The Theory of Positive Disintegration by Kazimierz Dabrowski.

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The mystical struggle: A psychological analysis

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Abstract

This thesis is a psychological analysis of the internal conflicts experienced by many religious mystics at the beginning of their mystical life. I refer to the conflicts, and the response of the mystic to these conflicts, as an experience of mystical struggle. The study begins with an examination of descriptions of mystical struggle found in scholarly accounts, manuals of mystical instruction and in the personal documents of mystics themselves. Subsequently I critique the psychological interpretations of mystical struggle found in William James and Evelyn Underhill. In order to provide what I believe is a more adequate interpretation, I compare the mystical struggle to the relevant stages in the personality development theory of Kazimierz Dabrowski. I also present a model of five factors that appear to be predispositional of a mystical struggle. These factors are: (1) a temperament characterized by emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement; (2) stress or loss; (3) emotional support or encouragement; (4) religious training and modeling; and (5) access to a mystical institution (e.g., convent or ashram).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to make a contribution to the psychological study of mysticism. More specifically it is to make a contribution: (1) to the psychological study of an early stage in the mystical career of some mystics, which I refer to as the mystical struggle; and (2) to the effort to determine the factors that predispose some individuals to enter into that struggle. This is not a theological investigation, nor even a phenomenological one. Nor do I present here a general theory of mysticism. My purpose is a more modest one - to provide no more than a psychological interpretation of the mystical struggle and to identify some of the factors that appear to be predispositional of that struggle.

I make no claim to a complete explanation of the phenomenon under investigation, much less is it my intention to reduce mysticism as a whole, or even the mystical struggle in particular, to psychological theory. Clearly there are alternative approaches. Historical and sociological forces play an important role as predisposing factors, and hence mysticism is more in evidence at some times (and in some places) than at others. Regarding the truth claims of statements made by the mystics themselves, my position is one of methodological agnosticism. It is not my intent to engage, either overtly or covertly, in either an apology for or a critique of the ultimate worth of the mystical life. I do feel that the lives of many mystics indicate a process of personality development of a kind not usually undertaken by the average person. But any evaluation beyond that is outside of the scope of the present study.

For the purposes of this study I do not distinguish between theistic and non-theistic mysticism, nor do I distinguish between celibate and non-celibate mystics, although I recognize that these differences may well affect the nature of mystical development in one way or another. In addition I do not attempt to generalize about the character of the mystical process for *all* mystics. Rather I focus only on those who describe the early stages of their mystical life as a kind of struggle in which they sought to reduce their internal conflict through ascetical and meditative practices.

For many mystics, commitment to the mystical life takes place within the context of what William James calls the "divided self" and Evelyn Underhill the "oscillation of the self." I refer to both the psychological context and the commitment as the *mystical struggle*, and the first task I undertake, in Chapter Two, is to articulate the dimensions of this phenomenon as described by scholars of mysticism and as found in the personal documents and mystical manuals of a number of mystics from various religious traditions and at various periods in world history. At the end of the chapter I formulate a descriptive definition of the mystical struggle.

My second task (in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six) is to interpret the mystical struggle in psychological terms. The most widely recognized efforts in this direction are to be found in William James' *Varieties of religious experience* (considered in Chapter Three) and Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* (discussed in Chapter Four). The terms that James and Underhill use for the psychological state which is prerequisite for the mystical life, are, as noted above, the "divided self" and the "oscillation of the self." The overall psychological model implicit in both of their analyses is one of personality development, but their formulations require further elaboration, and therefore in Chapters Five and Six I supplement their descriptions and explanations with a theory of personality development, specifically Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration. My concern is to show that the divided self of James and the oscillating self of Underhill are similar to Dabrowski's description of a type of personality disintegration prerequisite for reintegration of personality at a more mature level of functioning. Given Dabrowski's more elaborate account of the process of disintegration in personality development, the use of his theory can make a contribution to a more detailed understanding of the psychological basis of the mystical life.

In spite of its value as a descriptive model, Dabrowski's explanation suffers from a defect found in the studies of both James and Underhill. All three tend to explain the psychological condition, on which

the mystical struggle is based, solely in terms of temperament, which for Underhill and Dabrowski at least is genetically-determined. The role of the environment is not adequately recognized. Consequently a major, and third, task of this study is to identify and provide corroborating evidence for a set of environmental factors that appear to play a role in fostering the mystical life. In Chapters Seven to Ten I describe these factors.

Method

The study is divided into three parts: (1) an analysis of the mystical struggle in Chapter Two; (2) a critical examination of the theories of the mystical struggle found in James and Underhill, and a comparison between the models of these two authors and that of Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of personality development, in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six; and (3) in Chapters Seven to Ten, the presentation of a model of five factors that foster a mystical vocation through a comparison of the temperament and environment of mystics, creatives and the mentally ill.

I argue that many mystics seem to pass through a period of internal conflict in the early stages of the mystical life. Accounts of the mystical struggle by scholars, reports from the personal documents of mystics and descriptions from manuals of mysticism are cited and separately analysed for common features in order to arrive at a description of some of the salient characteristics of the mystical struggle. This description provides a fuller definition than has hitherto been available and thus enables the recognition of implicit features of the mystical struggle that might otherwise elude detection. This may mean in turn that a wider selection of descriptions of the phenomenon can be included in future studies.

The methodological approach employed in the second part of the study is one of comparing the psychological insights of two scholars of mysticism, William James and Evelyn Underhill, with a theory of personality development. The two theorists, William James and Evelyn Underhill, who have set the agenda for the psychological study of mysticism, provide different but complementary psychological analyses of the inner discord found in some mystics. James considers what he refers to as the divided self from the perspective of religious experience in general. The value of this approach is that it makes it possible to see the relationship between the mystical struggle and other forms of religious struggle. While there is an implicit process of development in James' exposition, Underhill describes an explicit model of mystical stages and locates the mystical struggle within the beginning stages. In addition Underhill provides an examination of the mystical response to the experience of inner division, i.e., the disciplines of asceticism and meditation.

The theory of personality development employed is that of the Polish clinical psychiatrist, Kazimierz Dabrowski. Dabrowski's theory provides a psychological model that makes it possible: (1) to see the mystical struggle from the perspective of the anxiety and inner conflict experienced by non-mystics; and (2) to see the parallels between the mystical struggle and personality development in general. Both James and Underhill identify psychological causes and functions, but their remarks, although incisive, are brief and require elaboration. This is precisely the reason why Dabrowski's theory is

useful. The explanation of the causes and function of the divided self found in James, Underhill and Dabrowski show a marked similarity, even though the first two focus on mystics while the last-named focuses on people in general.

Because of these parallels, Dabrowski's detailed analyses of self-division, as a stage in personality development, can serve as a means of providing a more elaborate psychological account of the internal self-division experienced by many mystics. Furthermore, the theory of positive disintegration has formed the basis for a continuing body of empirical research making use of standardized tests. This means that future research can put the psychological insights of James and Underhill to an empirical test.

The reason for taking into consideration the works of James and Underhill has already been indicated above. *Varieties* and *Mysticism* remain standard works constantly referred to by scholars of mysticism. However the choice of Dabrowski, who is neither a scholar of mysticism nor a widely recognized psychological theorist, requires some explanation. While James and Underhill provide some striking psychological insights into the struggle experienced by some mystics, and into the temperamental characteristics of those mystics, it is possible to provide a more elaborate analysis by making use of a theory of developmental psychology.

Since I had the impression that many mystics achieved, or at least hoped to achieve, the equivalent of a level of personality well beyond maturity, and since I wanted to show how the psychological aspect of the mystical struggle was related to that mystical goal, a maturity model of personality development, such as a psychoanalytic one, or one derived from psychoanalysis (e.g., Erikson or Loevinger),[1] would have been inappropriate.

A Jungian approach would not have been subject to the same criticism. Welch (1982) compared *The interior castle* of Teresa of Avila with Jung's model of individuation and Spiegelman (1985) did a Jungian analysis of the Zen ox-herding pictures. Since both *The interior castle* and the ox-herding pictures are rich in imagery, they readily lend themselves to an archetypal analysis. Such, however, is not the case with the personal documents of mystics. It is rare enough to find personal documents that provide detailed descriptions of feelings (as opposed to just actions and thoughts), but rarer still to find those that describe the products of the imagination in any detail. A Dabrowskian model is based primarily on an analysis of emotions, and hence is relatively serviceable.[2]

Some of the combined insights of James and Underhill receive empirical support from a review of the investigations of temperamental factors found in the lives of a number of mystics, creative persons and the mentally ill (undertaken in Chapters Seven to Ten). The method used in this review is one of synthesizing the results of a number of experimental, field and historical studies. James and Underhill refer to a unique temperament that is common to many mystics, creatives and mentally ill persons, but they do not identify the environmental factors that distinguish these three groups from each other. Therefore a review is also conducted of studies taking account of such factors. The comparison

between mystics and the other two groups (a comparison frequently found in the literature) serves to emphasize the unique features in the background of many mystics.

Definitions of a mystic

An adequate definition of a mystic should include a reference to mystical experience.[3] Walter Stace (1960a:9) defines the term mystic as follows, "By the word `mystic' I shall always mean a person who himself has had a mystical experience." Elsewhere Stace (1960b) describes a number of characteristics of mystical experience, such as unity, noetic quality, transcendence of space and time, deeply-felt positive mood, paradoxicality and ineffability. These characteristics, derived from personal accounts of experiences of numerous traditional mystics of the east as well as the west, have the virtue of generally excluding non-mystical religious experiences while including non-theistic experiences. Stace does not however include in his definition of a mystic any notion of development. He does discuss mystical discipline (1960a:18-19), but strictly in the context of mystical experience.

The definition of F.C. Happold contains a reference to the influence of states of heightened awareness on the individual, but his description of these experiences seems to be overly inclusive. Happold proposes that,

A man may be a mystic who is not...a contemplative. There come to many sudden moments of intuitive perception...illuminations which they feel reveal to them new facets of reality.

Such experiences when they happen to a man, often change his life...He feels that he has received a pure, direct vision of truth. Nothing can be the same again. (Happold, 1970:39)

Not only is this definition overly inclusive - few are those who have never known such moments - but the effect of the experience is not clearly identified as a developmental one. A vague reference to a change in the life of the recipient does not adequately describe the developmental process undergone by those usually considered to be mystics, a process that is set forth in considerable detail in the manuals of the mystical life in almost every major religious tradition.[4]

There is at least the acknowledgement of a growth process in the following statement by Walter Capps and Wendy Wright:

...mystics enter so deeply into their own inner lives that they discover a reality, as it were, "on the other side of themselves." Abandoning themselves to a transformation by the presence they discover both within and outside themselves, they become the voice of humankind articulating its awestruck perception of God. (Capps & Wright, 1978:2)

Some might question whether one must necessarily become the "voice of humankind" in order to qualify as a mystic. However the most important shortcoming of all the above definitions, is that they do not sufficiently articulate the unique and salient features of mystics across time and across cultures. A far more adequate description is found in Underhill's study, written long before any of the above. The context for Underhill's definition is a discussion of the similarity between artistic and mystical experience:

That "more real world of essential life" is the world in which the "free soul" of the great mystic dwells...The artist too may cross its boundaries in his brief moments of creation...

But we do not call everyone who has had these partial and artistic intuitions of reality a mystic, any more than we call every one a musician who has learned to play the piano. The true mystic is the person in whom such powers transcend the merely artistic and visionary stage, and are exalted to the point of genius: in whom transcendental consciousness can dominate the normal consciousness, and who has definitely surrendered himself to the embrace of Reality. As artists stand in a peculiar relation to the phenomenal world, receiving rhythms and discovering truths and beauties which are hidden from other men, so this true mystic stands in a peculiar relation to the transcendental world; there experiencing actual, but to us unimaginable tension and delight. His consciousness is transfigured in a particular way, he lives at different levels of experience from other people: and this of course means that he sees a different world, since the world as we know it is the product of certain scraps or aspects of reality acting upon a normal and untransfigured consciousness. Hence his mysticism is no isolated vision, no fugitive glimpse of reality, but a complete system of life carrying its own guarantees and obligations. As other men are immersed in and react to natural or intellectual life, so the mystic is immersed in and reacts to spiritual life. He *moves towards* that utter identification with its interests which he calls "Union with God." [My emphasis.] (Underhill, 1960:75-76)

Underhill's portrayal goes beyond a purely phenomenological description, containing as it does more than a hint of the apologetic; and it is also longer than is usually desired for a definition. However her account is not only comprehensive; it also identifies a relationship between mystical experience and mystical growth. The everyday awareness of most persons considered to be mystics is permanently altered, or transfigured, as a result of their experiences. Underhill also identifies a relationship between mystics and creative persons, although she is emphatic in her position that the experiences of the two are qualitatively distinct as well as different in their effects.

A more concise definition is given by Underhill in another work, *Practical Mysticism*: "The mystic is a person who has attained...union [with Reality] in a greater or lesser degree; or *who aims at and believes in such attainment* [My emphasis]" (Underhill, 1940:3). While lacking an explicit reference to mystical experience, this definition, as well as the longer one provided by Underhill, identifies mystics as persons engaged in a process. Their goal is to achieve "union with Reality," or a permanent transformation of consciousness. Underhill is careful not to say, in either statement, that mystics are

those who *achieve* the goal of union with Reality, but only that they *move* in that direction, or that they attain the goal *in a greater or lesser degree* or that they *aim at and believe in* such an attainment.

