

Man and Religion, Aldous Huxley

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I would like to start by reading two or three lines from the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Revelation. This chapter contains a description of the New Jerusalem, and it ends like this: 'and the street of the city was pure gold as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it' (Revelation 21:21-2).

In the same way there was no temple—no religion, in the ordinary sense of the word—in Eden. Adam and Eve didn't require the ordinary apparatus of religion because they were in a position to hear the voice of the Lord as he walked 'in the garden in the cool of the day' (Genesis 3:8).

When we read the Book of Genesis, we find that religion, in the conventional sense of the word, began only after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, and that the first record of it is the building of the two altars by Cain and Abel. This was also the beginning of the first religious war. Cain was a husbandman—a vegetarian, like Hitler—and Abel was a herdsman and a meat eater. They were divided passionately on their different occupations, and this gave them a kind of religious absoluteness, with the sad result which we all know.

In the third chapter of Genesis, after the birth of Seth, who was Adam's third son, there is mention of a new phase in religion. The verse reads: 'And to Seth, to him also was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord' (Genesis 4:26). This evidently represents the beginning of what may be called the conceptual, verbalized side of religion.

These two sets of references illustrate very clearly that there are two main kinds of religion. There is the religion of immediate experience—the religion, in the words of Genesis, of hearing the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, the religion of direct acquaintance with the divine in the world. And then there is the religion of symbols, the religion of the imposition of order and meaning upon the world through verbal or non-verbal symbols and their manipulation, the religion of knowledge about the divine rather than direct acquaintance with it. These two types of religions have always existed, and we shall discuss them both.

Let us begin with religion as the manipulation of symbols to impose order and meaning upon the flux of experience. In practice we find that there are two types of symbol-manipulating religions: the religion of myth and the religion of creed and theology. Myth is obviously a kind of non-logical philosophy; it expresses in the form of a story or, very often, in the form of some visual image, or even in the form of a dance or a complicated ritual, some generalized feeling about the nature of the world and of man's experience in regard to it. Myth is unpretentious, in the sense that it doesn't claim to be strictly true. It is merely expressive of our feelings about experience. But although it is non-logical philosophy, it is often very profound philosophy, precisely because it is non-logical and non-discursive.

It permits the bringing together in the story, the image, the picture, the statue, or the dance of a number of the disparate and even apparently incommensurable or incompatible parts of our experience. It brings them

together and shows them to be an indissoluble whole, exactly as we experience them. In this sense it is the most profound kind of symbolism. For example, the myth of the great Mother, which runs through all of the earlier religions, shows the mother as the principle of life, of fecundity, of fertility, of kindness and nourishing compassion; but at the same time she is the principle of death and destruction. In Hinduism, Kali is at once the infinitely kind and loving mother and the terrifying Goddess of destruction, who has a necklace of skulls and drinks the blood of human beings from a skull. This picture is profoundly realistic; if you give life, you must necessarily give death, because life always ends in death and must be renewed through death. Whether such myths are true or not is quite an irrelevant question; they are simply expressive of our reactions to the mystery of the world in which we live.

We find earlier non-logical mythical religions very frequently associated with what have been called spiritual exercises, but which are in fact psychophysical exercises. By use of chant and dance and gesture, they get a genuine kind of revelation. The physical tensions which are built up by our anxious and egocentred life are released. This release through physical gestures constitutes what the Quakers called an 'opening' through which the profounder forces of life without and within us can flow more freely. It is very interesting to see even within our own tradition how this occasional letting go for religious purposes has had profound and very salutary influences. The Quakers were called 'Quakers' for the simple reason that they quaked. The meetings of the early Quakers very frequently ended with the greater part of the assembly indulging in the strangest kind of violent bodily movements, which were profoundly releasing and which permitted, so to speak, the influx of the spirit.

As a matter of history the Quakers, as long as they quaked, had the greatest degree of inspiration and were at the height of their spiritual power. We have the same phenomenon in the Shakers, and we see it in the contemporary religious movement called Subud—the coming upon the assembled people of curiously violent and involuntary physical movements, which produce a release and permit for many people the influx and the flowing through of deeply powerful spiritual forces. Here I would like to cite the eminent French Islamic scholar Emil Dermenghem, who says that modern Europe—of course modern Europe includes modern America—is almost alone in having renounced out of bourgeois respectability and Gallic Puritanism the participation of the body in the pursuit of the spirit. In India as in Islam, chants, rhythms, and dance are spiritual exercises. But only small corners of our tradition have illustrated, through this permission to use the body, that the spirit may be left more free, a fact which is so manifestly clear when we study the history of the Oriental religions.

