

INTRODUCTION

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS AND SOME CONTEMPORARY ISSUES CONCERNING CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross (1541-1592) is widely regarded today as one of the most important authors to have written about contemplative prayer and mystical experience.¹ In his Apostolic Letter issued on August 24, 1926, Pope Pius XI formally declared St. John of the Cross a "Doctor of the Universal Church." In his letter, Pius XI stated that theologians today could turn to John and draw "from his doctrine and writings the limpid purity of all the spiritual teaching that has ever poured forth from the fountainhead of Christian thought and from the Spirit of the Church."² A growing number of books and articles, which either deal with his theology or draw on it as a central source, is being published each year. Surprisingly, the wide recognition he now receives and his position of authority as a master of ascetical-mystical theology have only come about during the last one hundred years.³ Before this, he was little known outside the Carmelite Order and Spanish-speaking lands.⁴

One possible reason for John's popularity today derives from the fact that he wrote for people living in an age not unlike the twentieth century. A few general, but significant, parallels can be drawn between Europe in the sixteenth century and the global community of the twentieth. The sixteenth century was a period of great cultural and social transition. It was an age of discovery and commerce, of great technological and scientific advance, of revolution and rapid institutional change. It was also an age of war and alienation, an age of religious

disenchantment and spiritual experimentation, an age of vast wealth for a minority of people while great numbers lived in abject poverty.

It is especially during times such as these, when religious disaffection tends to be high, that interest in mysticism seems to flourish. In both the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, there have been great revivals of interest in mystical experience, although more specifically in its epiphenomena. Much of what passes for mysticism, then and now, has little or nothing to do with genuine contemplative transformation. There can be no doubt that the tremendous confusion concerning these experiences is a major concern of St. John of the Cross who devotes a significant portion of his writings to clarifying and distinguishing authentic from inauthentic contemplative experience.

St. John of the Cross's whole purpose for writing is to guide and instruct others on their spiritual journey. In his Prologue to The Ascent of Mount Carmel, John states that he does not undertake the "arduous task" of writing about the contemplative life because of "any particular confidence" in his "own abilities."⁵

Rather, . . . because it is extremely necessary to so many souls. Even though these souls have begun to walk along the road of virtue, and our Lord desires to place them in the dark night so they may move on to the divine union, they do not advance. Sometimes, the reason is, they do not want to enter the dark night or allow themselves to be placed in it, and sometimes they misunderstand themselves and are without suitable and alert directors who will show them the way to the summit.⁶

John's purpose is practical rather than theoretical.⁷ With this concern in mind he turns to scholastic faculty psychology as a useful, practical tool for describing the stages of contemplative development and the dynamic state of perfection. John's psychological insight provides a compelling analysis of the mystical journey.

Commenting on the Spanish mystics of the sixteenth century, Urban T. Holmes states that with them "we get the first science of the spiritual life."⁸ Their preoccupation with "logic,

analysis and explanation"⁹ led them to produce thoroughgoing psychological, phenomenological, and theological analyses of mystical experience. No period in the history of Christian spirituality, until this century, has produced such psychologically perceptive theories of contemplative development. Together, Carmelite Sts. John of the Cross and Teresa of Jesus are perhaps the pre-eminent "psychologists" of mysticism and contemplation.¹⁰

Psychology frames the world of twentieth-century Western people. Its jargon has entered everyday speech; its theories, although popularized, condition the way people relate to one another and their world; for millions, the therapist has replaced the minister and priest as healer of the broken soul. Present-day fascination with the "psyche," with "experience," and "the contents of consciousness" is not restricted to psychology, but pervades the other sciences and religion as well. The psychological orientation of contemporary culture can also explain some of the appeal that St. John of the Cross has for twentieth-century people.

The fundamental purpose of this study is to give a practical, contemporary exposition of contemplative transformation. The work of St. John of the Cross was chosen as the primary source for this task for several reasons--for its exceptional clarity and insightful analysis as well as for its wide appeal and contemporary relevance. John's doctrine can continue to make a much needed contribution to the ongoing study of contemplative development. His psychological analysis especially lends itself to dialogue with contemporary developmental theory.

Psychology contributes to this study in two important ways. First, it will be suggested that modern scientific psychology has contributed significantly to the current state of confusion concerning mysticism and contemplative development. Second, this work will suggest that, among some currents in modern psychology which can overcome this negative contribution, psychoanalytic object relations theory is particularly suited to the task of making a contemporary

interpretation of John's doctrine.

The present-day fascination with mystical phenomena is accompanied by significant misunderstanding and misappropriation of meditation, mysticism, and contemplation. This work will analyze some of these problems (in this and later chapters) with the express intention of having St. John of the Cross speak to these very important spiritual issues. While this work is largely theoretical, its primary purpose is to suggest a contemporary model for the practical application of John's theology. It is therefore necessary to examine contemplative development, not only in its healthy manifestations, but also in those which are distorted and pathological. This introductory chapter will examine some contemporary problems concerning religious experience, especially contemplative prayer and mystical experience.

The New Gnosticism

The popular twentieth century Western understanding of mysticism and contemplation betrays the presence of a new form of Gnosticism. Like the Gnosticism of old, it is a curious blend of Eastern and Western religion. Unlike the traditional forms of Gnosticism, this newer phenomenon tends to be pantheistic, instead of dualistic, and rather than being esoteric, it tends to combine spirituality with psychology and turns this hybrid into a profit motivated business, often distributed through high-gloss media. Instead of describing the world and the body as evil, the only evils are "certain restricting blocks or fixations which retard your advancement and actually attract failure, bad luck and accidents."¹¹

In this popular understanding, meditation can achieve all things. It promises "overall control of your life," "self-preservation," "direct contact" with God, "full mastery of your Higher Self," and "control as never before." The structure of this new gnosticism tends to be organized primarily on the flow of money, usually one way into the pockets of those who promise that

meditation will guarantee "success and financial riches." There seem to be no restrictions. After having attained absolute control over your "Higher Self," you transcend space, time, and bodiliness to "experience ultimate liberation and true freedom from any limitations."¹² Since morality is seldom, if ever, mentioned (why restrict the "Higher Self"?) it can be assumed that even moral "limitations" are forgone.

In the "New Age" religion(s), there are frequent references to Jesus, usually with regard to his wonder-working "powers." Seldom does one hear of Jesus' encouragement that people should shoulder their cross, nor of his indictment of riches, nor of his concern for the poor. The terms "contemplation" and "mystical" are quite popular, but like "supernatural" and "metaphysical," they seem to be almost completely detached from the Catholic tradition from which they have emerged. M. C. D'Arcy observes:

It is really a distressing fact that so much should be written on mysticism by those who do not seem to be aware of the state of the question. There is an immense literature stretching down the ages, and this and the carefully thought out science of the spiritual life in the Catholic Church, with its vast evidence, its carefully drawn distinctions, have been completely ignored.¹³

Harvey D. Egan, in his book Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition, lists some of the widespread misconceptions about mysticism that often stand in stark contradiction to the authentic Christian mystical tradition.¹⁴ Egan writes:

For example, many today identify mysticism with irrationalism, vague speculation, otherworldliness, dreaminess, or a lack of practicality in dealing with daily living. Others incorrectly associate it with parapsychological phenomena, theosophy, the occult, magic, witchcraft, and demonology.