Almost every definition of a mystic contains, as well it should, a reference to mystical experience. Unfortunately, very few indicate the commitment of the mystic towards a distant goal that requires sustained effort. And yet, that is precisely what one usually finds in both the personal documents of a large number of mystics themselves and in numerous manuals of mysticism. This does not mean that the word mystic cannot be used in a more inclusive sense. Clearly, it is so employed and there is no reason to object to this use. But in such cases it seems to me that a further distinction is indicated - i.e., between folk mysticism (involving, e.g., trance states), popular mysticism (e.g., emotional conversion experiences) and what could be called great tradition, or classical, mysticism.

The authors cited above were primarily concerned with the last-named type of mysticism, as is the present study, and so an adequate definition of a mystic ought to reflect the nature of this type, and should therefore include references both to mystical experience and to participation in a process of mystical transformation. On the other hand to define a mystic as one who has achieved the final stage of the mystical path is, it seems to me, unnecessarily restrictive; and even impractical since in many cases there is insufficient reliable data to establish the point.[5] And in fact many scholars of the mystical life cite passages from persons assumed to be mystics but for whom there is no clear evidence of mystical marriage, enlightenment, liberation, etc.

The definition of a mystic employed in this study

As commonly used, even among scholars, mystic is a term that covers a wide range of persons, the differences between whom could be considered greater than their similarities. One response to this situation could be to develop a typology of mystics, however my concern in this study is with only one particular mystical type. Instead of referring to mystics throughout the study with a qualifying adjective, for the sake of brevity I use the term mystic in a particular sense. For the purposes of this study, I use the word mystic to refer to those persons who have had at least one mystical experience and who undertook a disciplined way of life, involving ascetical practices and meditative exercises, in order to realize a transformation of themselves in the direction of greater conformity to what they perceived to be ultimate reality. Of course other definitions are possible and in different contexts are more appropriate but I believe the definition given here has in its favour that it both identifies a limited, and hence manageable, range of religious persons, and yet is broad enough to include a number of those, frequently assumed to be mystics, but for whom there is no incontrovertible evidence of ultimate mystical attainment.

The definition excludes those who, it is claimed, reached the goal of mystical life without any effort or struggle on their part, but usually the religious traditions themselves consider such cases to be exceptions rather than the rule. This point is discussed in more detail below. Another matter that requires clarification is that of mystical experience. Although my focus is not on what is traditionally considered to be mystical experience, but rather on mystical struggle, since I have made mystical

experience part of my operating definition, a consideration of the phenomenon, or set of related phenomena, is indicated.

Previous studies of mystical experience

Mystical experience has received more attention in the scholarly literature than any other aspect of mysticism. Not only has it been defined[6] but characteristic features have been identified (James, 1929 and Stace, 1960b) and these in turn have served as bases for questionnaires used in empirical research (Pahnke, Richards & Smith, 1973 and Hood, 1970 & 1975).[7] William James (1929:371-373) proposes that mystical experience can be identified by four "marks": ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity. Stace provides a more extensive list of characteristics of the mystical experience and these in turn have been modified by others (e.g., Pahnke, 1973).

Such lists of common characteristics have been the subject of a critical analysis by Katz (1978), who argues that mystics do not necessarily mean the same thing when they say, e.g., an experience is ineffable. Katz further asserts whatever may be the case regarding their understanding of a term like ineffable, the object of the experience is not the same and therefore the experience is not the same. An ineffable experience of nirvana is not an ineffable experience of Allah, he says. Katz' remarks are directed primarily against the position that claims there is first an unmediated mystical experience, and subsequently there is a culturally determined interpretation.

Katz does not mean to say that there are no features common to mystical experience. In fact one of the contributors, i.e., Robert Gimello, to the volume of essays edited by Katz, provides his own set of characteristics of mystical experience, a set which shows a clear indebtedness to Stace. Katz' main argument is that mystical experiences themselves, not just their interpretations, are influenced by their cultural context. But he also makes the point that the language used to describe mystical experience is culturally determined and that mystics' descriptions of their own experiences must be treated with caution and due respect for their context. All interpreters of mystical texts ought to heed this caveat, although clearly it applies more to multivalent philosophical interpretations than it does to psychological analyses.[8]

It should be noted that James, Stace, Pahnke, Gimello and others have restricted themselves to describing positive mystical experiences. In fact, James places *negative* mystical experiences into the category of "*diabolical* mysticism." These share a common origin with the positive mystical experiences but James clearly considers them to be counterproductive:

In delusional insanity, paranoia, as they sometimes call it, we may have a *diabolical* mysticism, a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down. The same sense of ineffable importance in the smallest events...the same voices and visions...only this time the emotion is pessimistic: instead of

consolations we have desolations; the meanings are dreadful; and the powers are enemies to life. It is evident from the point of view of their psychological mechanism, the classic mysticism and these lower mysticisms spring from the same mental level, from that great subliminal or transmarginal region...That region contains every kind of matter: "seraph and snake" abide there side by side. To come from thence is no infallible credential. What comes must be sifted and tested... (James, 1929:417)

The problem with this analysis is that not all negative mystical experiences are "snakes" (nor for that matter are all positive mystical experiences "seraphs") and the point is well expressed by Egan:

...the question can be raised whether James has confused here two different types of mystical experiences. Mystical purgation, the dark nights of the senses and the spirit, the intense mystical desolations and deaths through which authentic mystics of both the Eastern and the Western mystical tradition have passed as a necessary step toward illumination and union cannot be called "diabolical" without confusing the issue. The mystical tradition has long distinguished authentic purgation from the illnesses, frenzies, degenerate behaviour, and excesses resulting from *pseudo*-mysticism. (Egan,1982:10)

Thus, there are two types of authentic mystical experience (and presumably by implication two types of inauthentic experience): those that are ecstatic or blissful and those that are desolate or anguishing. Evelyn Underhill cites a late nineteenth-century essay on mysticism by E. Recejac in which a connection is established between authentic mystical experiences that are positive and those that are negative:

"The mystic experience," says Recejac, "ends with the words, `I live, yet not I, but God in me.' This feeling of identification, which is the term of mystical activity, has a very important significance. In its early stages the mystic consciously feels the Absolute in opposition to the Self...as mystic activity goes on, it tends to abolish this opposition...When it has reached its term the consciousness finds itself possessed by the sense of a Being at one and the same time greater than the Self and identical with it: great enough to be God, intimate enough to be me." (Recejac, 1897:45)

Recejac's remarks are highly relevant to the present study, since feeling "the Absolute in opposition to the Self" is one way of describing the mystical struggle. In locating the feeling of opposition between the "Self" and the "Absolute" in the early stages of the mystic's development Recejac raises the question of the mystical path, and so it is appropriate at this point to turn to a discussion of this process.

The mystical path

The term mystical path has been used to characterize the process of deliberate self-development as practised by mystics. Scholars of particular mystical traditions have frequently included in their works descriptions of the stages a large number of mystics pass through on their journey. Some of these are brief skeletal outlines (Scholem, 1941:240-241 & 1974:156; Coster,1972:232-238; Mookerjee & Khanna, 1977:192-195; Dimock, 1966:48-51; and Lossky, 1973:204); others have provided lengthy and detailed accounts (Underhill, 1960; Nicholson, 1975; and Schimmel, 1975).

Mystical stage-models, such as that of Underhill (1960), should be distinguished from models of religious maturity (Allport, 1950) and of faith development (Fowler, 1981) with which they have some features in common. Allport's notion of religious maturity is assumed to be a norm achievable by a large number of religious persons. The final stage in Fowler's model appears to be a level of development beyond mature religion as described by Allport but still far short of the transformation that apparently characterizes the unitive life (the final stage of the mystical growth process, at least as presented by Underhill). The differences between the mystical and religious models is not however restricted to differences in the final goal. In neither Allport nor Fowler do we encounter radical withdrawal from society, persistent forms of asceticism or intensive meditation practice. Nor do we find a stage in which the tortures of remorse, shame and guilt are described.

Thus far there have been few attempts to construct a generic model of mystical development,[9] although Evelyn Underhill felt that the set of stages that she described was equivalent to indigenous models found in Judaism, i.e., the Kabalistic *sephirot* (1960:98), and Islam, i.e., seven valleys of Attar (1960:131-132).[10] Underhill is aware of the fact that there are other models even within the Christian tradition, but she feels that, all the various paths found within and without Christianity are merely different ways of describing the same process:

The habitations of the Interior Castle through which St. Teresa leads us to that hidden chamber which is the sanctuary of the indwelling God: the hierarchies of Dionysius, ascending from the selfless service of the angels, past the seraph's burning love, to the God enthroned above time and space: the mystical paths of the Kabalistic Tree of Life, which lead from the material world of Malkuth through the universes of action and thought, by Mercy, Justice and Beauty, to the Supernal Crown; all these are different ways of describing the same pilgrimage. (Underhill, 1960:103)

In fact, there is evidence demonstrating that Underhill wanted, as much as possible, to present the mystical life in neutral terms in order to have a model that would have universal application.[11]

Some later scholars seem to be of the opinion that Underhill was sufficiently successful in her attempt and that her model can be taken as paradigmatic for mysticism in general. In the chapter entitled, "The mystic path," in his *Mysticism and religion* (980), Ellwood simply summarizes Underhill's five-stage model. Politella (1964 & 1965) applies Underhill's stages to passages in well-known works from

various major religious traditions. While he does seem to establish valid correspondences, his applications are not detailed or extensive enough to do this unequivocally. Nevertheless in the absence of a well-grounded generic model, Underhill's stages will serve the purpose of helping to locate the mystical struggle within the context of mystical development. Underhill's model consists of the following stages: (1) the awakening of the self; (2) the purification of the self; (3) the illumination of the self; (4) the dark night of the soul; and (5) the unitive life.[12]

The mystical struggle

The mystical struggle is found at the beginning of the mystical path and consists of an experience of inner conflict, referred to by William James (1929) as the divided self, plus a systematic response to that condition, which Evelyn Underhill (1960) calls the purification of the self. The divided self is an experience of internal self-division, which may be analysed from two perspectives, one of which emphasizes the substance or content of this experience in terms of beliefs, ethical commitment and personal competence, and the other of which emphasizes the character and form of personal consciousness. In any given account of the divided self, whether located in a personal document or in a manual of mystical practice, the two perspectives may not necessarily be clearly articulated, but the frequency with which they are found to coincide is such as warrant the assertion that they are two perspectives on the same phenomenon.

The divided self may be experienced in conjunction with ascetical and meditational practices. It is this conjunction that more truly characterizes the mystical struggle. The divided self experienced without asceticism and meditation is typical of the critical condition that precedes the awakening, or commitment, of a potential mystic. An excellent example of this state can be found in the life of the Muslim mystic, Al-Ghazzali. Just prior to his commitment to the Sufi path he found himself in the following dilemma:

Coming seriously to consider my state, I found myself bound on all sides...Still a prey to uncertainty, one day I decided to leave Bagdad and to give up everything [for the Sufi life]; the next day I gave up my resolution. I advanced one step and immediately relapsed. In the morning I was sincerely resolved to occupy myself with the future life; in the evening a crowd of carnal thoughts assailed and dispersed my resolutions...

Thus I remained, torn asunder by the opposite forces of earthly passions and religious aspiration... (Al-Ghazzali, n.d.:48-50)

At this point in his life the aspiring Sufi was not meditating or engaging in ascetical exercises. This situation changed when he finally decided to commit himself to the mystical path:

At last I left Bagdad, giving up all my fortune...I then betook myself to Syria, where I remained for two years, which I devoted to retirement, meditation and devout exercises. I only thought of self-improvement and discipline and of purification of the heart...

...Finally the longings of my heart...brought me back to my country...family cares and vicissitudes of [life]...troubled my meditative calm. However...my confidence ...did not diminish; and the more I was diverted by hindrances, the more steadfastly I returned...[to his devotions]. (Al-Ghazzali, n.d.:52-53)

In the second passage can still be seen the oscillation between what is perceived as the higher value (the Sufi path) and what is taken to be a hindrance to this goal, but the oscillation is not just suffered passively. Rather it is accompanied by a volitional effort to firmly orient the self in the direction of the admired end.

The same conflict between an ideal and an attractive alternative that requires the abandonment of the ideal is found in instances of non-mystical conversion, in efforts at ethical self-improvement, and in other life-situations as well. The reason why the mystical struggle is called mystical, however, is because it is experienced by those whose intention it is to achieve the permanently unified condition which Underhill calls the unitive life. In other words the intent of the person who actively responds to the condition of the divided self is what makes the struggle mystical.

Thus, my study, focusing on the experience of the mystical struggle, has relevance for the general investigation of mysticism since it is widely referred to in the personal documents of many mystics and in most manuals written for spiritual advisers. In fact this experience is the point of departure for most systems of mystical development and has been noted as such by a number of scholars of mysticism. Both William James and Evelyn Underhill, who have set the agenda for much of the writing and research on mysticism in the Anglo-American scholarly community, felt that the phenomenon required an explanation in terms of the principles of human psychology. Their insights appear to me to be fundamentally sound but in need of further elaboration.