Religion as a system of beliefs is a profoundly different kind of religion, and it is the one which has been the most important in the West. The two types of religion—the religion of direct acquaintance with the divine and the religion of a system of beliefs—have co-existed in the West, but the mystics have always formed a minority in the midst of the official symbol-manipulating religions, and the relationship has been a rather uneasy symbiosis. The members of the official religion have tended to look upon the mystics as difficult, trouble-making people. They have even made puns about the name, calling mysticism 'mysti-schism'—a foggy, antinomian doctrine, which doesn't conform easily to authority. On their side the mystics have spoken not exactly with contempt—they don't feel contempt—but with sadness and compassion about those who are devoted to the symbolic religion, because they feel that the pursuit and the manipulation of symbols is simply incapable in the nature of things of

achieving what they regard as the highest end, the union with God. William Blake, who was essentially a mystic, was apt to express himself in rather violent terms about those he disagreed with. He has a little couplet where he says, 'Come hither, my boy, tell me what thou seest there'—and the boy answers, 'A fool tangled in a religious snare.'

Within the tradition of Western Christianity, the Mystics have been assured of a tolerated position by the perpetuation at an early stage in Christian development of what is called a pious fraud. About the sixth century there appeared a series of Christian Neoplatonic volumes under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, who was the first disciple of St Paul in Athens. These volumes were taken to be almost of apostolic value, inasmuch as Dionysius was the first disciple of St Paul. In point of fact the books were written either at the end of the fifth or at the beginning of the sixth century in Syria. The unknown author merely signed the name of Dionysius the Areopagite to them in order to give them a better hearing among his fellows.

He was a Neoplatonist who had adopted Christianity and who combined the doctrine of Neoplatonic philosophy and the practices of ecstasy with Christian doctrines. The pious fraud was extremely successful. The book was translated into Latin in the ninth century by the philosopher Scotus Erigena, and thereafter it entered into the tradition of the Western Church and acted as a kind of bulwark and guarantee for the mystical minority within the Church. It was not until recent times that the fraud was recognized for what it was. Meanwhile, in one of the odd, ironical quirks of history, this curious bit of forgery played a very important and very beneficent part in the Western Christian tradition.

We have to consider now the relationship between the religion of immediate experience and the religion primarily concerned with symbols. In this context there is a very illuminating remark by Abbot John Chapman, a Benedictine who was one of the great spiritual directors of the twentieth century. His spiritual letters are works of great interest; he was obviously a man who had had a profound mystical experience himself and was able to help others along this same path. He remarks in one of his letters on the great difficulty of reconciling—not merely uniting—mysticism and Christianity:

St John of the Cross is like a sponge full of Christianity: you can squeeze it all out and the full mystical theory remains. Consequently, for fifteen years or so I hated St John of the Cross and called him a Buddhist. I loved St Theresa and read her again and again. She is first a Christian, only secondarily a mystic. Then I found that I had wasted fifteen years so far as prayer was concerned.

By 'prayer' in this context Abbot Chapman did not of course mean petitionary prayer. He was speaking about what is called the prayer of quiet, the prayer of waiting upon the Lord in a state of alert passivity and permitting the deepest elements within the mind to come to the surface. Dionysius the Areopagite, in *Mystical Theology* and his other books, had constantly insisted upon the fact that in order to become directly acquainted with God, rather than merely to know about God, one must go beyond symbols and concepts. These are actually obstacles, according to Dionysius, to the immediate experience of the divine. Empirically this has been found to be true by all the spiritual masters, of both the Western and the Oriental worlds. A striking example comes from the writings of Jean Jacques Olier, who was a very well-known spiritual director of the seventeenth century, a product of the Counter

Reformation and of the revival of mystical theology in France at the time of Louis XIII.

He wrote: 'The holy light of faith is so pure that special illuminations are impure compared with it, even thoughts of the saints or of the Blessed Virgin or of Jesus Christ in His Humanity are alike hindrances to the sight of the pure God.' This seems, particularly from a Counter Reformation theologian, a very strange and daring statement, and yet it does represent a perfectly clear restatement of what had been said again and again by the mystics of the past. What Olier calls 'the sight of the pure God' is, psychologically speaking, the mystical experience. This is one thing, and belief in propositions about God, belief in dogmas and theological statements and liturgies inspired by these statements, is something entirely different.