Another common line of current opinion reduces mysticism to moments of ecstatic rapture, or "peak experiences," triggered by music, poetic inspiration, nature, lovemaking, psychedelic drugs, prayer, giving birth, and so on. One line of thought falsely equates mysticism with repressed eroticism, deviant behavior, madness, psychological repression, biological and psychological pathology, or a variety of "altered states of consciousness" usually engendered by sensory deprivation. Some of the most absurd theories view mysticism as a form of "remembrance" of the mystic's

biological conception, life in the womb, or early nursing experiences. In this view mysticism is essentially biology.¹⁵

One other frequent mistake, pointed out by Egan, is the erroneous identification of mysticism with the miraculous. In this view, mystics are those persons invaded by the Holy Spirit who, as a consequence of this invasion, exhibit "a host of extraordinary psychosomatic phenomena."¹⁶

Two Major Sources of Confusion

There can be no doubt that there is great confusion today concerning contemplative development and the practice of mystical prayer. David Knowles states that the renewed interest in mysticism, which began toward the end of the nineteenth century, developed in large part from scientific psychology's fascination with "unusual psychological conditions."¹⁷ He relates that even those Catholics who investigated mysticism studied it at a distance using "a quasi-scientific technique of observing and comparing phenomena."¹⁸ Little attempt was made by those studying mysticism to analyze it theologically. "As a result, there was for long no consensus of opinion, even among the best qualified writers on mysticism, as to what precisely mysticism or contemplation might be."¹⁹

The sources of confusion concerning mysticism and contemplative prayer are many. Two major sources will be addressed here. They are: first, distortions within the Christian tradition itself, and second, the unprecedented secularization of modern culture that is so sharply criticized by Louis Dupré in his book Transcendent Selfhood: The Rediscovery of the Inner Life.²⁰

The first source of confusion is from the Christian tradition; the following issues will be addressed: (1) confusion over the meaning of the term "mystical" and its relevance for Christian faith; (2) doubt as to whether mysticism can be described as a legitimate part of

Christian life (this tends to be a "Protestant problem"); (3) the meaning of the term "contemplation"; and (4) confusion over what constitutes authentic mystical experience, as opposed to that which is merely epiphenomenal or pseudomystical (this tends to be a "Catholic problem").

The second source of confusion, to be discussed later in this chapter, is suggested by Louis Dupré, who accurately names a major problem of modernity: the alienation of persons from their own transcendence and therefore from what mysticism is primarily concerned with. In his discussion of this, he perceptively identifies a number of symptoms of alienation from the self and God which can be recognized as problems or confusions in the contemporary interest in religious experience, and especially as this regards meditation, mysticism, and contemplative prayer. (Some of the ways in which contemporary scientific psychology has contributed to the problems caused by secularization and alienation will be examined in chapter three of this work.)

Contemporary Confusions in Christianity

"Mysticism" and "Contemplation":

Confusion over Terminology

The study of mysticism and contemplation examines one of the most complex areas of human experience. Difficulty in understanding is compounded by confusion over exactly which experiences ought to be studied. The terms mysticism and contemplation have come to us from antiquity, and each has a dynamic history. Mysticism has been called "one of the most abused words in all civilized languages," and contemplation described as an "elastic term."²¹

The terms themselves are often the source of great confusion and misunderstanding, especially when those who use them, without clearly defining them, fail to realize or

acknowledge that they can mean many things to many people. This was often the case in the past when different schools of spirituality within the Christian tradition employed these terms strictly within the context of their own particular, limited theological system. The terms have not remained static either. In every age the fine shades of meaning change, and today there is among scholars outside the Catholic tradition less consensus than ever before on what constitutes mysticism and contemplation.

Mysticism. In modern times mysticism has become increasingly difficult to define inasmuch as it continues to acquire new and divergent meanings. In 1899 William Ralph Inge catalogued no fewer than twenty-six different definitions of mysticism, but today this would represent only a partial listing.²² In fact, "mysticism" has become a catchall to cover almost any extraordinary experience outside normal waking consciousness. The term is certainly widely used and abused.

The words mysticism and mystical, like their cognate mystery, have evolved from the Greek root *my-* which indicates "that which is closed." They are akin to the words *myo*, which means "to be shut or close," and *myein*, which is "to close one's eyes and shut one's mouth." They are related as well to a number of other words that originally referred to the Greek mystery religions such as: *mysterion*, or "secret rite"; *mystes*, or the initiate in such rites; and *mystagogos*, or the one who sponsors the initiate.²³ No one can deny that the origins of the terms mysticism and mystical are found in these references to the secret rites of ancient mystery religions. Aware of this link, some modern historians and scholars proceed to the conclusion that Christian mysticism is a Hellenistic import.²⁴

Is "Mysticism" Christian?

Some prominent non-Catholic theologians have mistakenly characterized the Catholic

mystical tradition as the product of Oriental or Hellenistic contamination that is opposed to the prophetic biblical tradition of Judaism and Christianity. Mysticism is seen by them as a perversion of Christian faith and among the worst of Catholic pietistic practices.²⁵ Karl Barth's criticism is a clear example of this view. For Barth, mysticism is more despicable than even Pharisaism "because it lies so near to the righteousness of God, and it too is excluded--at the last moment."²⁶

Louis Bouyer counters this view by demonstrating that the transposition of the word "mystic" from Greek religion into Christianity "was merely of a literary character and never gave its name to any doctrine, still less to any particular religious experience [of Hellenism]." A study of the term mysticism, as it evolved in Christian literature, clearly shows that there is no dependence on Hellenistic religion for its theological content. The first Christian use of "mystic" (*mysterion*), instead of referring to the performance of any ritual, as in Greek mystery religions, makes reference to the Bible which is "the least Greek thing about Christianity."²⁷

While it is true that neither "mystic" nor "mystical" appears anywhere in the Bible, their cognate, was used by St. Paul to describe Christ and Christ's redeeming work as the fundamental reality of the Scriptures.²⁸ *Mysterion*, in this way, refers to the divine presence hidden in the sacraments, scripture, and the everyday life of the Church.²⁹ This quality of being hidden does not refer to the secrecy of a "mystery religion," but indicates the inexhaustible fullness of a life in Christ.³⁰ For many Christians today, this is the primary meaning of mystical.³¹ Bouyer points out:

Mysticism was never reduced by the Fathers to the level of a psychological experience, considered merely, or primarily, in its subjectivity. It is always the experience of an invisible objective world: the world whose coming the Scriptures reveal to us in Jesus Christ, the world into which we enter, ontologically, through the liturgy, through this same Jesus Christ ever present in the Church.³²

For the Church Fathers, the term mystical has three fundamental meanings or references, of which two have been mentioned above. First, it referred to the gracious self-gift of God in the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in Sacred Scripture, and second, it referred to this gift as it is made present in and through the sacraments of the Church. Mystical's third meaning indicated a knowledge of divine realities by which the faithful enter into a deeper, more intimate possession of those same realities. This third meaning clearly demonstrates the consistent direction of development this term has had.³³ This knowledge through experience of divine realities was eventually called "mystical theology."