Both James and Underhill argue that the origin of the inner discord that characterizes most mystics, at least at the beginning of their development, can be found in their temperament. In particular the two authors refer to the trait of emotional sensitivity. Other students of mysticism have made the same observation. But this predisposition, while necessary, is not sufficient to account for the occurrence of the mystical struggle. I argue in Chapters Eight to Ten that at least four environmental factors are required in most cases: (1) the experience of loss in childhood; (2) the presence of emotional support in childhood; (3) childhood instruction and modelling in the religious life; and (4) the support of a mystical institution (e.g., convent, ashram or study and meditation centre) at the point of the mystical awakening. Finally, by establishing correspondences between the stages of the mystical path and stages in the development of personality, I argue that the psychological function of the mystical struggle is to make possible a reintegration of personality at a more adaptive level of functioning.

The mystical life without the mystical struggle

While references to the mystical struggle are numerous and are found in the mystical traditions of all the major religions, its absence has also been explicitly noted in some cases. Of course if a mystic is broadly defined as anyone who has had a mystical experience, then it is not unlikely that a certain number of such persons would simply have their mystical experience, perhaps be altered in some way or another as a result, and carry on with ordinary life, since presumably not everyone would accept an initial mystical experience as an invitation to the mystical path. However, not only is it possible to have mystical experiences of the kind that Evelyn Underhill describes as typical of the awakening stage, without becoming engaged in a mystical struggle, according to some it is even possible to have experiences that one normally associates with the final stage of mystical life - i.e., the unitive way - without going through such a struggle.

In the preface to her translation of Ibn Arabi's *Journey to the Lord of Power*, Harris summarizes Abdul-Karim Jili's view on the two ways of achieving intimacy with Allah:

As Abdul-Karim Jili points out in his commentary, the gift of this ascension [to the presence of Allah], though given without preparation to the prophets, *must be earned* by the saints. Its price is the perfection of all the interior and exterior arts of Islam, which means submission to God. Without the knowledge gained through Sacred Law and *inner battle with the self*, there can be no contemplation... [My emphasis.] (Harris, 1981:3-4)

A similar distinction is made by Al-Ghazzali:

Some of these souls [i.e., persons who became intimate with Allah] had not, in their upward Progress and Ascent, to climb step by step the stages we have described; neither did their ascension cost them any length of time; but with their first flight they attained to the knowledge of the Holiness and the confession that His sovereignty transcends everything that it must be confessed to transcend. They were overcome at the first by the knowledge which overcame the rest at the very last. The onset of God's epiphany came upon them with one rush, so that all that is apprehensible by the sight of Sense or by the insight of Intelligence was by "the splendours of His Countenance utterly consumed." It may be that the first was the way of Abraham, the Friend of Allah, while the latter was the way of Mohammed, the Beloved of Allah. (Ghazzali, 1924:97)

While both authors are referring to a mystical *experience*, and not explicitly to the final mystical *stage*, it is an exalted and transforming experience and the implication is that the prophets are just as transformed without effort, as the saints who have to go through a mystical struggle. In Islam, it would hardly be acceptable for the seal of the prophets to be considered in any way inferior to the saints who came after him, or the persons of faith who preceded him. Therefore it may be that the distinction made by Jili and al-Ghazzali is based not on actual experience, but rather on the exigencies of piety.

Whether or not it is possible to have the most exalted spiritual experiences without the mystical struggle, it is apparently possible to become *enlightened* without that struggle. For example, Mahadevan, a biographer of the Indian sage Ramana Maharshi, after describing a decisive mystical experience in Ramana's life, says,

The realization came to him in a flash. He perceived the truth directly. `I' [the higher Self] was something very real, the only real thing. Fear of death had vanished once and for all. From then on, `I' continued like the basic note that underlies and blends with all the other notes in music. Thus, young Venkataraman [i.e., Ramana Maharshi] found himself on the peak of spirituality *without any arduous or prolonged training and discipline*. The ego was lost in the flood of self-awareness. *All of a sudden*, the boy called Venkataraman had flowered into a sage and saint. [My emphasis] (Mahadevan, 1977:17-18)

Although Mahadevan's point is not made so emphatically in an older anonymous biography published in Madras by T.N. Venkataraman, and one upon which Mahadevan is clearly dependent,[13] the point is perfectly consistent with the description of Ramana's life that is given in the earlier work. True, Ramana went through a period of *tapas*, usually translated as austerity, in which, "...the lower part of his thighs had been nibbled away by the dark denizens of the pit [i.e., lice], blood and pus had issued out discolouring the spot where he sat" (Anonymous, 1973:8). But the experience was entirely passive, and Ramana is described as having been in a state of mystical absorption for the duration. Not really the mystical struggle! Thus if the account of the life of Ramana Maharshi is accurate, it would appear that it is possible to realize, not just exalted mystical experiences, but the goal of the mystical life itself, without engaging in a mystical struggle. However it should be mentioned that such accounts are rare - in fact, apart from that of Ramana, I know of no other.

It should be pointed out that Ramana's disciples clearly recognize the exceptional nature of his experience; the normal way, it is said, requires a mystical struggle:

When the Maharsi Bhagavan Sri Ramana realized the Self he was a lad of seventeen in a middle-class Brahmin family in South India. He was still going to High School and had undergone no spiritual training and learnt nothing of spiritual philosophy. *Normally some study is needed, followed by long and arduous training...Only in the rarest cases is it possible, as with Maharsi, to take a single step and the goal is reached*. [My emphasis.] (Osborne, 1979:i)

According to Osborne a first mystical experience is soon obscured in the case of most persons because of inherent deficiencies and so a process of purification is required:

Such an experience of Identity [i.e., of the kind sustained by Ramana] does not always, or even normally, result in Liberation. It comes to a seeker but the inherent tendencies of the ego cloud it over again. Thenceforward he has the memory, the indubitable certainty, of the True State, but he does not live in it permanently. He has to *strive to purity the mind and attain complete submission* so that there are no tendencies to pull him back again to the illusion of limited separative being. [My emphasis.] (Osborne, 1979:iii)

While I do not insist that all those who are recognized, and referred to, as mystics undergo a mystical struggle, it seems however that in at least one case where there is an explicit report of an absence of mystical struggle the mystical tradition itself considers struggle to be the norm, and its absence a rarity.

CHAPTER II

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE MYSTICAL STRUGGLE

In this chapter my goals are: (1) to facilitate an appreciation for an experience reported by many mystics, which I refer to as the mystical struggle, by presenting a variety of reports of it; (2) to indicate the transcultural and transhistorical nature of the experience by a selection of accounts from different religious traditions and historical periods; and (3) to undertake an analysis of the reports of the experience that will result in a descriptive definition. Most studies of mystical experience, understandably, focus upon the ecstasies or on the experiences of union or enlightenment reported by mystics. In addition to such exalted states, however, many mystics also experience intense frustration, anxiety and desolation. In fact, these "negative" mystical experiences are considered by many mystics to be essential to the goal of mystical self-transformation; and these experiences, which I refer to as the mystical struggle, usually occur at the beginning of the mystical life and are intensely painful.

To begin with, the mystical struggle consists of a condition William James (1929:163-185) calls the divided self. A self is divided when a distant ideal of behavior and experience is perceived and strongly desired, while at the same time habitual patterns of functioning are understood to impede the fulfilment of this ideal. For some the realization that there is a better, more desirable way of being and acting, and that there is a discrepancy between this ideal and one's actual life, is an occasion of remorse and self-recrimination, the response to which is a determined effort to bring about the valued attitudinal and behavioral change. Evelyn Underhill (1960:198-231) refers to this effort as the purification of the self.[14] Further, an experience of the mystical struggle appears to be a two-phase process, the first phase of which is a passive experience of inner division, and the second phase of which is an active effort at self-change.

Those who experience inner division do so because they identify with two conflicting life-stances or

sets of values. However the two are not axiologically equivalent. One set of values is considered to be more worthy than the other. At the same time the less worthy set represents a source of gratification and consequently is rejected only with difficulty. The result is that individuals oscillate between these two sets of values. Valiant efforts are made to live according to the more worthy set but in an unguarded moment there is a reversion to the less worthy one. This in turn occasions remorse, compunction, shame, self-reproach and a renewal of efforts to live according to the values considered to be higher. These efforts frequently take the form of meditation and ascetical practices.

In descriptions of inner conflict found in the personal documents of many mystics, in a great deal of the inspirational literature, and in most mystical manuals at least four distinguishable, though not separable, desires or aspirations are expressed: a desire to be united with some religious ideal, to live a moral life, to have control over one's impulses, and to have a unified consciousness. Since the very nature of the conflicts so often reported is due to a failure to achieve these aspirations, another way of regarding them is in terms of dimensions of experience. In which case a distinction could be made between the *contents*, or *content* dimensions, of the experience of inner discord of many mystics, and the *form*, or *formal* dimension of the experience. The contents can be thought of as consisting of the *objects* of thought; the form is the *way* in which one thinks about those objects. In terms of content, the experience of the mystical struggle can be thought of as three types of aspiration, i.e., the desires to become competence-oriented, ethical and religious.

The competence dimension is often expressed in terms of regret over the incapacity to control the impulses or passions. Most beginning mystics are sensitive to the fact that they are not "masters in their own house" - that what they determine to do in their more recollected moments they are unable to effect, because their impulses prevent them, or else lead them on a course of feeling and action at variance with their choices. Of all the dimensions of the mystical struggle, the competence dimension is the one most easily appreciated by non-mystics. Anyone who has failed to stick to a predetermined schedule or who has been unable to stick to a recommended diet knows something of the frustration reported by those mystics who complain that their desires and impulses impede them in the realization of their chosen goals.

The ethical dimension reveals itself in the concern over sin, imperfection, fault or vice, and in the effort to live according to a standard of virtue. One does not have to be a mystic-in-the-making to know the pain of moral failure, but a number of mystics are particularly plagued by feelings of shame, guilt, and remorse. And they do not, like most other people who have such feelings, find ready relief in consolations, be they religious or secular, of one kind or another. In these mystics, feelings of guilt are usually accompanied by self-critical thoughts and the result of both appears to be a determination to engage in efforts to realize a change in character.

The conflict in religious values, the religious or spiritual dimension of the mystical struggle, is found in expressions such as "the spirit warring against the flesh" and "God versus the world." In the lives of most mystics, and most aspiring mystics, priority is given to those teachings, devotions and other practices, such as meditation, that result in the "spiritual point of view." The contents of the spiritual

perspective vary from one tradition to another, but in almost all cases they take precedence over concerns about food, clothing, shelter, progeny, health and even life itself. In some mystical traditions this dimension is expressed in a relatively permanent withdrawal from the ordinary social obligations of work and marriage; in others the withdrawal from society into a mystical fellowship or into solitude is temporary but frequent (e.g., extended retreats, regular study groups, periods of lengthy daily prayer and meditation).

The formal dimension of the experience of the divided self consists of a unified, or concentrated, mind versus a consciousness that is distracted or dispersed; a mind *focused* on the ultimate ideal as opposed to one preoccupied with a *multiplicity* of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. The emphasis here is not *what* the mind is concentrated upon, but the fact that it *is* concentrated. Most mystics regret, not just that their mind is distracted from focusing upon a worthy spiritual object, but also the fact that it is distracted in and of itself. One of the recognized goals of meditation exercises is to gain the skill of being able to concentrate the mind, without the interruption of distracting thoughts.

While logically these four dimensions of the experience of mystical struggle can be distinguished from each other, in mystical documents, as we shall see, two or more of them are usually combined. For the purposes of analysis of the mystical struggle, I have taken examples from scholars of particular mystical traditions, from personal documents of mystics and from manuals of mysticism. I begin with the citations from the scholars in order to establish that the phenomenon under investigation is one that is widely recognized.

Scholarly descriptions of an experience of mystical struggle

One of the earliest descriptions of a mystical struggle in Buddhism can be found in a footnote in Rhys Davids' 1878 translation of the *Nidana-katha* (a canonical account of the life of the Buddha). There Rhys Davids explains that the meditational struggle (including the encounter with Mara), that led to Siddhartha's becoming the Buddha, was paradigmatic for monks who aspired to the mystical goal of enlightenment. Further it was a model, not just of an attempt to realize a concentrated mind, but of the general struggle the majority of aspiring mystics underwent in order to prepare themselves for a mystical transformation:

The Great Struggle [the struggle that led to Siddhartha becoming enlightened] played a great part in the Buddhist system of moral training; it was the wrestling with the flesh by which a true Buddhist overcame delusion and sin, and attained to Nirvana. It is best explained by its four-fold division into 1. Mastery over the passions. 2. Suppression of sinful thoughts. 3. Meditation of the seven kinds of Enlightenment (Bodhi-anga...); and 4. Fixed attention, the power of preventing the mind from wandering. It is also called Sammappadhana, Right Effort, and a formula alluded to in many Suttas. (Rhys Davids, n.d.:181)

Rhys Davids does not explicitly distinguish between the form and the content of this struggle, but they

are both represented in his description. The form consists of a single dimension (i.e., fixed attention versus a wandering mind) and the content of three dimensions (i.e., control over versus subordination to the passions, virtue versus sin and ignorance versus enlightenment).