In this context I would like to quote the words of an eminent contemporary Dominican theologian, Father Victor White, who is a particularly interesting writer, as he is both a theologian and a psychotherapist who worked a great deal with Jung, and as he is very well acquainted with modern psychological theories and practice. He says:

Freud's conception of religion as a universal neurosis [is not] entirely without truth and value—once we have understood his terminology. We must remember that for him, not only religion, but dreams, unbidden phantasies, slips of the tongue and pen—everything short of an unrealizable idea of complete consciousness is somehow abnormal and pathological (cf. Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, passim). But theology will also confirm that religion, in the sense of creeds and external cults, arises from man's relative unconsciousness, from his incomprehension of—and disharmony with—the creative mind behind the universe, and from his own inner conflicts and divisions. Such religion, in theological language, is the result of man's fall from original innocence and integrity, his remoteness on this earth from Divine vision.

The religion of direct experience of the divine has been regarded as the privilege of a very few people. I personally don't think this is necessarily true at all. I think that practically everyone is capable of this immediate experience, provided he sets about it in the right way and is prepared to do what is necessary. We have simply taken for granted that the mystics represent a very small minority among a huge majority who must be content with the religion of creeds and symbols and sacred books and liturgies and organizations.

Belief is a matter of very great importance. One of the great best sellers of recent years is called *The Power of Belief*. This is a very good title, because belief is a very great source of power. It has power for the believer himself and permits the believing person to exercise power over others. It does in a sense move mountains. Belief, like any other source of power, can be used for both evil and good, and just as well for evil as for good. We have seen in our very own time the terrifying spectacle of Hitler very nearly conquering the entire world through the power of belief in something which was not only manifestly untrue but profoundly evil.

This tremendous fact of belief, which is so constantly cultivated within the symbol-manipulating religions, is essentially ambivalent. The consequence is that religion as a system of beliefs has always been an ambivalent force. It gives birth simultaneously to humility and to what the medieval poets call the 'proud prelate', the ecclesiastical tyrant. It gives birth to the highest form of art and to the lowest form of

superstition. It lights the fires of charity, and it also lights the fires of the Inquisition and the fire that burned Servetus in the Geneva of Calvin. It gives birth to St Francis and Elizabeth Fry, but it also gives birth to Torquemada and Kramer and Springer, the authors of the *Malleus Maleficorum*, the great handbook of witch hunters published about the same year Columbus discovered America. It gives birth to George Fox, but it also gives birth to Archbishop Laud. This tremendous force of religion as a theological system has always been ambivalent precisely because of the strange nature of belief itself and because of the strange capacity of man, when he embarks on his philosophical speculations, for coming up with extremely strange and fantastic answers.

Myths, on the whole, have been much less dangerous than theological systems because they are less precise and have fewer pretensions. Where you have theological systems it is claimed that these propositions about events in the past and events in the future and the structure of the universe are absolutely true; consequently reluctance to accept them is regarded as a rebellion against God, worthy of the most undying punishment. And we see that in fact these systems have, as a matter of historical record, been used as justification for almost every act of aggression and imperialistic expansion. There is hardly a single large-scale crime in history which has not been committed in the name of God. This was summed up many centuries ago in the hexameter of Lucretius: 'Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum' (such great evils was religion able to persuade men to commit). He should have added, 'Tantum religio potuit suadere bonorum' (such great goods also could it persuade men to commit). Nevertheless, the good has had to be paid for by a great deal of evil.

This strife-producing quality of religion as a system of theological symbols has brought about not only the jihads and crusades of one religion against another, it has produced an enormous amount of internal friction within the same religion. The odium theologicum, the theological hatred, is notorious for its virulence, and the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were of a degree of ferocity which passes all belief. In this context I think we should remember that we are accustomed now to say, 'O, what great evils Naturalism as a philosophy has brought upon the world!'—but in point of historical fact, supernaturalism has brought about just as great evils and perhaps even greater ones. We must not allow ourselves to be carried away by this kind of rhetoric.