Harvey Egan also affirms the essentially Christian character of Christian mysticism. He refutes Protestant critics by pointing out Christian mysticism's thoroughly Biblical foundations. "The Old Testament patriarchs and prophets are paradigms of those who experienced God as the Holy, as the tremendous and fascinating mystery."³⁴ The New Testament builds on this foundation as it expounds a Trinitarian mysticism of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. The life and teaching of Christ is a witness to his mystical union with the Father. Pauline mysticism, as all genuine Christian mysticism, is a witness to the promise of union with God as it is offered to us through Christ. Christian mysticism--truly Christian and mystical--always maintains this primary relation to Christ.³⁵

Pseudo-Dionysius and Mystical Theology. One of the most important contributions to the evolution of the word mystical comes from Pseudo-Dionysius (ca. fifth century), author of the classic *De mystica theologia*.³⁶ Dionysius's contribution in the history of Christian mysticism, both East and West, cannot be understated.³⁷ He brought together the major lines of Christian mystical theology which preceded him and became a major source for the theology which followed.³⁸ Denis Edwards, drawing on the work of Bouyer, suggests that Dionysius is,

more than likely, the key mystical theologian for understanding St. John of the Cross and his language.³⁹

"Mystical theology" for Dionysius is what future generations would call infused contemplation. He reveals that, in "mystical contemplation" (*peri na mystika theamata*), one must

abandon all the senses and the intellectual energies and everything that is sensible or intelligible, everything that is not and that is, and raise [oneself] in unknowing (*agnostos*) toward union, so far as this is permitted, towards what surpasses all essence and gnosis . . . towards the superessential ray of divine darkness.⁴⁰

In this statement three fundamental aspects of "mystical contemplation" are put forth: abandonment of all that is sensible and intelligible, entry into the darkness of unknowing, and movement toward divine union with God.⁴¹

Although he uses some concepts and language of Neo-Platonism, Dionysius develops the term *mystikos* along lines entirely contrary to Neo-Platonism.⁴² He shows himself as true "heir to the whole patristic tradition of the use of this word" as it refers to the scriptural and liturgical life of the Church.⁴³ Vladimir Lossky, in a view supported by Bouyer, emphatically argues against a Neo-Platonic interpretation of Dionysius. He writes: "Here is a Christian thinker disguised as a Neo-Platonist, a theologian very much aware of his task, which was to conquer the ground held by Neo-Platonism by becoming a master of its philosophical method."⁴⁴

Mysticism in St. John of the Cross. St. John of the Cross restricts the term *mistica* (mystical) to designate only that which is truly contemplation. He uses the word infrequently, a little over fifteen times in his collected works. For him, "contemplation" and "mystical theology" are synonyms as he points out: "Contemplation is also termed mystical theology, meaning the secret or hidden knowledge of God."⁴⁵ For John, growth in contemplative prayer is a mystical transformation. The term mystical is used sparingly by him and has a very specific

meaning which finds its place in a coherent and relatively consistent tradition of usage.

Unlike the contemporary understanding of mystical theology which defines it in terms of theory and doctrine, John views it in the classical sense where it is equated with mystical experience.⁴⁶ In the cases where "mystical" is not modifying "theology" for John, it is usually found modifying the terms "knowledge" or "wisdom."⁴⁷ John understands contemplation then as that "by which the intellect has a higher knowledge of God, [which] is called mystical theology, meaning the secret wisdom of God."⁴⁸

This work will follow John's restrictive use of the term "mystical" to refer only to that which is of contemplative prayer.

Contemplation and Contemplative Prayer

The term "contemplation" historically has been an ambiguous word. Authors in the past have often failed to distinguish the various meanings they intended by their different uses of "contemplation." A writer might use it chiefly to mean intellectual pondering in one place, in another it might refer to that which is actually mystical prayer without even a hint of distinction between them. Many authors, such as St. Bonaventure, use the term frequently without ever defining it at all.⁴⁹

Contemplation (*contemplatio*) comes from the Latin *contemplare*, which means "to gaze upon" or "to gaze attentively."⁵⁰ Contemplation in general refers to a mode of knowing "which involves the immediate presence of [an] object to the mind."⁵¹ The object is known apart from any discursiveness or abstraction. This cognition is described as "the highest mode of intellectual actualization" wherein the object, either material or spiritual, is apprehended as a "whole individual existent" without abstraction.⁵² Contemplation is experimental and connatural; it brings with it both delight and admiration of the object beheld. As a mode of

knowing, it is characteristic of aesthetic experiences of the beautiful, philosophical or scientific experiences of truth, theological understanding of God as arrived at through reason supported by faith, and mystical experiences of God.⁵³

When the term "contemplation" is used in Catholic theology it is usually restricted to that mode of knowing which has God as its object.⁵⁴ Most Catholic authors, past and present, would agree with the general description of contemplation as "loving knowledge of God."⁵⁵ Until the twelfth century, no serious effort was made to develop a consistent vocabulary of prayer and there were often different, and at times conflicting meanings, of the term contemplation.⁵⁶ Theologians often did not distinguish between "meditation" and "contemplation."⁵⁷ Although some tended to equate the two forms of prayer, other theologians developed a more precise view of contemplation as "an experimental union with God." This union could not be arrived at through meditation, but was possible only after one had gone beyond such discursive methods.⁵⁸

With the scholastic attempt to establish a more coherent theological vocabulary, there came a gradual refinement of the meaning of "contemplation." By the time St. John of the Cross was writing in the sixteenth century, contemplation had come to mean, for most spiritual writers, a special type of prayer, different from meditation, which was given by God to some souls advanced in the spiritual life. As the highest form of prayer, contemplation came to be understood as divine knowledge and love infused within the soul. Catholic writers today tend to agree that contemplation, in this strict sense, is what constitutes mysticism. True mystical experience is contemplative prayer, strictly speaking.

Despite the movement toward greater specificity in meaning, there has been continued debate among the different schools of theology over many of the fine points concerning

contemplative prayer. Beginning in the seventeenth century, after St. John of the Cross's death, sharp division arose over the question of whether or not there is an "acquired" contemplation.⁵⁹ This was a major issue until the Second Vatican Council. Since then, debate has died down, in part because the shift away from extrinsicist views of grace has left some previous concerns mute.⁶⁰

Catholic Confusion

Many Catholics today, in ignorance of the Church's long tradition of mystical/contemplative prayer, shy away from the subject of mysticism as something suspect, if not occult and sinister.⁶¹ Of those who do have some knowledge of this vital leaven within Catholic tradition, many continue to believe that contemplation is a very rare gift given to a few privileged souls. Some well-meaning people in the Church have actually contributed substantially to this state of affairs.⁶² During the period between the Reformation and the Second Vatican Council, not only were the laity often discouraged from contemplative prayer, but even monks and nuns in contemplative orders were at times instructed in supposedly "safer" forms of prayer than contemplation.⁶³ This was not wholly without reason either. For many pious Catholics, "mystical" had come to mean primarily extraordinary experience and wonder-working activity including visions, voices, levitation, and ecstasy.⁶⁴

It is understandable that ecclesiastical authorities would discourage any preoccupation with extraordinary phenomena. Not only is it difficult to discern the true source of such experiences, but too much attention given to them runs the risk of idolizing them even when they are gifts from God. Emphasis on such phenomena also breeds an atmosphere ripe for fakery and abuse. It was fear and ignorance, often conditioned by paternalism, however, that kept contemplative prayer in a quiet corner of the Church so that it went unnoticed by all but a few of

the faithful. It was viewed as a way off the beaten path to be traveled by a small number of persons specially chosen for a sublime taste of heaven this side of death. The rest--that is most people--would have to wait.

The blurring of boundaries between contemplative prayer and its epiphenomena might not have been so pervasive had the contemplative tradition in the Church been more carefully studied and more faithfully lived in the past. Even today there is widespread ignorance among Christians--clerics and religious as well as lay people--concerning this priceless tradition which is their own.⁶⁵

Transcendence and Alienation

Contemporary Interest in Mystical Experience

During the last three decades, in the Western world, interest in meditation, contemplation, and mystical experience has steadily grown. Among Christians, this interest is rooted in a number of important twentieth-century movements including the return to Christian sources, the Second Vatican Council, greater participation by the laity in the life of the Church, and a flourishing of contemporary spiritual literature as well as a recovery of spiritual classics.