According to Har Dayal, author of *The bodhisattva doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit literature*, initially the career of a *bodhisattva* was considered to begin with an illuminative experience, referred to as the production of the thought of enlightenment. Then between the fourth and seventh centuries C.E., several texts add that prior to this experience there is a period of preparation, associated with the ideas of *gotra* (predisposition) and *adhimukti* (aspiration). At the preparatory stage, because of his *gotra* the bodhisattva is a "severe critic of his own actions, and he fears and avoids the slightest sin;" and further, "his excellent *gotra* protects him against the worst consequences of his evil deeds, even if he should lapse into sin" (Dayal, 1975:50-54).

In these two features (self-criticism and the lapse into sins) there is an indication of something like a mystical struggle. And Dayal's comments on the aspiration (*adhimukti*), characteristic of someone in the preparatory stage, further suggest that this is a period of imperfection on the one hand and aspiration on the other:

In this stage, a *bodhisattva*...is not prepared to suffer pain for the sake of others. But he has now commenced his progress towards the goal. When he has purified himself in this condition, he will be fit to enter on the first of the ten real *bhumis* (Stages) of his career. But he is as yet deficient in virtuous action; he is not free from faults and imperfections; and he is not regular and consistent in his life. He possesses the idea of perfection only in the state of germ or cause, as a latent possibility... (Dayal, 1975:54)

At the beginning of their ten-stage path, according to Dayal, *bodhisattvas* have a goal, but they also have faults and are deficient in altruism. Implied in these words and in the phrase, "not regular and consistent in...life," is an oscillation between two contradictory life-stances. Here the opposition between the ideal and the actual is expressed in ethical terms - i.e., as an opposition between virtue and imperfection.

Hugo Enomiya-Lasalle, a German Jesuit who studied, practiced and taught Zen Buddhism in Japan for most of his adult life, provides a description of a typical seven-day retreat in his book, *Zen: Way to enlightenment*; and in that context he outlines a model of three stages of meditative development. Regarding the first stage he says,

...[Zen] retreats...have effects on the moral-ascetical plane. Liberating oneself from inordinate passions is a constant endeavor among them. The ego must die....Fear, pride, envy, and other feelings must die with the ego. Christian retreats have a similar purpose, but in Christian retreats one

meditates on some doctrine of faith and makes appropriate resolutions to eliminate evil inclinations. In Zen the procedure is completely different....One simply empties [one's] mind and in so doing [one] destroys the obstacles and everything else which is inordinate in [one].

It is in this first stage that a man learns to control himself and to dominate evil passions. (Enomiya-Lasalle, 1967:19)

The procedure in Zen is "completely different" from that used in Christian meditation, according to Enomiya-Lasalle,[15] but the result is the same. The sentence, "Liberating oneself from inordinate passions is a constant endeavour..." implies a struggle between two poles of human experience - between a state in which one is dominated by one's passions and a condition of detachment or freedom from the domination of such impulses.

Scholars of Islamic mysticism have also remarked upon an internal struggle and its essential role. Annemarie Schimmel describes this struggle in terms of the Islamic concept of the three types, or stages, of *nafs*:[16]

The forward movement on the Path, as initiated by repentance and renunciation, consists of a constant struggle against the *nafs*, the "soul" - the lower self, the base instincts, what we might render in the biblical sense as "the flesh"....the *nafs* is the cause of blameworthy actions, sins, and base qualities; and the struggle with it has been called by Sufis "the greater Holy War"...The Koranic expression *an-nafs al-ammara bi's-su'*, "the soul commanding to evil" (Sura 12:53) forms the starting point for the Sufi way of purification. The holy book contains also the expression *an-nafs al-lawwama*, "the blaming soul" (Sura 75:2), which corresponds approximately to the conscience that watches over man's actions and controls him. Eventually, once purification is achieved, the *nafs* may become *mutma'inna* (Sura 89:27), "at peace"; in this state, according to the Koran, it is called home to its Lord....It is incumbent upon every traveller on the Path to purge the *nafs* of its evil attributes in order to replace these by the opposite, praiseworthy qualities. (Schimmel, 1986:112)

Phrases such as "struggle against the *nafs*" and notions such as purging the *nafs* can be seen as expressions indicating the presence of a struggle, presented in ethical terms and in terms of a conquest ("the greater Holy War") of the instincts (or lower desires). In the following passage from R.A. Nicholson, the inner discord of the heterogeneous self is even more explicit:

The first place in every list of `stages' is occupied by repentance (*tawbat*). This is the Moslem term for `conversion,' and marks the beginning of a new life....Repentance is described as the awakening of the soul from the slumber of heedlessness, so that the sinner becomes aware of his evil ways and feels contrition for past disobedience....A certain well-known Sufi repented seventy times and fell back

into sin seventy times before he made a lasting repentance. (Nicholson, 1975:30-31)

From this excerpt from Nicholson we learn that the mystical path is generally begun by repentance. This is not, however, for most mystics a one-time affair; rather it seems to be a process in which mystics repent and (by implication) resolve to do better and fail, then repent again and so on.

A slightly different, but complementary perspective on the awakening, the mystical problem and struggle, can be found in an essay by A. Reza Arasteh:

The one who seeks to transform his social self must experience at least once [that] which he is seeking. He must become aware of the problems of human existence: What are we? What is our destination and why?....This awareness or insight may occur suddenly, sometimes the result of a simple experience. Sufi literature abounds with examples of individuals who suddenly perceived the path they must follow.....Having had an image of such a better life, the awakened person becomes a seeker and values this image above all else. Motivated by it, he longs for it, becomes concerned with it and directs his efforts toward attaining it...He becomes competitive, but only with himself, for competition with oneself constitutes perfection.

Man's nature, however, does not easily bend towards perfection. While his insight may make him aware of a better life, his instincts, drives and selfish motives, or *nafs*, as the Sufis refer to them, may pull him down. Caught by contradictory forces in his nature, he becomes anxious...he stands at the threshold of two worlds: his ego stands up against his potential or real self; the universal man against the social....As a searcher of the truth he recognizes that he has only one heart and is potentially one entity; he cannot split into several parts....he concentrates solely on union...with the desired object and disunion [with] the heart's attachment to several objects. (Arasteh, 1970:6-7)

Arasteh describes a struggle between the ideal to be pursued and the actual or habitual. He also refers to ethical (selfish motives) and self-conquest (the pull of the instincts) dimensions of this struggle. He further hints at yet another dimension when he says that human nature cannot comfortably be split into several parts. The division alluded to here is between a consciousness that is focused, or unified, and one that is split or dispersed or preoccupied with several objects.

A connection between the idea of renouncing the "world," the conquest of the passions and a recollected state of mind is made by Vladimir Lossky in his study on Eastern Christian mysticism. After introducing the subject, Lossky cites Isaac of Ninevah and then provides his own commentary:

The beginning of the spiritual life is conversion (*epistrophe*), an attitude of the will turning towards God and renouncing the world. "The world" has here a particular ascetical connotation. "The world is said by speculative examination to be the extension of a common name to distinct passions," says St.

Isaac the Syrian. For the great ascetic and mystic, the "passions are part of the usual current of the world. Where they have ceased, there the world's currents have ceased....Where their current has been damned, there the world after their example has to some extent ceased to be maintained and to exist." "The world" signifies here a dispersion, the soul's wandering outside itself, a treason against its real nature. For the soul is not in itself subject to passions, but becomes so when it leaves its interior simplicity and exteriorizes itself. Renunciation of the world is thus a re-entering of the soul into itself, a concentration, a reintegration of the spiritual being in its return to communion with God. (Lossky, 1973:199-200)

Lossky identifies three aspects of a divided self and relates them to each other. Ordinary persons are not recollected - they live "outside of themselves" - and as a result their passions or desires cause them to be controlled by objects, persons, events outside of themselves. Although Lossky does not include an ethical dimension in his brief analysis, it is possible to see how one may be related to the process: if persons are controlled by things outside of themselves, then they are not free to make decisions, including ethical decisions, regarding their actions. In order to be free individuals have to withdraw from the external things which control them, then they can choose what their reason (and later their intuition) indicates to them is an ethical direction. And the means to become recollected is by unifying the mind by focusing on a transcendent object, which for Isaac of Ninevah is the Christian God.

The importance of an inner struggle has been noted in various analyses of Hasidic teaching. Lawrence Kirmayer summarizes the centrality of struggle for Nahman of Bratslav in these words:

Although R. Nahman's soul was [considered] special, he emphasized that his spiritual achievements came not through hereditary powers but through "good deeds, struggle and worship. He said explicitly that everyone in the world could reach even the highest rung, that everything depended on human choice." This emphasis on the attainability of advanced spirituality contributed to the distinctive quality of Bratslav hasidism.

For Nahman, the essence of religious life was inner struggle. The roots of this struggle are the human tendencies to yield to desire and to experience doubt when faced with the realization of God's distance. Desire must be extinguished. The self must be made a strong vessel - through faith and discipline - strong enough to bear the terrible pain of longing. Doubt persists but is surpassed by the intensity of Faith. Only then can the Divine be encountered. (Kirmayer, 1987:33-34)

The contrast between living a disciplined life on the one hand versus yielding to desires on the other is an opposition frequently encountered in accounts of the mystical struggle. Less often mentioned is the contrast between faith and doubt. Underhill (1960:382-383) refers to the temptation to doubt as a feature of the dark night of the soul, a stage more advanced than the mystical struggle, but in continuity with it. She specifically mentions Heinrich Suso as someone who experienced such

temptations (1960:407).

In the introduction to his translation of Dobh Baer's *Tract on ecstasy*, Louis Jacobs identifies an underlying dichotomy in Habad Hasidism as a struggle between the animal and the spiritual souls:

...when the `divine soul' in man struggles with his `natural soul' and thereby `purifies' it of the evil it contains, the resulting love for the divine is far more powerful than it could have been without the struggle. Based on this thought is Schneor Zalman's mystical interpretation of the verse:`If a man have two wives, the one beloved, and the other hated... (Deut. xxi. 15). The `two wives' are the two souls, the `divine' and the `natural'. They are rivals to each other and struggle with each other, particularly at the time of prayer when the `divine soul' longs for the nearness of God and the `natural soul' is responsible for distracting thoughts. (Jacobs, 1963:20)

Corresponding to this struggle between the natural and spiritual souls is nearness to God and (by implication) a concentrated mind versus a distracted mind and (again by implication) distance from God. But the correspondence has to be qualified. Distance from God and a distracted mind are situations to be overcome. The natural soul on the other hand is not to be rejected, but transformed. In fact it is due to the natural soul and the struggle with it that the divine is believed to enter as powerfully as it does into the life of a mystic.

This same attitude on the part of Schneor Zalman in particular and Habad Hasidism in general is related by Schultz to the idea of the "average man:"[17]

...the goal of the average man [is] to free the divine elements even in his baser nature by utilizing and sublimating their impulses for a higher purpose.

Schneor Zalman recognized that this was no easy task. For just as the animal soul enjoys the bliss which comes from above through the divine soul without recognizing its source, so does it luxuriate in the pleasures derived from instinctual gratification which come from below without recognizing its source. Thus, the average man is daily faced with a tug-of-war within himself, his intelligence being pulled in both directions. Nevertheless, Schneor Zalman urged the average man not to despair, to recognize and accept even the basest instincts of his animal soul but to strive mightily to direct them upward. (Schultz, 1973:723)

The teaching of Schneor Zalman contrasts with the general impression of mystics fleeing from the temptations of the flesh. As Schultz notes the Habad master recommends something rather like the higher level defense mechanism of sublimation. Specifically mentioned as a characteristic feature of the "average man" is his intelligence. The intellect mediates between the instincts of the natural soul, and the intuitions, or revelations, of the divine soul. Intellect or reason also plays a role in the

description of a yogic struggle given by Geraldine Coster.

From her study of Patanjali's *Yoga sutras*, and the often associated Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy, Coster obtains a five-stage model of human consciousness.[18] The first two stages describe persons who are frequently found in human society. The third stage marks a transition to the final two stages of yogic consciousness and is one of internal division:

...intelligence has become highly developed...and to a greater or less extent dominates the emotions....The person whose growth is arrested at this point is not free because he is dominated by his own ideas, which tend to express themselves ever more and more mechanically as life goes on. In the phraseology of Patanjali his major obstacle is self-esteem....the gulf between the focus of consciousness and the world of physical expression is greater. The sense of duality, of the "flesh warring against the spirit" reaches a maximum, and ultimately may cause such acute discomfort as to drive the man almost against his will to an exploration of further possibilities of living [i.e., yoga practice]. (Coster, 1972:234-235)

Coster has focused on the rational aspect of a self divided. This is an interesting point because one usually thinks of mysticism being at least non-rational, if not anti-rational. However the point at which mystics are reported to go "beyond" rationality is usually during mystical experiences. At the beginning of the mystical life, i.e., during a mystical struggle, a desire to be free of the domination of the passions is frequently reported and hence a replacement for the passions as a source of direction is required. Temporary intuitions or insights into the meaning of sacred texts play some role, but the mind may not be sufficiently habituated to this source as to rely upon it completely. And yet the only other option is to yield to the pressures of desire. It is here that reason is apparently able, at least for some mystics, to exercise a transitional function, discerning the difference between intuition and impulse when this is required, and on other occasions deducing behavioral norms from general principles.