I mentioned before the extraordinary capacity of philosophers and theologians to produce fantastic ideas which they then dignify with the name of dogma or revelation. As an example of this I would like to cite a few facts about one of the fundamental ideas in Christianity, the idea of the atonement. Such information as I have here is based upon the excellent article, a long essay on the subject, in Hastings's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. The essay is by Dr Adams Brown, who at one time was professor of theology at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. He has set forth the history of this doctrine very lucidly and summed it up very cogently at the end. Let me quickly go through it, because it illustrates clearly the dangers of symbol-manipulating religion.

In the earliest period of Christianity, Christ's death was regarded either as a covenant sacrifice comparable to the sacrifice of the pascal lamb in the Jewish religion or as a ransom, exactly comparable to the price paid by a slave to obtain his freedom or to the price paid by a war prisoner for his release. Both of these ideas are hinted at in the

Gospels. Later on, in post-Gospel theology, there came the notion that Christ's death was the bloody expiation for original sin. This was based on the very ancient idea that any wrongdoing required expiation by suffering on the part of the sinner himself or on the part of a substitute for the sinner. In the Old Testament we read that David's sin in making a census of his people was punished by a plague which killed seventy thousand of his subjects but didn't kill David.

In Patristic times we find a profound difference on this subject between the Greek theologians and the Latin theologians. The Greek theologians were not primarily concerned with the death of Christ; they were concerned with life, and the death was so to speak a mere incident in the life. Their view of the atonement was that it existed not to save man from guilt but to save him from the corruption into which he had fallen after the fall of Adam and Eve. Consequently the life was more important than the death. Irenaeus says that Christ came and lived the life of man in order that man might live a life comparable to his—and that this was the saving quality of the atonement.

Among the Latin fathers the stress was entirely different. Here the idea was that man was being redeemed, not from corruption primarily, but from guilt. He was redeemed from the punishment which had to be inflicted upon him for the sin of Adam. Whereas the Greek theologians regarded God as primarily Absolute Spirit, the Latin theologians regarded God as Governor and Lawgiver, with the mind of a Roman lawyer (their theology tends to be in legalistic terms). The doctrine was developed slowly, but we get in St Augustine a continual stress on the horror of original sin and on the idea that guilt is fully inherited by all members of the human race, so that an unbaptized child must necessarily go directly to hell.

This view was developed over the centuries, and there was a long period of discussion about the question of the ransom. To whom was the ransom of the death of Christ paid? There were many theologians who insisted that the ransom was paid to Satan, that God had handed the world over to Satan but wished to take it back again and had to pay this enormous price to Satan for the privilege. On the other hand, there were theologians who insisted that the ransom was paid to satisfy the honour of God. God had been infinitely offended, and the only reparation for an infinite offence was an infinite satisfaction, the death of the God-man, Christ.

It was the latter view which prevailed in the more or less official doctrine formulated by St Anselm in the twelfth century. Anselm said that the death of this infinite Person produced a surplus of satisfaction, which constituted a kind of fund of merit that could be used for the absolution of sins. It was on the basis of this doctrine that the medieval church enlarged the practice of selling indulgences, which led in due course to the Reformation.

In the Reformation we find Calvin, who felt that retributive justice was an essential part of the character of God and that Christ was actually bearing the punishment which was due to man. 'The Christ'—these are the words he used—'bore the weight of the Divine anger ... and experienced all the signs of an angry and avenging God.' These views were modified by the Arminians and the Socinians and by Hugo Grotius in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and have given place gradually to a more ethical and spiritual view in modern Protestantism.

Now I would like to quote the passage in which Professor Adams Brown sums up the whole of this very strange history:

The atoning character of Christ's death is found now in its penal quality as suffering, now in its ethical character as obedience. It is represented now as a ransom to redeem man from Satan, now as a satisfaction due to the honour of God, now as a penalty demanded by His justice. Its necessity is grounded now in the nature of things, and, again, is explained as a result of an arrangement due to God's mere good pleasure or answering his sense of fitness. The means by which its benefits are mediated to men are sometimes mystically conceived as in the Greek theology of the Sacrament; sometimes legally, as in the Protestant formula of imputation; and, still again, morally and spiritually, as in the more personal theories of recent Protestantism. Surveying differences so extreme, one might well be tempted to ask, with some recent critics, whether indeed we have here to do with an essential element in Christian doctrine, or simply with a survival of primitive ideas whose presence in the Christian system can constitute a perplexity rather than aid to faith. But the differences we have discussed are not greater than may be paralleled in the case of every other Christian doctrine.