This renewed interest in spirituality has been accompanied by a growing fascination with psychology, especially in its popular forms as it appears in self-help texts as well as in an array of therapies and pseudo-therapies. The common, everyday language of Westerners betrays the subtle, but pervasive influence of psychological idiom.

During the nineteen-sixties, while many Christians began to look afresh at their rich spiritual heritage, many others became disenchanted with Western religious traditions which they perceived as having become formal, empty, and removed from the concerns of everyday life.

While headlines proclaimed the "death of God," many began to look to the philosophical and religious traditions of the East for new sources of inspiration and guidance.⁶⁶

The decade of the seventies was a heyday for eastern teachers coming to the West. Gurus crisscrossed the Atlantic by jet to teach burgeoning groups of disciples and to found meditation and retreat centers in North America and Europe. In some cases, this activity amounted to little more than a convenient meeting between spiritually hungry souls with too much money and self-appointed avatars eager to relieve them of both burdens simultaneously. For others, it was a genuine spiritual meeting of qualified teachers and serious students. In the wake of eastern imports and new psychologies, many today are heralding the "dawn" of a "new age" where peace, love, and prosperity for all will at last begin to shine in this harried world.⁶⁷

This steady growth of interest, over the last three decades, in meditation, contemplation, and mystical experience has significantly affected modern culture in both positive and negative ways. It must be asked if this widespread interest indicates a corresponding depth of religious experience. One reply is that it does not indicate great depth of experience, but instead confusion over what should be a normal part of human development. There has been a great proliferation of misunderstanding and misappropriation of mystical experience and contemplative prayer in modern times.

"Interest Increases as Experience Declines"

On the surface, it would seem that the growing interest in religion and psychology witnessed to by the amazing number of meditation centers, pop therapies, new and newly arrived religious movements, and an abundance of pious spiritualities might also indicate an increase in authentic religious experience. However, Louis Dupré, in his book *Transcendent Selfhood*, asserts otherwise.⁶⁸

Published in 1976, this book describes the core problem of the contemporary cultural crisis. In this age of radical secularization, with its overemphasis on objectivity and its neglect of interiority, religion is "desacralized" and the possibilities for transcendence are obscured if not lost.⁶⁹ For Dupré, this "unprecedented secularization of the world" has converged with "an unprecedented emphasis on the transcendence of God" to radically reduce the opportunities for a "worldly experience of transcendence."⁷⁰ He believes that both pluralism and the movement toward ever greater specialization also contribute to a loss of any real sense of integration in life itself.⁷¹

The lively involvement by many today in "new age" movements as well as the growing participation in small religious and quasi-religious groups indicates what Dupré calls a contemporary struggle to "recapture the ancient wholeness of life."⁷² He writes:

Now, increasing numbers of our contemporaries have grown disenchanted with the secularist fragmentation of modern life. They are searching for a new synthesis and nostalgically recall how a sense of the sacred provided their ancestors with what their existence so sadly misses. Not surprisingly, interest increases as experience declines. . . . Instead of risking the leap into the great unknown which his ancestors so adventurously took, he cultivates self-expanding feelings. He may even share his religious enthusiasm with a privileged few and articulate it in symbols borrowed from ancient traditions. But by and large he is not committed to their content, and his concern remains primarily with his own states of mind.⁷³

Dupré believes that the possibilities for experiencing transcendence are not completely lost, but must be rediscovered. He contends that secularization has left the religious person no alternative but to turn inward. It is primarily within the core of the self that one now finds support for one's religiosity. "The center of human piety has moved inward where the self encounters its own transcendence."⁷⁴ He continues by stating:

Contemporary man feels a strong affinity with the mystics, not because he is more mystical than his ancestors, but because in the absence of outer resources of piety, he has no choice but to start from within, as did those who, however faithful to ritual and practice, favored the inner presence over the more worldly sacred. In this respect at

least the modern believer is justified in considering the mystic a kindred spirit.⁷⁵

For those who are religious, each soul is understood to hold within it a greatness that transcends it, because the center of the soul is recognized as the "sanctuary" of divine indwelling.⁷⁶ To lose touch with this "center" is not only to lose touch with God, but to lose sight of one's very self. It is to deny freedom and transcendence. One is "reduced to a 'substance,'" where the parameters of the self are circumscribed by the limits of this world.⁷⁷ This is the tendency of modernity: to define the self in terms that are less than the self, thereby reducing it to its lowest common denominator--that of immediate experience. But this erroneous denial of the transcendence of the self has generated a widespread sense of "unfulfillment" and "dehumanization."⁷⁸

If secularization has left people no alternative but to turn inward, this has positive as well as negative implications for Dupré. He insists that one's capacity for surpassing the world resides in the soul's ability to transcend itself.⁷⁹ An authentic return to the self holds the potential for a rediscovery of this transcendence. It is a mystical journey beyond ordinary consciousness "into the dark source of selfhood."⁸⁰ This is accomplished pre-eminently in the mystics, who, through their mystical experience, have "a unique and direct awareness of the self." Unlike ordinary self-awareness which is arrived at through indirect reflection upon one's acts, mystical knowledge is a "direct, explicit awareness of the self as such."⁸¹ Transcendence is an intrinsic part of the self. To deny this is to define the self as something less than human.⁸²

In the experience of transcendence one discovers that the center of the self is in fact the "sanctuary where God and the soul touch."⁸³ It is a realization that "the self is essentially more than a mere self, that transcendence belongs to its nature as much as the act through which it is immanent to itself."⁸⁴ Drawing on the mystic Jan Ruusbroec, Dupré describes the actualization of "self-transcendence" as a "mystical transformation" wherein the soul "surpasses

its createdness and participates actively in God's uncreated life."⁸⁵ Ruusbroec states that the person in this transformation eventually rises "above nature" and lives "in the essential unity of God's own being, at the summit of his spirit."⁸⁶ To fail to do this is to submit to being less than a self, less than human.⁸⁷

To Rediscover Transcendence

How can transcendence, in a world where it has been "desacralized" and "obscured," be rediscovered? Rediscovery requires that religion and theology meet the challenges of modernity (and now post-modernity) as they strive to shape a vision for the future where the possibilities for transcendence will be viable and available to those who yearn for it. Both the "unprecedented secularization of the world" and the "emphasis on the transcendence of God" must be responded to in ways that do not deny what is good either in secularization or in the recognition that God is transcendent as well as immanent. If the tendency of modernity is to define the self in the reductionistic terms of immediate experience, this must be corrected by a view of the self as both immanent in and transcendent of its immediate, sensual experience.

The possibilities for transcendence can only be discovered by a theology which is responsive to the particular milieu in which it is done. It is the task of spiritual theology to re-envision the process of human transformation in a way that remains true to tradition, and yet accommodates the real needs of people in the world today. This is accomplished in two steps: First, a recovery of the Christian mystical tradition can let those who were true to interiority, and who did not evacuate the symbols of faith of their power, show us the way to authentic transformation. Second, by bringing this contemplative tradition, which seeks to articulate the movement of faith, into dialogue with those elements of modernity which also deeply reveal the human person--contemporary science, philosophy, and art--we can forge a deeper understanding

of the human-in-transcendence that is nonreductive and open to God's transforming love.