An experience of mystical struggle consists of a stimulus and a response. The stimulus is the condition of the divided self, the dimensions of which are indicated in the above citations from studies of the mystical life. The response, can be subsumed under the labels meditation and asceticism. The passage from Enomiya-Lasalle mentions that meditation affects the moral life of retreatants. In other words it is Enomiya-Lasalle's opinion, based on the observation of Zen practitioners, that meditation plays a role in resolving the ethical dimension of the inner conflict in the direction of the ideal.

A practice not unconnected with meditation is that of spiritual reading, and as V.H. Datte points out in his work, *The yoga of the saints*, the effect of this practice is not so much to resolve the division within the self as to initiate it:[19]

The reading of spiritual literature....makes a man satisfied and not satisfied at the same time; satisfied so far as he is intellectually and intuitively convinced; and not satisfied so far as there is the intellectual understanding but no actual experience. In the case of a student of mere philosophy, there may not be any dissatisfaction or feeling of want; but in a Sadhaka [a follower of the mystical path], the spiritual literature creates the desire to have more and more of experience, and brings home to his mind the sense of weakness, finitude and helplessness. As such, the reading of spiritual literature awakens the Sadhaka to the need of making more efforts, of cultivating the moral virtues and of enhancing his meditation and devotion. (Datte, 1974:80)

Datte's remarks, of course, are based on data from various Hindu traditions. They have however a wider application as the following quotation from the autobiography of the Muslim mystic, Al-Ghazzali, will demonstrate:

When I had finished my examination of these [various theological] doctrines I applied myself to the study of Sufism....I acquired a thorough knowledge of their researches, and I learned all that was possible to learn of their methods by study and oral teaching. It became clear to me that the last stage could not be reached by mere instruction, but only by transport, ecstasy, and the transformation of the moral being. (Ghazzali, n.d.:46-47)

At this point in his life, Al-Ghazzali went on to experience an acute case of the divided self. Datte's point, and it is nicely illustrated in the life of Al-Ghazzali, is that as seekers, after meaning or purpose in life, continue in the study of the philosophy and methods of mystics, and in reading about the great exemplars of the mystical enterprise, there will develop within them a certainty of the direction that their lives ought to take. This solves the problem of meaninglessness, but at the same time it creates another problem: anxiety over the discrepancy between the newly accepted ideal and the seeker's actual condition. Thus spiritual reading serves to bring about, or augment, whatever division already exists within the self. Spiritual reading is usually regarded as relevant to the *beginning* of meditation. As aspiring mystics continue in their practice, often the next step is to undertake reflective meditation, and then various levels of one-pointed concentration until they attain an experience of ecstatic unification of consciousness.

Meditation is one response to the condition of the divided self; the other is asceticism. Restriction of movement, restriction of self-expression (i.e., periods of silence), withdrawal from the consolations of social intercourse, restriction of food and liquid intake, exposure to extremes of hot and cold weather, denial of customary comforts (even such elementary ones as bathing and changing clothes), sleep deprivation - these are some of the standard means adopted by a number of mystics to exercise control over what they have felt were their inordinate desires. Nicholson, commenting on the importance of mortification for many Muslim mystics, distinguishes between lower (outward) and higher (interior) types of mortification:

The principle of mortification is that the *nafs* should be weaned from those things to which it is accustomed, that it should be encouraged to resist its passions, that its pride should be broken, and that it should be brought through suffering and tribulation to recognise the vileness of its original nature and the impurity of its actions. Concerning the outward methods of mortification, such as fasting, silence, and solitude, a great deal might be written, but we must now pass on to the higher ethical discipline which completes the Path.

Self-mortification, as advanced Sufis understand it, is a moral transmutation of the inner man....the lower self...can and should be purged of its attributes, which are wholly evil. These attributes - ignorance, pride, envy, uncharitableness, etc. - are extinguished, and replaced by the opposite qualities, when the will is surrendered to God and when the mind is concentrated on Him. (Nicholson, 1975:40-41)

Nicholson's distinction is useful for placing the dimensions of a divided self in relation to each other. Self-mortification of the outward, or lower, kind appears to aid devotees of the spiritual path in exercising restraint over their passions or desires. Running concurrently with this struggle (or as part of this struggle) is an effort to live a life of virtue instead of one of vice. Also present is a third dimension: the attempt on the part of mystics to align themselves with ultimate reality as opposed to compliance with the usual social norms.

As the passions are brought under control, there seems to be less need for the outward forms of mortification. At this point "advanced" mystics have only to work on their moral and spiritual transformations. The conquest of the passions is the focus of Evelyn Underhill's stage of the purification of the self; the completion of the moral transformation takes place in the stage she refers to as the illumination of the self; and the final spiritual metamorphosis occurs in the dark night of the soul which ends in the unitive life. Following this review of the observations of scholars of particular mysticisms, the next step I want to take in explicating the experience of a mystical struggle is to examine the primary sources, personal documents of a select number of mystics and some manuals of mysticism, in order to lend weight to the features reported by scholars, and in order to discover further details.

Descriptions of the experience of a mystical struggle in personal documents

William James summarizes the dilemma of the divided self in the following terse phrase, "Wrong living; impotent aspirations," and refers to the classic statement found in Paul's letter to the Romans:[20]

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it

is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:19-24; RSV)

In these verses Paul (died circa 67) laments the fact that he is unable to do good; rather he finds himself following the "law of sin." Hence the conflict is to some extent an ethical one.

James also cites passages from Augustine's *Confessions*[21] that he says are "an account of the trouble of having a divided self which has never been surpassed." One of these citations is from Book VIII, Chapter 5:

The enemy had control of my will, and out of it he fashioned a chain and fettered me with it. For in truth lust is made out of a perverse will, and when lust is served, it becomes habit, and when habit is not resisted, it becomes necessity. By such links, joined one to another...a harsh bondage held me fast. A new will, which had begun within me, to wish freely to worship you and find joy in you...was not yet able to overcome that prior will, grown strong with age. Thus did my two wills, the one old, the other new, the first carnal, and the second spiritual, contend with one another, and by their conflict they laid waste my soul.

Thus I understood from my own experience what I had read, how "the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." I was in both camps, but I was more in that which I approved within myself than in that other which I disapproved within me. For now, in the latter, it was not so much myself, since in large part I suffered it against my will rather than did it voluntarily. Yet it was by me that this habit had been made so warlike against me, since I had come willingly to this point where I now willed not. (Augustine, 1960: 188-189)

Augustine (354-430) appears to be speaking about a situation similar to the one experienced by Paul, except that he is not explicitly describing an ethical dimension of his inner conflict. Instead we learn about two other dimensions. One of these can be called the volitional since a binary opposition expressed is the free will versus the enslaved will. The other dimension of his conflict is spiritual, or "flesh" versus "spirit." Augustine's attraction toward the spiritual is seen in the phrase, "A new will, which had begun within me, to wish freely to worship you and find joy in you..." We can see that while a volitional dimension can be distinguished from the spiritual one, at least with respect to this passage (and in fact for Augustine in general) it cannot really be separated from it.

Augustine's wish to find joy in God is only one pole of the spiritual dimension; the second pole is related in another passage also from Book Eight of the *Confessions*:

I was displeased with the course I followed in the world, and with my desires no longer aflame with hope of honor and wealth, as they had been, to bear so grievous a bondage was a very great burden to me. In comparison with your sweetness and the beauty of your house, which I loved, those things no longer gave me delight, but I was still tightly bound by love of women. (Augustine, 1960:182)

From this passage the details of his spiritual conflict emerge: on the one hand devotional feelings; on the other hand pleasure derived from material acquisitions, or from the recognition and admiration of others or from erotic stimulation and satisfaction.

In addition to relating details regarding the dimensions of his inner division, Augustine provides an account of the emotions he experienced:

Thus I was sick and *tormented*, and I upbraided myself much more bitterly than ever before. I twisted and turned in my chain, until it might be completely broken, although now I was scarcely held by it, but still held by it I was. Within the hidden depths of my soul, O Lord, you urged me on. By an austere mercy you redoubled the scourges of *fear* and *shame*, lest I should give in again...The nearer came that moment in time when I was to become something different, the greater *terror* did it strike into me...My lovers of old, trifles of trifles and vanities of vanities, held me back. They plucked at my fleshly garment, and they whispered softly: "Do you cast us off?" and "From that moment we shall no more be with you forever and ever!"...I felt great *shame*, for I still heard the murmurings of those trifles, and still I delayed and hung there in suspense. [My emphasis] (Augustine, 1960:199-201)

Torment, fear, terror and shame are explicitly mentioned by Augustine as those emotions that accompanied his spiritual struggle - the struggle between two wills. However what Augustine is talking about is not a mystical struggle proper, because although it is an experience of the divided self, it is not accompanied by a systematic program of asceticism and meditation. Augustine is describing the inner tension that precedes a point of commitment.

The Spanish Carmelite nun, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), in her description of the mystical struggle, focuses on the contrast between the favors, or emotional consolations, given to her by the Lord, and what she perceives as her faults:

...since I remembered the favors the Lord granted me in prayer and the many things I owed Him, and I saw how badly I was repaying Him, I could not endure it. And seeing my lack of amendment, I became extremely vexed about the many tears I was shedding over my faults, for neither were my resolutions nor were the hardships I suffered enough to keep me from placing myself in the occasion and falling again. They seemed fraudulent tears to me, and afterward the fault appeared to be greater, because I saw the wonderful favor the Lord bestowed in giving me these tears and such deep

repentance. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:52)

The emotions reported by Teresa are vexation, frustration and remorse; the division within herself is between God's graciousness and generosity versus Teresa's ingratitude and moral weakness. An even more striking example of the divided self is the following account from Teresa of Avila:

On the one hand God was calling me; on the other hand I was following the world. All the things of God made me happy; those of the world held me bound. It seems I desired to harmonize these two contraries - so inimical to one another - such as are the spiritual life and sensory joys, pleasures, and pastimes. In prayer I was having great trouble, for my spirit was not proceeding as lord but as slave. And so I was not able to shut myself within myself (which was my whole manner of procedure in prayer); instead, I shut within myself a thousand vanities. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:62-63)

Here we can see a dimension of the inner conflict similar to the one reported by Augustine: pleasure in serving (and experiencing) God versus pleasure in the vanities of the ordinary social world. However in this passage can also be found a different dimension of the divided self: one that has to do more with the form of consciousness than its content. Teresa discloses that in prayer (i.e., mental prayer or meditation) she is unable to concentrate or focus her mind. Instead her mind is given over to distractions. Hence we have a formal dimension of unified consciousness versus dispersed consciousness.

Since Teresa had read Augustine and Augustine had read Paul, one might suspect that such reports were possibly no more than a convention of a particular genre of Christian literature. But in spite of similarities between, e.g., the confessions of Augustine and Teresa, there are clearly differences as well. Augustine's temptations are erotic whereas Teresa's preoccupations are of a romantic type. This is not explicit in the above cited passages, but it is clear from other passages in the *Life* as a whole. Augustine places more emphasis on the will, than does Teresa. He also states that he is beyond the point of being tempted by honour and fortune, whereas a desire to be well thought of by others is a temptation for Teresa. The impression one has of Teresa is that she sees herself, in this period of her life, as being distracted by trivialities, or little sins, instead of the serious work of God. Again this is not explicit in the above passages but is an impression based on the text as a whole. Augustine's view of his sins is that they are important, albeit shameful, sins.

Part of the difference between Augustine and Teresa can be accounted for by the fact that the former is in a pre-commitment phase whereas the latter is in a post-commitment phase of the divided self. Teresa of Avila is engaged in a mystical struggle proper. She is following the routine of convent life and she is practicing meditation. Much of the rest of the difference between the two is probably accounted for by differences in socialization patterns for males and females. And whatever differences remain can be explained in terms of variations in culture, historical period, family background and individual temperament. However the point to be noted is that within the general pattern of narrating

an interior struggle, there is room for the unique features of any given individual's experience.

The fact of individual differences in the reporting of a divided self inside or outside of the context of a mystical struggle suggests that the phenomenon is not merely a literary convention but an actual occurrence. Additional support for this position is provided by the fact that self-reports of a divided self are not particular to one religious tradition. They are found in the personal documents of other religious traditions as well.[22] But even if it were the case that the mystical struggle existed only in mystical literature, and not in mystics who produced the literature, the question arises: Why are reports of a mystical struggle found in so many different religions and periods of history? The answer, I suggest, is that a mystical struggle corresponds to a stage anticipated by a number of mystically oriented persons.

Subsequent to an investigation of various religious doctrines and sects, the Muslim theologian, Al-Ghazzali (1058-1111), turned to a study of Islamic mysticism and arrived at the conclusion that true Sufism consists not of intellectual analysis but rather of mystical experiences and the ascetical preparation required for such experiences:

I saw that one can only hope for salvation by devotion and the conquest of one's passions, a procedure which presupposes renouncement and detachment from this world or falsehood in order to turn towards eternity and meditation on God. Finally, I saw that the only condition of success was to sacrifice honours and riches and to sever the ties and attachments of worldly life. (Ghazzali, n.d.:48)

The division that is set forth in these remarks is: meditation upon (or devotion to) God, control over the passions and detachment from the ordinary social world versus preoccupation with honours and riches, which come from social involvement when the passions are dominant, to the exclusion of interest in things eternal.