The reasons for these differences even in particular doctrines are to be sought in fundamental differences in man's conception of God and of His relation to the world. Where God is thought to be Absolute Spirit the atonement is conceived as the Greek theologians conceived it; in the theology of Roman Catholicism and earlier Protestantism, God is conceived primarily as governor and judge and legal phraseology seems a natural expression of religious faith; where ethical doctrines come to the fore, as in modern views of the atonement, a kind of ethical and spiritual language is used. This confusion indicates very clearly the extraordinary difficulties we are up against when we embark upon a systematic theologization of experience into conceptual and symbolic terms. The advantages which certainly accrue from accurate theological expression seem to me offset by the very great disadvantages which the history of organized religion makes evident.

What has been the attitude of the proponent of religion as immediate experience towards the religion expressed in terms of symbols? Meister Eckhart, one of the great mystics of the Middle Ages, expresses it in an extreme form: 'Why dost thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue.' Here we have to make a short digression on the use of the word 'truth' in religious literature. The word 'truth' is used in at least three common senses. It is used synonymously with Reality when we say 'God is Truth', which means that God is the Primordial Fact. It is used in the sense of immediate experience, as in the fourth Gospel, where it is said that God must be worshipped 'in Spirit and in Truth' (John 4:24), meaning with an immediate apprehension of Divine Reality. Finally, it is used in the common sense of the word, as correspondence between symbolic propositions and the fact to which they refer. Eckhart was a theologian as well as a mystic and he would not have denied that truth in the third sense was to some degree possible in theology. He would have said that some theological propositions were certainly truer than others. But he would have denied that there was any possibility of the final end of man, the union with God—truth in the second sense—being achieved by means of manipulating theological symbols.

This insistence on the inefficacy of symbolic religion for the ultimate purpose of union with God has been stressed by all the Oriental religions. We find it in the literature of Hinduism, in the literature of Mahayana Buddhism, of Taoism, and so on. Hui-neng says that the truth has never been preached by the Buddha, seeing that one has to realize it within oneself, and that what is known of the teaching of Buddha is not the teaching of Buddha, which has to be an interior experience. Then we

get a paradoxical phrase: 'What is the ultimate teaching of the Buddha? You won't understand it unless you have it.' The author goes on to say, 'Don't be so ignorant as to mistake the pointing finger for the moon at which you are pointing,' and he says that the habit of imagining that the pointing finger is the moon condemns all efforts to realize oneness with Reality to total failure. There were even Zen masters who prescribed that anybody who used the word 'Buddha' should have his mouth washed out with soap because it was so remote from the goal of immediate experience.

This has been the usual attitude of mystics at all times, but above all in the Orient, where philosophy has been in one respect profoundly different from Western Philosophy. Oriental philosophy has always been what I may call a kind of transcendental operationalism; it starts with somebody doing something about the self and then, from the experience attained, going on to speculate and theorize about the significance of the experience. In contrast, all too frequently Western philosophy, above all modern Western philosophy, is pure speculation based on theoretical knowledge that ends only in theoretical conclusions. However, there have been many exceptions to this rule in the West, above all among the mystics, who have insisted just as strongly as their Oriental counterparts on the necessity for direct experience and on the inefficacy of symbols and of ordinary discursive thought. St John of the Cross says categorically, 'Nothing that the imagination may conceive or the understanding comprehend, in this life, is or can be a proximate means of union with God.'

The same idea is expressed by the great Anglican mystic of the eighteenth century, William Law:

To find or know God in reality by any outward proofs, or by anything but by God Himself made manifest and self-evident to you, will never be your case either here or hereafter. For neither God, nor heaven, nor hell, nor the devil, nor the flesh, can be any otherwise knowable in you or by you but their own existence and manifestation in you. And all pretended knowledge of any of these things, beyond and without this self-evident sensibility of their birth within you, is only such knowledge of them as the blind man hath of the light that hath never entered into him.

What is the mystical experience? I take it that the mystical experience is essentially the being aware of and, while the experience lasts, being identified with a form of pure consciousness, of unstructured transpersonal consciousness which lies, so to speak, upstream from the ordinary discursive consciousness of everyday. It is a non-egotistic consciousness, a kind of formless and timeless consciousness, which seems to underlie the consciousness of the separate ego in time.