This bifold movement is directed toward a synthetic view of the developing self that seeks to understand human development as an open-ended movement and a transformation unto God. No one discipline, whether it be psychology or theology, can adequately grapple with the challenge before us. What is demanded is a multidisciplinary, nonreductive investigation of human spiritual growth.

This work joins other efforts which attempt a nonreductive utilization of theology and psychology in an effort to form a synthetic model of human development.

Summary

It is certainly a temptation, as Louis Dupré points out, to consider mystical experience as somehow isolated from all other experience. "But if its vision is unique, its foundation is not. For the mystical experience merely brings to full awareness the common religious principle that the soul itself rests on a divine basis."⁸⁸ The divine basis of the soul is the transcendence of the self; it is the locus of God's indwelling. In this way the "core of the self" is, as Dupré says, "the sanctuary where God and the soul touch."⁸⁹ In a similar vein, St. John of the Cross declares: "Oh, then, soul, . . . so anxious to know the dwelling place of your (God), . . . now we are telling you that you yourself are His secret chamber and hiding place."⁹⁰

Contemplation is the journey into this secret sanctuary of God. It occurs when the everyday consciousness of the mind falls into silence and the reality of God's loving presence dawns within the soul's awareness, although, as St. John explains, this happens in a "hidden" way.⁹¹ "Contemplation is nothing else than a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God, which, if not hampered, fires the soul in the spirit of love."⁹² This "loving wisdom of God" both purges and illumines the soul as it readies it for divine union.⁹³

For Catholics, union with God is the divinely ordained term of all human growth and development. In this sense, the grace of contemplative transformation is the supernatural destiny--in this life or the life to come--of every soul that is open and responsive to God's self-gift in love. The mystics, as ones who actualized this goal, are pre-eminent guides on this contemplative journey. In the modern world, where transcendence has been "desacralized" and "obscured," they point the way to its rediscovery. They who were true to interiority and the symbols of faith provide flesh and blood models of transformation. A few, like St. John of the Cross, have encoded their wisdom in theological teaching.

Today, as during the lifetime of St. John of the Cross, there is a great deal of misunderstanding and misappropriation of mystical experience and contemplative prayer. This has been greatly exacerbated by much of contemporary psychological science which, because of its reductionistic tendencies, has failed to understand transcendence as an essential dynamic of human (spiritual) growth.

In a later chapter we will examine some of the ways in which contemporary scientific psychology has contributed to the problems caused by secularization and alienation. Some of these problems and confusions are, in general, named by Dupré, but can be readily identified with psychology's contribution to secularization. It will be argued that, even though secular psychology has significantly contributed to the loss of transcendence, it can, by entering into a nonreductive dialogue with theology, help to remedy this situation.

Even within Catholic Christianity, contemplation is often misunderstood if not misappropriated. St. John of the Cross provides, in his writings, a model of contemplative development and a doctrine of mysticism that can address many of these issues. John's work is a clear, critical theological and psychological account of human growth as it proceeds through

contemplative stages toward union with God. Of all the Roman Catholic mystics, with the exception of St. Teresa of Jesus perhaps, John's doctrine is most suited for dialogue with contemporary psychology because of his brilliant psychological account of contemplative life and development.

Problems with Understanding

St. John of the Cross

Even though St. John of the Cross, in this century, has come to be widely recognized as one of the foremost authorities on contemplative prayer and mystical experience, some scholars have questioned the legitimacy of his doctrine.⁹⁴ Both historical distance and the difficult nature of the subject no doubt have led to misunderstanding and misappropriation. Some problems in understanding and applying John's theology have to do with the distinction of dark night experiences from purely emotional reactions or breakdowns, the roles of the body and desire, and the sense of self and the nature of relations to others required in the practitioner of contemplative prayer.⁹⁵

Contemporary Psychological Theory

It is the position of this work that contemporary psychology can contribute to a better understanding of mystical experience and contemplative prayer. Reductionistic and dualistic positions in psychoanalysis, which negatively regard contemplative experience as a regression to primary narcissism and infantile wish-fulfillment, contrast with more open positions. Perhaps the most important contribution is psychoanalytic object relations theory, which is a broad revision of Freudian psychology.

Object relations theory, which has moved away from a physicalist model of mental

operations to study the nature of human relations, provides a nonreductive, interpersonal model for understanding religious experience and spiritual development. Raymond Studzinski stresses the "considerable promise" that this theory holds "for extending the dialogue between theology and psychoanalysis on a broad range of topics." Instead of focusing on instinctual drives, as does classical Freudian theory, object relations theory stresses the critical role of human relationship in early life development. Studzinski points out:

Central to object relations theory is a recognition of the impact of the interpersonal matrix into which the human person is born for supporting emerging senses of self and other. This attention to the pre-oedipal situation of human beings enables object relations theorists to point out elements of proto-religious experience in the first three years of life which later can be carried forward into more mature and integrated religious experience.⁹⁶

This revision of psychoanalytic theory, which sees human development as always occurring in a relational context, can provide insight into some basic questions concerning religious development: Is there continuity between normal development and mystical transformation? Can an analogy be drawn between human relations in general and the divine-human relation in contemplative prayer? How are God and the self imaged in prayer? Because object relations theory can provide insight into these issues, it is a promising source for interpretation of St. John of the Cross's theology of transformation.

Purpose of This Study

This study will analyze the dynamics of contemplative transformation as described by St. John of the Cross from the perspective of some current contributions of psychoanalytic object relations theory to the study of religious development and on that basis demonstrate the need for a relational model in the application of his theology. This model will show the centrality of relation and relational transformation in religious development. Furthermore, it will exemplify

the appropriateness of psychological analysis for engaging the surplus of meaning in John's writings.

A constructive-relational methodology will be employed in this analysis which allows both the theological and the psychological perspectives to speak to the primary data of religious development without either subsuming the other.⁹⁷ This constructive analysis will attempt to resolve some of the contemporary problems in understanding and applying John's theology of contemplative transformation by suggesting a relational model of the self through the stages of contemplative development. It will articulate prerequisites for this transformation and also make the dynamics of this development more comprehensible in relational terms. In doing this, it will make John's theology more accessible to the present-day Christian community.

Chapter one will explore the life and times of St. John of the Cross.

Chapter two will briefly expose St. John of the Cross's understanding of the nature and structure of the human person, especially as the subject of God's grace and love. This will form a foundation for exposing and analyzing John's theology of transformation from the perspective of psychoanalytic object relations theory in the final chapter.

Chapter three will very briefly examine some trends in contemporary psychology as they pertain to the study and practice of contemplative prayer.

Chapter four will then expose some current interpretations of psychoanalytic object relations theory that can provide insight into St. John of the Cross's theology of contemplative transformation.

Finally, the conclusion will examine transformation as both a process of contemplative development and the dynamic state of union with God that John also calls the spiritual marriage which is the summit of the mystical life. Both object relations theory and John's theology of

transformation will be brought together in a constructive dialogue in order to suggest a model of human contemplative development that incorporates both conventional and contemplative developmental theory. The conclusion will be suggestive rather than comprehensive and will raise issues that need to be addressed in further study that goes beyond the scope of this present work.

INTRODUCTION NOTES

¹ Thomas Merton calls St. John of the Cross "the Church's 'safest' mystical theologian." He asserts: "No other Christian mystical theologian builds on such clear dogmatic foundations, or with so powerful a framework of thought"; see The Ascent to Truth (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 17 and 121. E. Allison Peers, declares: "It is doubtful if a single [Christian mystic other than Augustine and Ruysbroeck] can be called his equal"; see Spirit of Flame: A Study of St. John of the Cross (Wilton, CT: Morehouse and Barlow, 1946), 123.