However Al-Ghazzali's insight did not result in a decisive course of action. On the contrary, it precipitated an acute case of a divided self:

Coming seriously to consider my state, I found myself bound down on all sides by these trammels. Examining my actions, the most fair-seeming of which was my lecturing and professorial occupations, I found to my surprise that I was engrossed in several studies of little value, and profitless as regards my salvation. I probed the motives for my teaching and found that...it was only actuated by a vain desire of honour and reputation. I perceived that I was on the edge of an abyss, and that without an immediate conversion I should be doomed to eternal fire. In these reflections I spent a long time. Still a prey to uncertainty, one day I decided to leave Bagdad and to give up everything; the next day I gave up my resolution. I advanced one step and immediately relapsed. In the morning I was sincerely resolved only to occupy myself with the future life; in the evening a crowd of carnal thoughts assailed

and dispersed my resolutions. On the one side the world kept me bound to my post in the chains of covetousness, on the other side the voice of religion cried to me, "Up! Up! [T]hy life is nearing its end, and thou hast a long journey to make..." Then my resolve was strengthened, I wished to give up all and flee; but the Tempter, returning to the attack, said, "You are suffering from a transitory feeling; don't give way to it, for it will soon pass. If you obey it, if you give up this fine position, this honourable post exempt from trouble and rivalry, this seat of authority safe from attack, you will regret it later on without being able to recover it."

Thus I remained, torn asunder by the opposite forces of earthly passions and religious aspiration... (Ghazzali, n.d.:48-50)

In addition to such dimensions as spirit versus the world and uncontrolled versus controlled passions, a split in the form of consciousness similar to that referred to by Teresa of Avila can also be found here: "...a crowd of carnal thoughts assailed and dispersed my resolutions." The opposition is between a consciousness *focused* on religious aspirations as opposed to a consciousness preoccupied with a *multiplicity* of objections. Hence the future mystic speaks of his resolutions being *dispersed*.

Finally Al-Ghazzali did leave Bagdad. His experience of a divided self continued but it was now met by a disciplinary program of asceticism and meditation:

At last I left Bagdad, giving up all my fortune...I then betook myself to Syria, where I remained for two years, which I devoted to retirement, meditation, and devout exercises. I only thought of self-improvement and discipline and of purification of the heart by prayer in going through the forms of devotion which the Sufis taught me. I used to live a solitary life in the Mosque of Damascus, and was in the habit of spending my days on the minaret...

From thence I proceeded to Jerusalem, and every day secluded myself in the Sanctuary of the Rock. After that I felt a desire to accomplish the Pilgrimage...Mecca, Medina...After visiting the shrine of the friend of God (Abraham), I went to the Hedjaz. Finally, the longings of my heart and the prayers of my children brought me back to my country although I was so firmly resolved at first never to revisit it. At any rate I meant, if I did return, to live there [in solitude] and in religious meditation; but events, family cares and vicissitudes of [life] changed my resolutions and troubled my meditative calm. However irregular the intervals which I could give to devotional ecstasy, my confidence in it did not diminish; and the more I was diverted by hindrances, the more steadfastly I returned to it. (Ghazzali, n.d.:52-53)

Again in this passage Al-Ghazzali describes two sets of oppositions within himself. There is the contrast between religious aspiration and material, or worldly, concerns; and parallel to this opposition is the contrast between two forms of consciousness - i.e., between a *unified* aspiration or resolution and a *multiplicity* of opposing thoughts. In other words the nature of his divided self is as much one of form as it is of content. The content is one of an opposition between a higher and a lower set of

values; the form is one of an opposition between a mind that is unified and one that is distracted or dispersed.

A diary of a nineteenth-century Hasidic Rabbi, Isaac Eizik of Komarno (1806-1874), contains an account of the divided self as well as a description of the severe ascetical regimen he adopted:

...I attained to many lofty stages of the holy spirit, the result of my industry in Torah study and in divine worship. The truth be told, I did not appreciate at the time that it was not the result of my own efforts since I was still remote from true worship. But after reflecting on the matter I separated myself entirely from the world. It happened in the year 5583 (=1823) at the beginning of winter. It was my habit to sleep only two hours a day, spending the rest of the time studying Torah, the Talmud, the Codes, the Zohar, the writings of our Master (Isaac Luria) and the works of Rabbi Moses Cordovero. But I fell away from all these stages for three months and was in a state of immense smallness of soul. Many harsh and demonic forces (*kelippot*) rose against me to dissuade me from studying the Torah. Worse than all was a state of melancholy into which I was hurled. Yet my heart was as firm as a rock. During this time the only pleasure I allowed myself was to drink a little water and eat a morsel of bread daily. I had no delight whatever in the Torah I studied or the prayers I recited. The cold was very severe and the demonic forces extremely powerful so that I actually stood equally balanced between two paths, depending on how I would choose. Much bitterness passed over my head as a result of these blandishments, really more bitter than a thousand times death. But once I had overcome these blandishments, suddenly, in the midst of the day...a great light fell upon me...From that time onwards I began to serve the Creator of all with a marvelous, unvarying illumination. The blandishments had power over me no longer. Afterwards I fell once again for a time so I came to realize that I must journey to the saints who would draw down His light...upon me since I already had a refined vessel wherewith to receive the light. (Jacobs, 1976:240-241)

In this passage the opposition is between "lofty stages of the holy spirit" and concentrated study of religious texts, on the one hand, and "immense smallness of soul," a falling away from study and the consequent experience of temptation by demonic forces, on the other. What is narrated here is more than an account of a divided self; it is one of a mystical struggle. In addition to his study of (or reflective meditation upon) religious, ethical and mystical literature, Rabbi Isaac subjected himself to restricted food and liquid intake, sleep deprivation, social isolation, and exposure to the severe cold of early winter.

In the autobiographical verses of the seventeenth-century Maharashtrian saint, Bahina Bai (1628-1700), can be found a description of her mystical experiences as well as her mystical struggle. Bahina produced an autobiography, but as her translator states, the story contained therein ends before she embarked upon anything resembling a mystical struggle:

Her autobiography covers only the details of the early years of her life. For her later years with their mental struggles, temptations, perplexities, and thoughts of approaching death, one has to gather from her verses such details as she has made possible. (Abbott, 1929:iii-iv)

In fact Bahina's autobiography ends with what Underhill (1960:176-197) calls an awakening of the self, i.e., the first of the five stages in Underhill's model of the mystical path. According to Underhill's model the stage that follows upon an awakening is that of a mystical struggle and descriptions of it can be found in a number of Bahina's verses.

These descriptions are frequently cast in the form of a dialogue between her higher self (the self struggling to realize mystical union, or liberation) and her "heart" (a lower self). In the following example Bahina is at a point where she has gained a measure of self-mastery, but is still apprehensive regarding "attachment to worldly things:"

Oh my heart, your nature of attachment to worldly things was formed in a former birth, therefore the power of worldly things is great in you. I, therefore, pray you to listen to me. I have made my organs of sense willingly obedient to me. But if you do not mind what I tell you, I shall not let anything remain of my body. I shall fast, I shall stop my breathing. In the hottest season I shall sit in the midst of five fires (four at the sides, and the sun above); I shall torture my body by hanging head downward over a smoking fire; I shall wander to all the sacred bathing places of the earth; I shall adopt extreme fasting; I shall put my body to the saw. Then what will you gain by all this? Says Bahini, "Oh my heart, obey what I tell you. If you don't, you will have to go begging." (Bahina Bai, 1929:74-75)

The passage is both an affirmation of progress already undergone, i.e., she has distanced herself from that part of her which is attached to "worldly things" and she has made her "organs of sense willingly obedient," and at the same time a commitment to further progress, i.e., to complete subordination of the "heart" through ascetical practices, if they prove necessary.

There can also be found in her verses a commitment to meditation as a means of achieving success in her mystical struggle:

I have found Right-thinking (*viveka*) and Indifference to worldly things (*vairagya*) as the true way. So now, Oh heart, who is going to pay any respect to you! I shall seize and compel you to contemplate. Then at once the (seductive) power of my bodily organs will decline. I shall make you the judge of yourself. Oh heart, look to yourself. Says Bahini, "In gaining the credit of this you will be the gainer, and find yourself in peace." (Bahina Bai, 1929:75)

In Bahina's model of the person, the heart is not to be rejected, but rather purified of its attachments and brought into subordination; when this happens the heart is possessed by the principle of

goodness (*sattvaguna*) and the result is good deeds (Bahina Bai, 1929:93-94). Thus her notion of the heart closely resembles the Sufi concept of *nafs*. Strictly speaking the heart is not one pole in the mystical struggle, rather it is the ground upon which the struggle takes place.

In the first verse, cited above, Bahina threatens her heart, in the second, she holds out the promise of peace if the heart will only be compliant. In the following verse the tone is even more conciliatory:

Through Right-thinking I will give attention to the Vedanta philosophy. I will acquire the non-dualistic experience of oneness with Brahma. Oh heart, I will lay this wager before you, therefore, give yourself to knowing the supreme Atman. The right result of listening (to the scriptures) is meditation. And in this deep meditation there is rest (for the soul). Says Bahini, "Oh heart, become a good heart. Why should we quarrel from now on?" (Bahina Bai, 1929:78)

In subsequent verses Bahina reports her experience of non-dualistic oneness. Of interest in the verse just quoted is the connection between spiritual reading (or in this case listening) and meditation. Thus sacred, and in particular mystical, texts both create the problem of the divided self, as Datte noted, and at the same time give rise to one of the means, i.e., meditation, of solving the problem.

A brief but richly detailed description of inner conflict can be found in an autobiographical account of the process of self-cultivation written by the Neo-Confucian Kao P'an Lung (1562-1626):

In 1593 I was banished because I had spoken out on certain affairs [he had defended some officials who were unjustly dismissed from their positions], but it did not disturb my thoughts. However as I was returning (home) I tasted the ways of the world and my mind became once again more agitated.

In the year 1594 during the Autumn I headed for Chieh-yang. I realized that within myself, principle and desire waged battle upon battle without peaceful resolution. In Wu-lin I talked for several days with Lu Ku-ch'iao and Wu Tzu-wang. One day Ku-ch'iao suddenly asked, "What is the original substance like?" What I said was vague though I replied by saying, "Without sound or smell." However this came only from my mouth, not from a true understanding. (Taylor, 1978:126)

These two paragraphs contain several interesting features. Kao contrasts his response to his banishment with his response to his having "tasted the ways of the world." Although banishment is a source of shame, not to mention inconvenience, it did not disturb Kao because his behaviour was in defense of justice. However his failure in the pursuit of his ideal did result in inner conflict. But as in the case of Al-Ghazzali the conflict is in both the form and the content of consciousness. With respect to the latter, the opposition is between principle (the ideal) and desire (for the "ways of the world"). The opposition in the form of consciousness is between an agitated state of mind and (by implication) a calm (or undisturbed) and unified state. The fact that Kao could become so easily agitated suggests

that his experience of the calm and unified mental state was neither frequent nor profound. This is confirmed by his confession that his response to Lu Ku-ch'iao's question was "only from my mouth, not from a true understanding." Finally it should be noted that Kao describes his emotional condition as one of agitation or a lack of inner peace.

Kao's response to his experience of inner discord, and the apathy that resulted from it, was a firm resolution to pursue the ideal of sagehood:

The night before I crossed over the river the moonlight was pure and clear. I sat beside the Liu-ho Tower. The river and mountains were clear and inviting. Good friends urged me to drink more. In this most agreeable of times I suddenly felt unhappy as if something were constraining me. I exerted myself to rouse my joy, but my spirit did not accompany me. Late in the night when the others had gone I went on board the boat. In a sudden realization I said to myself, "How is it that today the scenery was as it was and yet my feelings were like this?" Making a thorough investigation I realized that being totally ignorant of the Way, my mind and body had nothing to draw on. Thus I strongly affirmed, "If on this trip I do not penetrate the matter, then this life will have been in vain." (Taylor, 1978:126)

The emotion reported here is unhappiness; Kao also relates that he was unable to respond with joy to stimuli that usually provoke this emotion.

In the paragraph that immediately follows Kao describes the means he undertook to achieve his goal. The emphasis is on study and meditation (which in the Neo-Confucian tradition is referred to as quiet-sitting):

The next day in the boat I earnestly arranged the mat and seriously set up rules and regulations. For one half of the day I practised quiet-sitting while for the other half I studied. In the quiet-sitting I did not settle on any one specific way, but just followed the methods Ch'eng and Chu [have] spoken of generally, practising one by one: with integrity and reverence consider quietude as fundamental, observe joy, anger, sorrow and happiness before they arise, sit in silence and purify the mind, realize for oneself the Principle of Heaven. Whether I was standing, sitting, eating, or resting, these thoughts were continuously present. At night I did not undress and only when I was weary to the bone did I fall asleep. Upon waking I returned to sitting, repeating and alternating these various methods of practice. When the substance of the mind was clear and peaceful there was a sense of filling all Heaven and earth, but it did not last. (Taylor, 1978:126-127)

From this passage we learn that Kao's ascetical practice included sleep deprivation and the immobility and social isolation that accompanies protracted periods of quiet-sitting or meditation. We also are given details regarding the nature of meditation - it is the practice of mindfulness, a fundamental

meditation exercise employed in Buddhism. Subsequently Kao had an experience in which he perceived the unity of all things - an experience of enlightenment (or *wu*) - which experience he integrated into his self-cultivation (Taylor, 1978:92-93). Thus for Kao P'an-lung there is a process of development, found in many other mystics: the experience of the divided self precipitates a resolution to follow a discipline involving study, meditation and some degree of asceticism; this discipline, in turn, appears to play a role in facilitating a series of revelatory ecstasies.

