing which poems belong to which stage; but this is to look for precision where none can be found. Although there are certain clearly recognizable steps in the growth of the mystic consciousness, it is untrue to life to separate them sharply from one another, for they are seldom unmixed in form and so frequently they merge together, periods of illumination, for example, being intermitted with those of purgation. Furthermore, Blake had his own individual scheme, in which there were three stages, and as was natural for a man whose mysticism was so closely connected with his art and whose system was founded upon a creative response to the divine call and not upon an ascetic one, he symbolized the quest as a gradual cleansing of vision, the separate phases of which are twofold, threefold, and fourfold vision; single vision being the condition of those who have not yet entered upon the mystic way.

15- Importance of Vision & Four Kinds of Vision

Single vision is the condition of the man who is concerned only with that which is outward, with the material and whose philosophy is merely a rationalization of the perceptions received through the five senses. So he is unable to apprehend or enjoy any communion with the
world of eternity, which is “incomprehensible To the Vegetated Mortal Eye’s perverted and single vision”. So it was Blake’s fervent prayer:

May God us keep
From single vision and Newton’s sleep.

Twofold vision is the condition of the man whose consciousness has been redirected from a self-centered world to a God-centered world; it is in fact to be identified with that Illuminated Life experienced by all true mystics, and shared to a greater or less degree by all real artists. Its main feature is an increased clarity of vision, so that “everything appears to man as it is, infinite”, once “the doors of perception have been cleansed”.

Illumination or twofold vision was the most constant feature of Blake’s mysticism; he himself declared that it was “twofold always”, meaning thereby, not that he never ascended any higher, but that he never returned to the errors of single vision.

Threefold vision is the condition of the man who apprehends truth in a manner entirely supersensuous, by means of perceptions which include the desires and higher aspirations of the soul. “Man’s perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception; he perceives more than sense can discover.”

Fourfold vision is that state to which all mystics aspire, the condition of complete union with God, or in Blake’s own words:

“With holy raptures of adoration, rap’d sublime in the Visions of
This is achieved when “Self was lost in the contemplation of faith and wonder at the Divine Mercy.” Its attainment is rare in this life, but Blake had had experience of it. This climax is only once described:

Terror-struck in the Vale I stood at that immortal sound.
My bones trembled, I felt outstretch’d upon the path
A moment, and my Soul return’d into its mortal State.

Blake believed that man can “arise from Self by Self Annihilation,” and there are four means by which this may be achieved. First, by conscious acts of will; thus Blake spoke of ‘willing sacrifice of Self.’ Secondly, by self-examination:

To cleanse the Face of my Spirit, by Self-examination,
To bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off the Not Human,
I come in Self-annihilation and the grandeur of Inspiration.

Thirdly, by the practice of mutual forgiveness: “Forgiveness of Sins which is Self Annihilation.” And finally by the power of Christ:

O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness and love!
Annihilate the Selfhood in me: be thou all my life!

Blake believed that nature is to be valued, not only because of its beauty, but also because it is a shadow of the eternal world. “There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing
which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature".\(^{107}\) that is, natural things have their true being in

"the Real and Eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow".\(^{108}\) William Law, in similar vein wrote "The outward world is but a glass, or representation of the inward; and everything and variety of things in temporal nature must have its root, or hidden cause, in something that is more inward."\(^{109}\) This conception of type and anti-type was probably derived by Blake from his own artistic experience, influenced by his reading of Swedenborg. According to Blake the human mind unites the self not with things as they really are but with images and aspects of things. He painted from imagination; that is to say, his paintings are representations of a pre-existent idea conceived in the mind. The painting may be destroyed, but the idea cannot be obliterated; therefore, according to Blake, the idea is the reality, the painting only its shadow. By revealing something of the idea through art, Blake was performing a religious work, imparting spiritual realities to others through the visual image; similarly, nature, seen by the man of illuminated vision, can convey to us something of the divine.

Blake’s constant vacillation between the condemnation of the view of the nature which is characteristic of single vision and his approval of the enlightened view of twofold vision serves to explain the apparent contradiction in his attitude to the world of phenomena. Nature beheld by the Imagination is reality itself; nature distorted by reason and the selfhood falls into the realm of non-entity. The visible universe is a symbol of the eternal; because it is not eternal, it is relatively unimportant; nevertheless because of what it symbolizes it has
importance and significance. Hence the material world is unreal unless we see it as the artist sees it, with twofold vision; then it becomes an “Image of regeneration” \(^{110}\); then it becomes a way of return to eternity.