² Pius XI, Apostolic Letter, August 24, 1926, "declaring Saint John of the Cross a Doctor of the Universal Church"; cited in Merton, The Ascent to Truth, 18, 336, n. 6.

³ Early in this century, when critical editions of John's works were published, scholars began seriously to examine his writings. In 1924 Jean Baruzi published the erudite but controversial Saint Jean de la Croix et le problème de l'expérience mystique (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1924). The claim by Baruzi that John's work goes "to some extent beyond Christianity" and that, "through his thought's most secret movement" he joins rank with the NeoPlatonists, was enough to challenge some Catholic theologians to investigate earnestly the saint's long neglected works; quoted in Jacques Maritain, Distinguish to Unite, or the Degrees of Knowledge, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 8 and 9, n. 1. Maritain rebutted these charges by replying that "you have traced out a picture of the saint which the latter would have held in abomination and one whose glaring falsity, coupled with such great zeal is a subject of astonishment and sadness for us" (8-9). For support, Maritain cites Dom Philippe Chevallier, (no title) in Vie Spirituelle (May 1925); and R. Garrigou-Lagrange, (no title) in Vie Spirituelle (July-August 1925); and Roland Dalbiez, Saint Jean de la Croix d'après M. Baruzi (Paris: Éditions of Vie Spirituelle, 1927). Maritain was sufficiently impressed by St. John's mystical theology that he built his discussion of suprarational knowledge and the practice of contemplative prayer on the saint's doctrine. About the same time, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, in Christian Perfection and Contemplation According to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), used John to complement St. Thomas (as had Maritain) in his treatment of the life of Christian perfection. Ten years later, in 1948, Karol Wojtyła, who, in less than four decades, would become Pope John Paul II, completed his doctoral thesis Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce at the Angelicum in Rome under the directorship of Garrigou-Lagrange. This thesis, in a certain sense, has further legitimized the mystical doctrine of St. John of the Cross during John Paul II's pontificate since it has been translated, published, and widely read as an early, important work of a future Pope; see English translation Faith According to St. John of the Cross, trans. Jordan Aumann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985).

⁴ St. John was not unknown, however. He certainly had some influence on spirituality on the continent, in England, and later in America, before this century. Some of those he influenced are: (1) St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622); see Jordan Aumann, Christian Spirituality

in the Catholic Tradition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 212; also see Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, s.v. "France: VI. Le Grand Siècle de la Spiritualité Française et ses Lendemain," by Jacques Le Brun. (2) Dom Augustine Baker (1575-1641); see Baker's Holy Wisdom, ed. Serenus Cressy (London: Burn & Oates, 1876) in which he draws on St. John's doctrine; see also David Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition (New York: Harper & Bros., 1961), 175. (3) Francis Rous (1579-1669); see Louis Bouyer and others, A History of Christian Spirituality, vol. 3, Orthodox Spirituality and Protestant and Anglican Spirituality (New York: Seabury, 1969), 136-139. (4) Francis de Fénelon (1651-1715) who used St. John to defend his quietist teaching; see Henri Sanson, Saint Jean de la Croix entre Bossuet et Fénelon (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953). For Baker, Rous, and Fénelon see also Steven Lawrence Payne, "The Philosopher and the Mystic: An Analysis of Some Contemporary Philosophical Approaches to Mysticism in the Light of the Teachings of St. John of the Cross" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1982), 16, n. 4.

⁵ Ascent Prol. 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ This does not mean that his work is not scientific in the classical sense of this term. His work is certainly one of the most scientific of the Christian mystical masters.

⁸ Urban T. Holmes, A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 93.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sts. John of the Cross and Teresa of Jesus were not only collaborators in the Carmelite reform, but also intimate friends. Although St. John is often called "confounder" of the Discalced Carmelites with St. Teresa, this title is perhaps exaggerated. St. Teresa was the true genius and inspiration of the reform. As mystical writers, they are esteemed by many as complementary equals. While recognizing their differences in style and emphasis, it is noted that Teresa is more kataphatic, John, apophatic; see Harvey Egan, Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition (New York: Pueblo, 1984), 213.

¹¹ These phrases are quoted from a cassette tape catalogue advertisement entitled "Pathways to Mastership," Discoveries Through Inner Quests, (Ojai, CA: Gateways Institute, Winter-Spring 1988), 5.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ M.C. D'Arcy. The Nature of Belief, quoted in John Chapin, ed. The Book of Catholic Quotations (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), 628.

¹⁴ These misconceptions stand, not only in contradiction to authentic Christian mysticism, but of any genuine mystical tradition. See Harvey Egan, Christian Mysticism, 14-16; for a discussion of secondary mystical phenomena see Chap. 8, 303-59.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁶ Ibid., 16. These extraordinary psychosomatic phenomena include: stigmata, levitation, visions, voices, divine communications and revelations, miracles as well as charismatic phenomena such as prophecy, glossolalia, interpretation of tongues, faith healing, discernment of spirits, etc. All of these "may be erroneously identified with mysticism." Egan defines mysticism in line with Underhill and Poulain: "The Christian mystic claims to experience an immediate contact with God as Beloved that eventually dominates his entire life and being. Christian mysticism is the palpable loving union with the God of truth and love. The felt presence of a loving union with this God purifies, illuminates, and eventually transforms the mystic into truth and love themselves" (16).

¹⁷ M. David Knowles, The Nature of Mysticism (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), 10.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., 11-12.

²⁰ Louis Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood: The Rediscovery of the Inner Life (New York: Seabury, 1976).

²¹ A Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey, Mediaeval Mystical Tradition and Saint John of the Cross (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1954), 1.

²² Harvey D. Egan, What Are They Saying about Mysticism? (New York: Paulist, 1982), 1; see William Ralph Inge, Christian Mysticism (New York: Scribner's, 1899), 1.

²³ As part of the initiation, the initiate's eyes were blindfolded and mouth closed, before the secrets of the rites were revealed, and the secrets remained strictly forbidden to all who were uninitiated; see Pascal Parente The Mystical Life (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1946), 4-7; also see Gordon S. Wakefield, ed. The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), s.v. "Mysticism," by Andrew Louth.

²⁴ Louis Bouyer, in "Mysticism/An Essay on the History of the Word," in Understanding Mysticism, ed. Richard Woods (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1980), states: "A whole long line of historians of Christianity . . . have considered mysticism . . . to mean an invasion of Christianity by Hellenistic religiosity" (44).

²⁵ Egan, Christian Mysticism, 15-16.

²⁶ Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 109-10, quoted in Egan, Christian Mysticism, 16. Urban Holmes critiques the disaffirmation of Christian mysticism by some Protestant theologians by stating: "Mysticism, with its emphasis upon the receptive mode of consciousness, seemed far too feminine for the patriarchal culture of

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Albrecht Ritschl's (1822-1889) deep distrust of mysticism, which epitomizes the intellectual climate of Protestantism toward spirituality after Kant, is more a rationale for a masculine prejudice than an original argument. His understanding of classical Christian mysticism is a caricature, a 'straw man' to attack, not a critical analysis of the historical reality. But he spoke for many people" (A History of Christian Spirituality, 143).

²⁷ Louis Bouyer, "Mysticism," 44-45.

²⁸ Louis Bouyer, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Mysticism of the Fathers," chap. in Louis Bouyer, Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke, and Louis Cagnet, A History of Christian Spirituality, (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), vol. I, The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers, by Louis Bouyer, 407.