A twentieth-century example of a personal account of the divided self can be found in the autobiography of a Japanese woman, Satomi Myodo (1896-1978).[23] Her experience of inner discord marks the beginning of a religious quest which led her to attend lectures given by members of various religions, to follow a Nichiren Buddhist monk for a brief period, to train as a Shinto *miko*, or medium, and finally to become a Zen Buddhist nun. Her experience of the divided self begins at the point in her life when she has just entered a relationship with an orphaned nineteen-year old male who was a member of a gang of youths which frequented the theatre where Satomi worked as an actress:

I immediately quit acting and began a life with Ryo-chan. I felt I had to watch over this wild youth until he attained maturity. When we started living together, he became completely amenable. Like a gentle pet lamb, he silently fell in line. He was innocent and genuine. I, however, quickly became aware of my own ugliness. Anger, jealousy, and all the other vices that seemed to have lain dormant now began to turn up constantly. I wanted to tell Ryo-chan off and drive him away. I ground my teeth and struggled to control these feelings, but in nine out of ten cases I was defeated. Even when I unexpectedly found myself succeeding in this struggle, my success proved temporary, and soon I reverted to nastiness. I keenly felt that I was the one who needed to be rescued. For me to try to rescue Ryo-chan was a complete impossibility and pure conceit. Carried away with emotion, I had completely overestimated myself. I did not stop and think. Unconsciously, I had decided that I was a correct and pure person. How shameful! Thus I made an abrupt turn. Until now I had sought to help others. Now I sought to help myself. (Myodo, 1987:29)

Ethical purity, and control over emotions, are set in opposition to being carried away by emotions, especially negative emotions. One of those negative emotions mentioned is overt anger. The experience reported in the above passage occurred when Satomi was approximately 26 years of age. In her autobiography she provides a report of her ascetical response to a similar state of inner discord which she experienced four years later:

...I couldn't help being aware of my moral ugliness. Tortured with guilt, all I could think of was to somehow wipe away the defilements with which I was stained and to develop the ability to understand myself. Thus I zealously began ascetic practice. At first, I would take a vow and set about my asceticism for set periods of seven, fourteen, or twenty-one days. As might be expected, during the

period of ascetic practice, with my body purified, deluded thoughts had no chance to put in an appearance. I felt that, in accordance with my goal, I was becoming completely pure. However, as soon as I fulfilled my vow and took a breather, my true character revealed itself, and in the end I saw that I was no better off than I had been before.

I was discouraged. "While I'm practising asceticism there's no problem at all; but as soon as I stop, I'm an ordinary befouled person. Hmm, they say you shouldn't stop ascetic practice until you lose consciousness and fall into a trance. If I do that, then surely when I revive from the trance, there won't be a bit of defilement left and I'll be an entirely new person." Thus I made the trance itself my goal and took up a final cold-water asceticism. For thirty days in the dead of winter, wanting the water temperature to be as cold as possible, I put water into a basin and left it overnight to freeze. At the crack of dawn the next morning, I broke the ice and poured the water over myself. At night, too, after everyone had gone to sleep, I did the same. I wanted to pass out! Nonetheless, I didn't pass out as I wanted. "Try harder! Harder!" I thought. After the morning water asceticism, stark naked, I tried to practice meditation, sitting out on a freezing concrete washstand. But no matter how long I sat out there, I still did not faint. Then, finally, winter passed. I began to hate myself. (Myodo, 1987:46-47)

In this account of her experience of a divided self two very specific emotional states that constitute the division are identified - *frustration* at her incapacity to enter into a meditative trance and *guilt* (or introjected anger) in the face of her perceived moral ugliness. And here again we have references both to the content of consciousness (purity versus defilement) and the form of consciousness (a trance state, devoid of thoughts, versus [deluded] thoughts). Another point worth remarking upon is that Satomi relates moral purity with an absence of deluded thoughts and associates this condition with a purified body resulting from asceticism.

From an examination of descriptions of the divided self found in the personal documents of several mystics belonging to a number of different religious traditions it can be seen that the division is in terms both of the content and the form of consciousness. The content may be an ethical opposition (good versus bad) or it may be a religious hierarchy of values (God versus the world) or it may be a conflict in terms of willpower or personal competence (control over passions versus an enslaved will). The poles of the formal dimension are in terms of a unified, or concentrated, versus a distracted or dispersed mind. In some accounts both the formal and the content dimensions of consciousness are referred to; in others one dimension alone is described.

Many of the above passages illustrate a response to inner turmoil found in numerous mystics, subsequent to the point of commitment - an attempt to control what is perceived as the lower nature through asceticism and an attempt to concentrate or unify consciousness through meditation. On the other hand the functions of these two sets of practices sometimes overlap or are interchanged. For example Satomi Myodo reports that asceticism helped her to succeed at concentrating her mind during meditation.

The passages cited also suggest a difference between the pre-commitment phase of the divided self

and the post-commitment phase, in terms of emotions experienced. Passages describing the pre-commitment period speak of torment, fear, terror and shame (Augustine); uncertainty (Al-Ghazzali); agitation, lack of peace and unhappiness (Kao P'an-lung); and (overt) anger, jealousy and (implicitly) pride (e.g., in Satomi Myodo). The emotions referred to in citations from the post-commitment period of the purification of the self tend to be of a self-critical inward-turning nature. Teresa of Avila mentions vexation, frustration (with herself) and remorse (with tears); Isaac Eizik speaks of "smallness of Soul" and melancholy; and Satomi Myodo refers to frustration with herself, guilt (introjected anger), self-hate and implicit self-disgust at her defiled condition. Finally, mention is made of determination (e.g., in the accounts by Al-Ghazzali and Isaac Eizik).[24]

Mystical manuals and inspirational literature

Reports found in personal documents are valuable primary sources for the study of the mystical struggle. Another set of useful descriptions are those provided by inspirational literature from within a given mystical tradition and manuals of mysticism, written for instructors or for potential mystics themselves. In an address, intended for delivery at a conference on great religious traditions held in Lahore, in 1896, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya movement in Islam, presents a mystical stage-model that makes use of the three types of *nafs*, referred to by Annemarie Schimmel in the passage cited above.[25] The first level of soul is *nafs-i-ammara*, or the soul of the uncontrolled passions, which because they are uncontrolled inevitably lead the person into conduct that meets with social disapproval. The third and final level is that of the *nafs-i-mutmainnah*, or the soul that is united with God. In between these two stages is that of the *nafs-i-lawamma*:

The source of the moral conditions of man is called the *nafs-i-lawamma*, or the self-accusing spirit (conscience)....[it] has been so called because it upbraids a man for the doing of an evil deed and strongly hates unbridled passions and appetites. Its tendency...is to generate noble qualities and a virtuous disposition...and to restrain the carnal passions and sensual desires so as to keep them within due bounds. Although the self-accusing soul upbraids itself for its faults and frailties, yet it is not the master of its passions, nor is it powerful enough to practice virtue exclusively. The weakness of the flesh has the upper hand sometimes and then it stumbles and falls down....But it does not persist in its fault, every failure bringing only fresh reproach to the mind. In short, at this stage the soul is anxious to attain moral excellence and revolts against disobedience which is characteristic of the first, or the animal, stage, but does, notwithstanding its yearning for virtue, sometimes deviate from the line of duty. (Ahmad, 1937:4-6)

In this statement we can recognize once again a divided self. Subsequent to the outline of the three souls or stages of human spiritual progress a great part of the address deals with vices to be avoided and virtues to be cultivated in the middle stage (*nafs-i-lawamma*). In this context a three-stage model of charity is presented:

The lowest stage is that in which a man does good to his benefactors only....From this there is an advancement to the second stage in which a man takes initiative to do good to others. It consists in bestowing favors upon persons who cannot claim them as a right. This quality, excellent as it is, occupies [only] a middle position. To it often attaches the infirmity that the doer expects thanks or prayers in return for the good he does and the slightest opposition from the object of compassion is termed ungratefulness....this is an infirmity attached to the noble deed of doing goodness to another that the doer is led sometimes to remind the person...of his obligation or [to] boast of it. A third stage...is free from every imperfection. (Ahmad, 1937:63-64)

The second stage of charity corresponds to the second stage of the soul, or the *nafs-i-lawamma*; and so this passage provides a few more details about the nature of the ethical dimension of a divided self. Persons at this stage are concerned to be charitable toward others and not just for an immediate material benefit, but for the sake of the recipients themselves. However they are prone to resentment at any sign of what they interpret as ingratitude and they are still concerned to receive social approbation.

Enomiya-Lasalle's observations and analysis of the mystical struggle in *zazen*, or Zen Buddhist meditation, have been cited above. But in spite of his apparent adaptation to Japanese culture and his evident appreciation of the Zen Buddhist tradition, it would be reasonable to harbor at least a suspicion that Enomiya-Lasalle is predisposed to interpret the Zen struggle in terms of morality because of his Christian background and especially his Jesuit training. For this reason it is instructive to consider an account given by an indigenous Zen instructor, Katsuki Sekida. Sekida's description of the developmental process in Zen takes the form of a commentary on the well-known ox-herding pictures. His interpretation of the fourth picture is as follows:

At this stage his *kensho* [awakening[26]] has been confirmed. However, as you see in the picture, the ox [his instinctual nature] is inclined to run away wilfully, and the man has to hold it back with all his might. In fact, he is experienced enough now to understand the saying, "Heaven and earth and I are of the same root; all things and I are of the same source," but in his everyday life he cannot control his mind as he wishes. Sometimes he burns with anger; sometimes he is possessed by greed, blinded by jealousy, and so on. Unworthy thoughts and ignoble actions occur as of old. He is exhausted by the struggle against his passions and desires, which seem uncontrollable. This is something he did not bargain for: in spite of having attained *kensho* he seems to be as mean-spirited as ever. Indeed, *kensho* has seemingly been the cause of these new afflictions. He wants to behave in a certain way but finds himself doing the opposite. His head is in the air, but his body is lying at the foot of the cliff. However, he cannot let go the bridle and tries to keep the ox under control, even though it seems to be beyond him. (Sekida, 1975:226-227)

Here we see a divided self described primarily in ethical terms. Sekida does discuss mystical development in terms of the unification of consciousness through meditation, but the ethical dimension is clearly a significant one.

The importance of engaging in a mystical struggle prior to seeking intimacy with God, is emphasized by Obadyah Maimonides (1228-1265), the grandson of Moses Maimonides. His manual on the mystical path, *The treatise of the pool*, was intended as a commentary, or enlargement, on the concluding chapters of his grandfather's *Guide for the perplexed.* Toward the end of that work Obadyah says,

The whole significance of the foregoing is that the individual should not venture upon this task [i.e., ecstatic intimacy with God] until he hath subdued his instincts, vanquished his passions and weakened his ambitions. For if he embark upon (this Path) while yet fettered to worldly affairs, he will not find success `and he will bring upon himself a curse rather than a blessing'. (Gen. XXVII:12) However, if thou severest thy thoughts from the pleasures of this world, turning toward God in thy heart and departing not from His door, then wilt thou be delivered from the imperfection and accidents of this nether world. Upon being assailed by matter's exigencies, such as eating and drinking, thou shalt be confused with shame... (Obadyah, 1981:114)

The curse referred to by Obadyah (1981:95) is the danger of becoming demented. What is recommended in the passage just cited, for those who desire mystical intimacy with God, is to take no pleasure in the things of this "nether world" but rather to concentrate the mind on God. For Obadyah, a struggle is important, but it should not be violent, as he indicates in the following advice:

The sole aim of the sages in the composing of their works for us was that we should heal therewith our souls and thus allay the difficulty of the task ahead. Indeed, none may travel this path save he that hath subdued and dominated this beastlike matter. But deal gently with it lest it resist thee. (Obadyah, 1981:104-105)

One means to success in the mystical struggle referred to by Obadyah is the practice of meditation. And he urges aspiring mystics to persevere in the face of whatever distractions they might encounter:

Know my son, that if thou desirest to achieve the state of solitude (*halwa*) and a worldly affair crosseth thy mind whilst thou art seated in contemplation, I urge thee to expel and banish it from thine abode and bar the door in its face; `above all that thou guardest, keep thy heart'. (Pr. IV:23) Pursue thy task strengthening thy zeal, and thou wilt not find it difficult to remove this worldly thought from thy mind... (Obadyah, 1981:104)

If mystical practitioners "keep the door of their hearts," i.e., if they daily concentrate their minds on God and especially avoid the temptation to consider transient pleasures, they will have no trouble in overcoming distractions while on a meditation retreat (*halwa*).