Mystics have tried very hard to explain their goal, that is union. The psychological state of the man who is in “Immediate Communion with God”\(^{111}\), would appear to be something akin to a condition between waking and sleeping. This is achieved when his four basic psychological functions, which in the natural man are habitually opposed, are in harmony, as in moments of inspiration. But the distinction between this synthesis, this ‘Divine Union’ of fourfold vision, and threefold vision is lacking in clarity. The difference would seem to lie in the fact that by means of the lower type of vision a man may convey a divine message and so reveal the nature of the Real; whereas the visionary of the highest type becomes “a conscious element of the Ideal, and enjoys the experience of immediately apprehending the homogeneity of all Being in Time and in Eternity”\(^{112}\), so that “the Divine Vision remains Every-where For-ever”\(^{113}\).

The visions of an artist are not necessarily of the same nature as those of a contemplative; with the former these psychic experiences expand themselves in creative work, with the latter they issue in a transformation of personality. As Blake’s art was the practical expression of his mysticism, his aesthetic problems were religious problems.

However, the researcher finds the painting ‘The Tree of the Soul’ very illuminating in order to understand the fourfold vision which Blake explains as the four levels of vision in Boehme. The
first illustration in this study is the four fold vision (A). The illustrations or painting provide a better understanding of the text. In fact, John beer in his book, namely, Blake’s Visionary Universe has an excellent explanation for it which follows:

There are four levels of vision which are shown in the painting as four parts of a tree, that is ‘The Tree of the Soul’. In the developing thinking these states are further defined as follows:

1- The state of ‘darkness’ the ‘Dark World’, becomes the state of Ulro, which Blake uses to describe the state in which Reason alone holds sway. It is thus also the ‘Heaven’ of The Marriage of Heaven and hell.

2- The state of ‘Fire’ or ‘Wrath’ is used for the state in which energy is freely exercised. A creative artist, or a lover, purely by exercising his energies, enters this state, which is sometimes called Generation, and is the ‘Hell’ of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

3- The state of ‘Light’ or ‘Paradise’ is reserved more particularly for the state of sexual pleasure. Blake often refers to it by the name of ‘Beulah’, and in so doing displays one of his more clever pieces of symbolic alignment. In Isaiah, Beulah is the name of a country, and is translated by the word ‘married’. Thus a symbol lies already to hand for the extending of wedded love into a ‘country’, a state of the soul, where the energies of
Ulro and Hell, now married, produce harmony and pleasure. Nevertheless, the state is of great importance to Blake, being one of the rare moments in which the full vision is glimpsed.

4- The final state, which reconciles all the others, and allows each to exist in its fullness, is the state of the Eternal Man. We have fallen from this, but it is recaptured in moments of supreme vision, by the Genius, for example, in his moments of inspiration. It can be completely recovered only after death.\(^{114}\)

16- Justification for Blake’s Mysticism

In order to conclude this chapter, it should be noted that Blake was, indeed, a mystic; although this has been denied, but on insufficient grounds. Blake’s mysticism is self-evident, and it has been accepted by the majority of his critics as the key to his personality and beliefs; yet they also concur in the judgement that he was one who never gained the height of mystical experience, that his mysticism was potential and never realized.

The elements in Blake’s mysticism which have led to this conclusion may be briefly enumerated. In the first place, it is contended that he practised no asceticism; but, as, we have seen, this is not an essential component of mysticism and, although Blake may not have been a saint, he was certainly a mystic. Secondly, it is maintained that prayer and meditation had no part in his system; but while Blake has left
no detailed account of his prayer life, it is undeniable that he was a man of prayer. What could be more devotional than this cry from the heart?

O how can I with my gross tongue that cleaveth to the dust
Tell of the Four-fold Man in starry numbers fitly order’d,
Or how can I with my cold hands of clay! But thou, O Lord,
Do with me as thou wilt! For I am nothing, and vanity.\textsuperscript{115}

Thirdly, his reliance on visions is said to be a sign of immature contemplation; here, again, as we have seen, Blake was only making open declaration of what the great mystics tacitly assumed and from which they derived their sublimest perceptions of truth. Finally, Blake is said to have been lacking in humility and to have displayed personal animus in his work which is inconsistent with true mysticism. Blake, while repudiating humility in the sense of that false abasement that denies the operation of the Holy Spirit in man, stoutly affirmed the true Christian doctrine of humility which thinks nothing of self but only of God. On the other hand, it is true that Blake did display a certain acerbity in his works, but it must be remembered that hatred of all that is evil should be natural to the Christian character, and Blake’s bitterness was seldom directed against individuals as such, but against the false ideas they propounded; his doctrine of states and his insistence on the need for continual forgiveness serve only as means to explain the dictum “Condemn the sin, but not the sinner”.\textsuperscript{116}