Why should this sort of consciousness be regarded as valuable? I think for two reasons. First, it is regarded as valuable because of the self-evident sensibility of values. As William Law would say, it is intrinsically valuable, just as the experience of beauty is intrinsically valuable, but much more so. Second, it is valuable because as a matter of empirical experience it does bring about changes in thought and character and feeling which the experiencer and those about him regard as manifestly desirable. It makes possible a sense of unity and solidarity with the world. It brings about the possibility of that kind of unjudging love and compassion which is stressed so much in the Gospel, where Christ says, 'Judge not that ye be not judged' (Matthew 7:1). St Catherine of Siena, on her death-bed, stressed this point with great force: 'For no reason whatsoever ought we to judge the action of creatures or their motives. Even when we see that it is actual sin we ought not to pass

judgment on it, but have holy and sincere compassion and offer it up to God with humble and devout prayer.'

The mystic is made capable of this kind of life. He is able to understand organically such portentous phrases, which for the ordinary person are extremely difficult to understand—phrases such as 'God is Love' (1 John 4:8) and 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him' (Job 13:15).

There are other fruits of the mystical experience. There is certainly an overcoming of the fear of death, a conviction that the soul has become identical with the Absolute Principle which expresses itself in every moment in its totality. There is an acceptance of suffering and a passionate desire to alleviate suffering in others. There is a combination of what Buddhists call Prajnaparamita, which is the wisdom of the other shore, with Mahakaruna, which is universal compassion. As Eckhart says, what is taken in by contemplation is given out in love. This is the value of the experience. As for the theology of it, this is profoundly simple and is summed up in the three words which are at the base of virtually all Indian religion and philosophy: 'Tat Twam asi' (Thou art that), the sense being that the deepest part of the soul is identical with the Divine nature, that the Atman, the deep soul, is the same as Brahman, the Universal Principle, or, in Eckhart's words, that the ground of the soul is the same as the ground of the Godhead. It is the idea of the inner light, the scintilla animae (spark of the soul); the scholastics had a technical phrase for it, the 'synderesis'.

Now, very briefly, I must touch on the means for reaching this state. It has been constantly stressed that the means do not consist in mental activity and discursive reasoning; they consist in what Roger Fry, speaking about art, used to call 'alert passivity', or what the modern American mystic, the great teacher of reading to the world, Frank Laubach, has called 'determined sensitiveness'. You don't do anything, but you are determinedly sensitive to letting something be done within you. This has been expressed by some of the great masters of the spiritual life in the West. St François de Sales, writing to his pupil St Jeanne Chantal, says, 'You tell me you do nothing in prayer. But what do you want to do in prayer, except presenting your nothingness to God?' And St Jeanne Chantal writes in one of her letters:

His [God's] goodness bestowed upon me this method of devotion consisting in a simple beholding and realizing of His divine presence, in which I felt utterly lost, absorbed, and at rest in Him. And this grace has been continued to me, although by my unfaithfulness I have opposed it much; permitting entrance into my mind of fears of being useless in this condition, so that desiring to do somewhat on my part, I spoiled all.

This attitude of the masters of prayer is in its final analysis exactly the same as that recommended by the teacher of any psychophysical skill. The man who teaches you how to play golf or tennis, your singing teacher or piano teacher, will tell you the same thing: you must somehow combine activity with relaxation, you must let go of the clutching personal self, in order to let this deeper self within you, which you interfere with, come through and perform its miracles.

In a certain sense one can say that what we are doing all the time is trying to get into our own light. Our superficial selves eclipse our deeper selves and so don't permit this light force, which is an impartial fact within us, to come through. In effect the whole of the technique of proficiency in every field, including this highest form of spiritual proficiency, is a dis-eclipsing process, a process of getting out of our

own light. Of course, one doesn't have to formulate this process in theological terms. I myself happen to believe that the deeper self within us is in some way continuous with the mind of the universe or whatever you like to call it. But as I say, you don't necessarily have to accept this.

We see that there is no conflict between the mystical approach to religion and the scientific approach, because one is not committed by mysticism to any cut-and-dried statement about the structure of the universe. You can practise mysticism entirely in psychological terms, and on the basis of a complete agnosticism in regard to the conceptual ideas of orthodox religion, and yet come to knowledge—gnosis—and the fruits of knowledge will be the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, and the capacity to help other people. And as Christ said in the Gospel, 'The tree is known by his fruit' (Matthew 12:33).

The end