²⁹ Egan, What Are They Saying?, 2; see also Dictionary of Christian Spirituality, s.v. "Mysticism," by Andrew Louth.

³⁰ Bouyer, "Pseudo-Dionysius," 406-7; idem, "Mysticism," 43, 47.

³¹ Egan, What Are They Saying?, 2.

³² Bouyer, "Mysticism," 52-53.

³³ Bouyer describes the three meanings of *mystikos* for the Fathers as "biblical, liturgical, and spiritual," ("Mysticism," 53, see also 47; idem, "Pseudo-Dionysius," 405-10).

³⁴ Egan, Christian Mysticism, 19; Egan borrows language from Rudolf Otto whom he cites, The Idea of the Holy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-29.

³⁶ Bouyer calls Pseudo-Dionysius "the first and most influential of the great mystical theologians." ("Mysticism," 53). Both the realization that "Dionysius" is an allonym--first suggested by Lorenzo Valla (ca. sixteenth century)--and the gradual dissatisfaction by many with Dionysius's Neo-Platonic language have led to his demotion from his earlier position of authority. However, most of those who have taken his place as master bear the obvious mark of his influence. See Karlfried Froehlich, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century," Introduction III in Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works, trans. Colm Luibheid; with: a Foreword, notes and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem; a Preface by René Roques; and Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 33-46.

³⁷ See Bouyer, "Pseudo-Dionysius," 395-421.

³⁸ Bouyer, "Mysticism," 52; Bouyer adds: "His mystical theology, as he understands it himself, is his manner of recognizing the Christ, at the breaking of the bread, in all the Scriptures" (53).

³⁹ Denis Edwards, "The Dynamism in Faith: The Interaction Between Experience of God and Explicit Faith: A Comparative Study of the Mystical Theology of John of the Cross and The Transcendental Theology of Karl Rahner" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1979), 42. Although E. W. Trueman Dicken argues, in The Crucible of Love: A Study of the Mysticism of St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), that John never actually read Pseudo-Dionysius, he affirms the strong Dionysian content of the mystical writings John studied (323). St. John's first biographer, Jesús Maria Quiroga relates that as a student John made an in depth study of some mystical writers, "in particular St. Denis and St. Gregory" (Denis being an alternate form of Dionysius). From this study, he wrote a paper evaluating and denouncing a fraudulent form of contemplation, probably illuminism, that was prevalent in his time; quoted in Crisógono de Jesús, The Life of St. John of the Cross, trans. Kathleen Pond (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 38.

⁴⁰ Mystical Theology, 1.1.997A-1000A, quoted in Bouyer, "Pseudo-Dionysius," 412.

⁴¹ These three aspects, abandonment, unknowing, and union, would later figure prominently in the theology of St. John of the Cross; for "abandonment," see Ascent, prol. 3-4; 2.7.9-11; 3.6.3-4; 3.7.2; Night 2.4.1; 2.6.4; Canticle 13.4,6; Flame 1.20; 2.25; for "unknowing," see Ascent 1.4.5; 1.13.11; 2.4.4,6; 2.14.4; Night 2.5.3; 2.17; Canticle 1.18; 26.13,16-17; "Stanzas Concerning an Ecstasy Experienced in High Contemplation"; and for "union," see entries listed for "unión" in Luis de San José, Concordancias de las obras y escritos del doctor de la iglesia san Juan de la Cruz (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 1980), 1314-34.

⁴² Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1976), 29-31. E. Elorduy wrongly identifies Dionysius as the Neo-Platonist Ammonius Saccas, the teacher of Plotinus; see Elorduy, "¿Es Ammonius Sakkas el Seudo Areopagita?" in Estudios eclesíasticos 18 (1944), 501-47; cited in Bouyer who discounts this "improbable" hypothesis as "wholly gratuitous" and "unacceptable" ("Pseudo-Dionysius," 260-61). David G. Kennedy, in The Incarnation and Hilton's Spirituality (Salzburg, Austria: OLW Editions, 1982), suggests that Dionysius is merely a Neo-Platonist, and probably a heretic, disguised as a Christian (65-70).

⁴³ Bouyer, "Mysticism," 52.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Lossky, The Vision of God (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 121-28. Lossky (122) quotes Cesla Péra in support of this view; see Péra, "Denys le Mystique et la Theomachia," in Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques (1936), 62. Bouyer asserts that "his use of the word mysticos, together with what is most characteristic of him in this use, is incorporated in a purely Christian and ecclesiastical context" ("Pseudo-Dionysius," 406).

⁴⁵ Canticle 27.5.

⁴⁶ Egan, Christian Mysticism, 4.

⁴⁷ Ascent, 2.8.6; 2.24.4; Night, 2.5.1; 2.12.2,5; 2.12.2; 2.13.1; 2.17.2,6,8; 2.19; 2.20.6; Canticle, Prol. 1, 2, and 3; 27.5; 39.12.

⁴⁸ Ascent, 2.8.6.

⁴⁹ A Benedictine, Mediaeval Mystical Tradition, 6.

⁵⁰ John C. Traupman, "contempl-o, -are," in The New College Latin and English Dictionary, (New York: Bantam, 1971); and Dagobert D. Runes, ed. Dictionary of Philosophy (New York: Philosophical Library, n.d.), s.v. "Contemplation," by Ledger Wood.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Wilhelmsen, Cognition and Communication in John of the Cross (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 123.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Contemplation," by Jordan Aumann.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ A Benedictine, Mediaeval Mystical Tradition, 6. St. Thomas quotes St. Gregory who states that the aim of "the contemplative life is to cling with our whole mind to the love of God and our neighbor, and to desire nothing beside our Creator" (Gregory, Hom. ii in Ezech., PL 76,953; cited in Summa Theologica 2.2.180.1). All English quotations from the Summa are taken from The Great Books of the Western World: Thomas Aquinas I,II, vols. 19 & 20, The Summa Theologica, trans. by Fathers of The English Dominican Province, revised by Daniel J. Sullivan (Chicago, London, Toronto: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952). After this all references to the Summa Theologica will be abbreviated to Summa Theo.

⁵⁶ A Benedictine, Mediaeval Mystical Tradition, 6-7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7. According to this Benedictine author: "St. Bernard, and even St. Thomas, equate meditation and contemplation, so that it is not easy to see a difference." This is not completely accurate, however, because St. Thomas follows the distinction drawn by Richard of St. Victor, a distinction that this author credits Richard (but not Thomas) for making. St. Thomas relates: "Meditation would seem to be the process of reason from certain principles that lead to the contemplation of some truth; . . . contemplation regards the simple act of gazing (*intuitio*) on the truth; hence Richard says again that 'contemplation is the soul's clear and free dwelling (*contuitus*) upon the object of its gaze; meditation is the survey (*intuitio*) of the mind while occupied in searching for the truth.'" (Richard of St. Victor, De Grat. Contempl., I,3,4; PL 196, 66; 67; cited in Summa Theo., 2.2.180.3.

⁵⁸ A Benedictine, Mediaeval Mystical Tradition, 9. Here the author describes the teaching of Bl. Guigo the Carthusian (1145).