The marks of the true mystic, according to Miss Underhill, are fourfold. First, he must be practical, not theoretical; that Blake was such
there can be no denial; on the contrary, the understanding of his mysticism would have been much facilitated if he had only given more exposition. Secondly, he must live for God alone and not for self; Blake’s strenuous and unremitting efforts to annihilate his selfhood and his utter detachment from material things, joined to his personal devotion to Jesus, show certainly that this was characteristic of him. Thirdly, his life must reveal increased fervour and love. Thus Blake sang:

I cry: Love! Love! Love!
Happy, happy Love! Free as the mountain wind!\textsuperscript{117}

Lastly, he must pursue the mystic way, impelled by an ardent desire for God and a thirst for moral perfection. Blake’s ardent desire for God is unquestionable, but he had no thirst for moral perfection. It is true that he had a sense of sin, “I am perhaps the most sinful of men. I pretend not to holiness: yet I pretend to love, to see, to converse with daily as man with man, and the more to have an interest in the Friend of Sinners”, \textsuperscript{118} but it was this that led him along the path of mysticism, it was his creative genius, and “Creation is in a profound sense the contemplation of God, truth, and beauty, or the supreme life of the spirit. God is not content that man should seek salvation, for He wants man to reveal his creative love for Himself in the positive revelation of his nature.”\textsuperscript{119} Creativeness involves an asceticism of its own, which is different in kind from that connected with traditional mysticism; the artist is purified, but not by feats of self-abnegation, rather by the trials
of life itself, and “these souls, whose style of life is active, will have the grace of contemplation, but of a masked, unapparent contemplation”.

I am in God’s presence night and day, And he never turns his face away.

There are two extreme forms of contemplation, according to the mystic’s predisposition to emphasize the transcendence or the immanence of God. In contemplating the transcendence, the mystic is aware of his own littleness and unworthiness, expresses his experience by negatives, and sees his communion with God as an entrance into a Divine Dark or Cloud of Unknowing. In contemplating the immanence, the mystic is possessed by a sense of the nearness and intimacy of God, expresses his experience in terms of personality, and sees his communion with God as a marriage or a joyous and loving participation in the Divine Life. The one looks to the transcendent and unknowable Godhead, the other to the Incarnate Lord. Blake briefly outlined these two ways of approach when he wrote:

God Appears and God is Light To those poor Souls who dwell in Night, But does a Human Form Display To those who Dwell in Realms of Day.
Blake himself was a mystic of the latter type, his creative genius allowed of no self-abasement, and his threefold vision is similar to that process of introversion by means of which the contemplative seeks union with the Godhead immanent within his own being. Hence the author of *De Adhaerando* says: “To mount to God is to enter into one’s self. For he who inwardly entereth and intimately penetrateth into himself, gets above and beyond himself and truly mounts up to God”.

“Let it be plainly understood that we cannot return to God unless we enter first into ourselves. God is everywhere, but not everywhere to us. There is but one point in the Universe where God communicates with us, and that is the centre of our own soul. There He waits for us; there He meets us; there He speaks to us. To seek Him, therefore, we must enter into our own interior.” St. Augustine says.

Blake laid great emphasis on the immanence of God; an emphasis to which he was led, not only by his own temperament and preconceptions, but also by his antagonism to the remote Divine Being of Deists. “Seek not thy heavenly father then beyond the skies”, he admonished his readers; and in one passage, he made Jesus say:

*I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend:*

*Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me.*

Therefore, according to the mystics, the point of contact in the soul between God and man is a Divine nucleus, variously called the Spark, the Apex. The origin of this belief is to be traced to Tatian, who wrote “in the beginning the spirit was a constant companion of the soul, but
forsook it because the soul would not follow it; yet it retained, as it were, a spark of its power." From this starting-point it was a short step to the belief that the divine element is not merely potential but actually immanent, and so the idea of deification. "If I am to know God directly, I must become completely He and He I: so that this He and this I become and are one." Eckhart says. The great mystics safeguarded themselves against such extravagances. Louis of Blois says:

"The soul becomes one with God, yet not so as to be of the same substance and nature as God." Blake, on the other hand, always prone to the most exaggerated assertion of any truth he perceived, was guilty of many rash and unqualified utterances. "We are all co-existent with God, members of the Divine body. We are all partakers of the Divine nature," Blake told Crabb Robinson. The same source of information tells us that on my asking in what light he viewed the great question concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ, Blake said "He is the only God. And so am I and so are you." In making this affirmation Blake was running counter to his master, Boehme, who with direct simplicity says: "Even if Christ is born in us, nevertheless we cannot say, in speaking of ourselves as a whole, 'I am Christ', for the external man is not Christ. We can only say honestly, I am in Christ, and Christ has become human in me."