⁵⁹ For attempts to resolve the controversy over "acquired contemplation" see Roland

Dalbiez, "La controverse de la contemplation acquise," in Technique et contemplation. Etudes Carmélitaines (Desclée de Brouwer, 1949), 81-145; Also see Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, "Acquired Contemplation," in St. John of the Cross: Doctor of Divine Love and Contemplation (Westminster, MD: Newman Bookshop, 1946), 100-202. These are cited by James Arraj who argues against the possibility of an "acquired contemplation" according to the teaching of St. John of the Cross, Christian Mysticism in Light of St. John of the Cross and Dr. C. G. Jung (Chiloquin, OR: Tools for Inner Growth, 1986), 61-103, 160-175 passim.

⁶⁰ Roger Haight, in The Experience and Language of Grace (New York: Paulist, 1979), writes that from the extrinsicist view, "the supernatural order of revelation and grace is conceived of as being imposed on human existence by an external decree of God, completely outside nature, outside history, outside human experience" (124); see also Karl Rahner, "Nature and Grace," in More Recent Writings, trans. by Kevin Smyth, vol. 4, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1982), 165-188; Gregory Baum, Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience (New York: Crossroad, 1979), 3-36. From this perspective, the grace of contemplation was thought by some to be a superadded grace given to souls who were specially selected by God to receive it. To those who were not given this special grace, an acquired contemplation was possible since it could be arrived at with no special help from God over and above the normal life of grace. A major shift away from this view is evidenced in Heribert Fischer's article "Mysticism," in the Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, ed. by Karl Rahner (New York: Crossroad, 1982). Fischer writes: "From the theological point of view, mysticism may be regarded as consciousness of the experience of uncreated grace as revelation and self-communication of the triune God. . . . [God] divinizes man according to his own likeness, by inherent grace, not by imparting created signs or through a representative, but by his own personal presence. . . . Mysticism is not confined to a privileged few" (1004-05).

⁶¹ This is not surprising when, in the movies, on T.V., and in popular literature, the term "mystical" like the word "supernatural" has come to refer precisely to those things having to do with mysterious phenomena or the occult.

⁶² David Knowles writes: "One only has to glance at the writings of Abbot Cuthbert Butler, in the editions of the 1920's and 1930's, to see the extent of 'theological agnosticism' on the subject even in a scholar long interested in the subject, whose findings and conclusions on the mystics have found acceptance at the highest level of Catholic and non-Catholic scholarship" (12).

⁶³ This has been related to the author himself by several religious, some of whom belong to "contemplative orders."

⁶⁴ Catholic miracle workers like Theresa Neumann and Padre Pio have been described as great "mystics" largely because of such phenomena.

⁶⁵ In what Sunday school class, or what homily, does one encounter anything about contemplative prayer? Other than to books, where are lay Catholics to go to learn about the rich mystical heritage to which they are rightful heirs? Without adequate catechesis, it is no wonder that there is ignorance and distortion of the mystical tradition. Harvey Egan reflects that he "had

never heard a sermon, a homily, a lecture, or a catechism class on the deep and simple prayer of the Christian mystics until I had entered the Society of Jesus" (Christian Mysticism, xiv). Unfortunately, this is the experience of most Christians.

⁶⁶ For a short history of eastern religions coming West see Robert S. Ellwood, ed. "Introduction," in Eastern Spirituality in America (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 435-43. Also see Robert S. Ellwood, Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Marvin Henry Harper, Gurus, Swamis, and Avatars: Spiritual Masters and Their American Disciples (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972). For an insightful critique by one who "turned east" and returned see Harvey Cox, Turning East: The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977).

⁶⁷ There seems to be a loose identification and collaboration among various groups whose members shop in the supermarkets of contemporary spirituality. Labels such as the "Human Potential Movement" and the "New Age Movement" have been adopted by many to describe the hoped for new age which is believed to have begun. See Otto Friedrich, "New Age Harmonies: A Strange Mix of Spirituality and Superstition is Sweeping Across the Country," in Time (December 7, 1987), 62-72. Also see any issue of the Washington, D.C. quarterly publication "Pathways" for a veritable potpourri of therapies and religious centers.

⁶⁸ The concept of transcendence as used in this work will follow Dupré's own understanding which is captured in the following thoughts: "To be a self is by its very nature to be more than the actuality of one's being, more than what can be described in purely immanent terms. . . . Spiritual men of all ages have known self to be even more fundamentally determined by what surpasses it altogether" (vii-viii). For Dupré, this "ultimate reality" which surpasses the human altogether, but which is immanent within each person, is designated by the theological term "God" (viii). "The very purpose of the mystical journey is to move beyond [ordinary] consciousness into the dark source of self-hood" in the experience of transcendence (92).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28-29. He writes: "On rare occasions the transcendent still manifests itself in the world to most believers. But such hierophanies are definitely not typical of the religious mentality of our age."

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷¹ Pluralism in itself is not so much the problem. Honest and open encounters of one healthy religious tradition with another can actually enrich and strengthen both. The problem with our culture today is that authentic religious practice is being stifled by rigidly narrow, materialistic philosophical systems which have been on the ascendancy. Denial of transcendence, not the relativism which occurs in pluralistic cultures, is the fundamental problem we face today. Capitalism and Marxism are the dominant philosophies of the "first" and "second" worlds. Religion, while claiming large numbers of nominal adherents, plays a radically reduced role in the lives of these people. Instead, it is the acquisition and defense of economic power that consumes most of the energy and resources of capitalist and communist nations.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁷³ Ibid., 24 & 26; (emphasis added). Dupré adds: "Much of what passes for a revival of the sacred in our age is only marginally religious."

⁷⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 93.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 94.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁸¹ Ibid., 102.

⁸² Ibid., 104. (What Dupré does not attempt to do in this book is to show how mysticism can break out of the radical individualism of modernity. This can be accomplished by rooting mysticism in its ecclesial context from which it must necessarily grow.)

⁸³ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Ruusbroec calls this transformation "overformation."

⁸⁶ Ibid., 104, 118.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁸ Dupré, 93.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Canticle 1.7.

⁹¹ Canticle 11.3. The contemplative awareness of God is like darkness, for it transcends all created reality. Ascent 2.8.6-7; also Ascent 2.19.5; Canticle 14 & 15.16; and Flame 3.49.

⁹² Night 1.10.6.

⁹³ "Insofar as infused contemplation, is loving wisdom of God, it produces two principal effects within the soul: it prepares the soul for the union with God through love by both purging and illuminating it" (Night 2.4.1).

⁹⁴ At one point Dom John Chapman was inclined to reject St. John of the Cross and called him a "Buddhist." See Dom Roger Hudleston, ed. The Spiritual Letters of Dom John Chapman, O.S.B. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1935), 269; cited by Harvey Egan, who says he later rescinded this position and even came to prefer John to Teresa (Christian Mysticism, 399, n. 25).

⁹⁵ Walter T. Stace, in his book The Teachings of the Mystics (New York: New American Library, 1960), discounts the dark night as nothing more than a type of emotional

disturbance (185-86). Marilyn May Mallory, in Christian Mysticism: Transcending Techniques (Assen and Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1977), claims that John's teaching is corrupted by a dualism that divides the body against the soul and that he views all human desire as sinful and in need of annihilation (see chapter one). Paul Elmer More contends, in Christian Mysticism (London: n.p., 1932), that "the law of theistic mysticism (according to St. John of the Cross) is: In order to love God thou shalt not love thy neighbor" (73-74); quoted in Peers, Spirit of Flame, 163.

⁹⁶ New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 18, 1978-88 supplement, s.v. "Object Relations Theory," by Raymond Studzinski.

⁹⁷ William R. Rogers, "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Moral and Religious Development: A Critical Overview," in Toward Moral and Religious Maturity: The First International Conference on Moral and Religious Development (Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett, 1980).