The next set of excerpts are from *The path of the just*, written by an eighteenth-century Kabbalist and poet, Moses Chaim Luzzatto. Luzzatto's Kabbalistic works were the subject of controversy, and were subsequently denounced, in his native Venice, and so he moved to Amsterdam, where he refrained from openly teaching Kabbalah. It was during his stay in Amsterdam that Luzzatto wrote *The path of the just*, and so the work has the appearance of being primarily a description of ethical development. However Luzzatto explicitly states that the ultimate goal is intimacy with God; ethical perfection by itself is an inferior goal:

...the majority of people cannot be saintly. It is enough if they are righteous. But upon the select few who desire to achieve closeness to the Blessed One...devolves the fulfilment of the saints' higher duties, those which the others cannot fulfil, namely, the provisions of Separation [i.e., asceticism]...it is impossible for all the individuals within a nation to be on an identical level (levels varying in accordance with intelligence), those individuals who have not completely conditioned themselves for the reception of the love of the Blessed One and of His Divine Presence are enabled to attain to it through the chosen few who have. (Luzzatto, 1980:189)

While *The path of the just* traces a series of stages in ethical development, for the "chosen few," this development is preparatory to reunification of consciousness in mystical intimacy with the ultimate reality or God. This is indicated Luzzato's last chapter on holiness (as well as in several references throughout the work).

Luzzatto's description of a divided self occurs in his chapter on "Cleanliness," a quality that refers to a sinless condition:

You will note the distinction between the Watchful and the Clean man (although they are closely related). The first is Watchful of his deeds...however, he is still not so much master of himself as to keep his heart from being pulled along by natural lust and inclining him to rationalize in relation to things whose evil is not thus acknowledged. For even though he exerts himself to conquer his evil inclination and to subdue his desires, he will not, because of this, change his nature; he will not remove bodily lust from his heart. All he will be able to do is overcome it and be governed...by reason. The darkness of earthiness, however, will still persist in its work of persuasion and deception. But when a person habituates himself to Watchfulness to the point where he completely cleanses himself of the acknowledged sins, and accustoms himself to zealous Divine service so that love and yearning for his Creator grow strong within him, then the force of this habituation will draw him farther from the

realm of earthiness and direct his mind towards spiritual perfection. Eventually he will attain to perfect Cleanliness, a state in which physical desire is extinguished from his heart....One who has attained to the trait of Cleanliness has unquestionably reached a very high level of achievement, for he has stood up in the face of a raging battle and emerged victorious. (Luzzatto, 1980:107-111)

Here we have a description of the basis of a divided self as understood by Luzzatto. Efforts to be watchful will at best result in a measure of self-control, but not a total transformation of human nature - "he will not remove bodily lust from his heart." Although change will ultimately take place if mystics persevere, it will do so only in the future. During the period of the divided self the intentions of the mystics, according to Luzzatto, are at odds with their deeply rooted inclinations. It is interesting to note that during the period of the divided self, the goal is to overcome "bodily lust" and be subordinated to reason. As seen above, Coster stated that reason played a similar role in the Yoga and Samkhya understanding of human development.

The means recommended by Luzzatto as efficacious in the acquisition of cleanliness include "the perpetual study of *halachic* and ethical pronouncements" (Luzzatto, 1980:175) and the practice of ascetical restraints, which Luzzatto refers to as "Separation:"

Separation is certainly necessary and essential. Our Sages of blessed memory exhorted us concerning it..."One who engages in fasting is called `holy,' a fact which may be deduced from the case of a Nazarite....In relation to Rabbeinu Hakadosh they said (Kethuvoth 104a) that before he died he held up his ten fingers and said, "It is perfectly known to You that I derived no enjoyment from this world, not even to the extent of my little finger"....there is no worldly pleasure upon whose heels some sin does not follow. For example, food and drink when free of all dietary prohibitions are permitted, but filling oneself brings in its wake the putting off of the yoke of Heaven, and the drinking of wine brings in its wake licentiousness and other varieties of evil....There is no question as to the permissibility of cohabitation with one's wife, but still, ablutions were instituted for those who had seminal emissions, so that Scholars should not be steadily with their wives, like roosters. Even though the act itself is permissible it implants in a person a lust for it which might draw him on to what is forbidden....they said of R. Eleazar (Nedarim 20b) that even in the proper hour and the correct time he would...imagine a demon was compelling him, in order to cancel out the feeling of pleasure. (Luzzatto, 1980:181-185)

Elsewhere Luzzato emphasizes the importance of solitude and reflection. At the beginning of his work, he recommends regular reflective meditation and self-examination as a means of initiating a mystical struggle:

...a man must constantly - at all times, and particularly during a regularly appointed time of solitude - reflect upon the true path (according to the ordinance of Torah) that a man must walk upon. After engaging in such reflection he will come to consider whether or not his deeds travel along this path.

(Luzzatto, 1980:43)

Reflective meditation is normally a means to be undertaken at the beginning of a mystical path, it would appear, because it helps in the determination of an ultimate goal of life and in so doing provides a criterion according to which behavior can be judged ("...he will come to consider whether or not his deeds travel along this path"), and hence makes possible the interior conflict between ideal and actual behavior. If the goal of holiness or intimacy with God increases in salience, then the practice of separation, or ascetical detachment, is joined to that of reflective meditation. Both asceticism and meditation (or solitude) appear to play a critical role in the effort to attain the ultimate goal of holiness as Luzzatto indicates in the final chapter of his guide:

It is to be seen that the means of acquiring this trait [of holiness] are much separation, intense contemplation of the secrets of Divine governance and the mysteries of creation, and understanding of the majesty of the Blessed One and his excellence, to the point where one cleaves to Him....

What assists one towards the acquisition of this trait is much solitude and separation, which by eliminating the claims upon a person, allows his soul to grow in strength and to unite itself with the Creator. (Luzzatto, 1980:333-335)

The object of asceticism and meditation here appears to be a reduction in the multiplicity of claims made upon aspiring mystics and to facilitate the concentration of their minds upon a single object (God). In this way emotional desire for the mystical goal is increased and previous desires for the multiplicity of competing interests are extinguished.

The importance of meditation and asceticism are also emphasized by the Roman Catholic priest Adolphe Tanquerey in a treatise on the mystical life which was very popular in Catholic seminaries in the mid-twentieth century. Tanquerey makes use of an ancient Christian model of mystical development (also the basis of Underhill's model) - that of the three ways: purgative, illuminative and unitive. His description of beginners in the spiritual life, i.e., those in the purgative way, is as follows:

In the spiritual life, *beginners* are those that habitually live in a state of grace and have a certain desire for perfection, but who have still attachments to venial [i.e., relatively less important] sin and are exposed to fall now and then into grievous faults. (Tanquerey, 1930:305)

Following this brief general description of the three defining characteristics of "beginners" Tanquerey further elaborates on each of the three. Of the characteristic of "attachment to venial sin," he says:

[The beginners] have, however, *some attachment to deliberate venial sin* and, therefore, they

frequently fall. This distinguishes them from souls already advancing along the way of perfection, who although they may from time to time commit some wilful venial sins, yet earnestly strive to avoid them. The existence of these attachments is due to the fact that their passions are not as yet subdued; hence they yield to temptations of sensuality, pride, vanity, anger, envy, jealousy, and uncharitableness in word and deed. (Tanquerey, 1930:306)

Associated here are two dimensions of the divided self: the ethical and the competence dimensions. In fact failure in the ethical struggle is attributed to an inability to gain competence in the control of the passions. After indicating the task of beginners, that of the purification of the soul, Tanquerey identifies the means to be employed in the mystical struggle:

Once we know the end, we must determine the means necessary for its attainment. Fundamentally, they may be reduced to two: *prayer*, through which grace is obtained, and *mortification* through which we correspond to grace. Mortification assumes different names according to the point of view from which we consider it. It is called *penance* when it prompts us to atone for our past faults; *mortification properly so called*, when it sets upon the love of pleasure in order to reduce the number of faults in the present and obviate their recurrence in the future; it is called *warfare against capital sins*, when it combats those deep-rooted tendencies that incline us toward sin, and *warfare against temptation*, when practiced by way of resistance to the onslaughts of our spiritual enemies. (Tanquerey, 1930:309)

Asceticism, or mortification, is considered to be an effective means in the struggle to control the inordinate passions. Prayer, including mental prayer or meditation, has a similar function as indicated by the following words:

From what we have just said [regarding the various methods of meditation], we may easily infer how helpful and how necessary mental prayer is for the purification of the soul....In *meditation*, we form, under the influence of divine light and of our own reflections, strong convictions on the malice of sin, on its frightful consequences in this life and in the life to come, on the means of expiating it and avoiding it in the future. Our heart is then filled with sentiments of shame, humiliation, of love of God, of hatred of sin, together with purpose of amendment, and thus our faults are washed away more and more in penitential tears and in the Blood of Christ. Our will is fortified against the slightest surrenders, and we embrace generously the practice of penance and self-denial. (Tanquerey, 1930:339-340)

Tanquerey summarizes the subjects for meditation that are suitable for beginners as follows:

They must, in general, meditate upon whatever is calculated to inspire them with a *growing horror* for

sin, upon the *causes* of their own faults, upon *mortification* that removes such causes, upon the principal *duties of their state*, upon *fidelity* to grace and its *abuse*, upon *Jesus Christ, a model for penitent sinners*. (Tanquerey, 1930:326)

Meditation, then, is to play an important role in control over desires, and it does this by desensitizing (to use a behaviourist concept) meditators to their former interests through focusing on their consequences (real and imagined) and by sensitizing the meditators to a new interest or goal.

In the traditional commentary (or *vyasa*) on the thirty-third sutra of the second book of *The yoga sutras* of Patanjali, can also be found a reference to an attempt to resensitize potential practitioners during a stage of inner struggle. The precise form of the meditation is different, but the underlying psychological mechanism appears to be similar:

When during the practice of the restraints [*yama*] and observances [*niyama*] sinful thoughts give trouble, the mind is to be habituated to the contrary ideas. When thoughts of the sins of causing injury to others and other sins appear in the mind of this devotee of wisdom, such as "I will kill the evil-doer," "I shall tell lies," "I shall appropriate this man's wealth"....When he is touched by the high fever of these sins, which tend to push him along the wrong path, he should habituate himself to think upon the contraries of such sins. He should entertain such ideas as these:- Being burnt up as I am in the fires of the world, I have taken refuge in the practice of Yoga, giving as it does protection to all living beings. (Prasada, 1912:161)

A modern commentary on the same verse makes an explicit reference to the psychological process involved:

In dealing with the subject of *Yama-Niyama* [ethical prohibitions and prescriptions], Patanjali has given two *Sutras* which are of great help...The first of these which is being considered gives an effective method of dealing with the habits and tendencies which interfere with the practice of *Yama-Niyama*. The student who tries to practice *Yama-Niyama* brings with him the momentum of all kinds of tendencies from previous lives, and in spite of his resolve, the undesirable habits and tendencies in which he has indulged assert themselves strongly and force him to act, feel and think in ways which go against his ideals. What is he to do...He should ponder constantly over the opposites of the undesirable tendencies...In this *Sutra* the author has given one of the most important laws of character-building....the only effective means of removing [bad habits and undesirable tendencies] completely and permanently is to attack the trouble at its source and alter the thoughts and attitudes which underlie the undesirable manifestations. (Taimni, 1975:231)

"Habituation of the mind" or "pondering"[27] is to be used as an adjunct in the struggle of the practitioner who seeks to be conformed to the ethical norms of the yogic path.

A review, albeit a brief one, of references from inspirational literature and mystical manuals confirms the reports found in personal documents with respect to the dimensions of an experience of a divided self. The distinct, but not separable, dimensions of the conflict are religious, ethical, volitional and formal. Mystical manuals contain a wealth of material, only a small sample of which could be reproduced here, on the means to take in order to succeed in a mystical struggle. The two general categories of means most emphasized are meditation and various ascetical practices. Their combined function is to reorient the interest of the self to the ideal poles of the binary oppositions that dominate its inner life.

Descriptive definition of the experience of a mystical struggle

Statements used to describe a mystical struggle by a number of scholars of mysticism, by various authors of inspirational and instructional literature and by many mystics in personal documents can be considered, for the sake of convenience, as belonging to one of four different categories of internal conflict: the content dimensions of the material world versus the supernatural world, sin versus virtue and domination by the passions versus control over the passions, and the form dimension of distracted versus concentrated mind. It seems that two stages are often found in the experience of a mystical struggle. The first stage is a passive one in which are experienced emotions such as torment, fear, anger and confusion - emotions that express discomfort and a lack a consistent focus or direction.

The second stage consists of the conflict already described, plus an active response of determined efforts to succeed in gaining control over the passions, in living virtuously, in appropriating the supernatural perspective and in concentrating the mind. The emotions of this stage include frustration with oneself, guilt (introjected anger) and remorse. They are just as expressive of discomfort, but they are directional, or goal-oriented. Specifically they are directed toward self-transformation. The response to the inner conflict is at this point frequently one of systematically engaging in ascetical and meditational practices.[28]

Conclusion

In their references to their state of inner struggle mystics generally see their experiences as being multidimensional - i.e., several different kinds of inner conflict seem to be present in close association. Although mystics use varied terms, it is possible to identify recurrent themes in their accounts - i.e., concerns regarding religious and ethical goals, personal competence and the achievement of a unified state of consciousness. Further, the reports of some mystics suggest that a qualitative distinction can be made between an experience of inner struggle before and after the point of commitment to a mystical path.

Of course an experience of inner conflict is not unique to mystics - non-mystics also have such experiences. Newick describes what appears to be an analogous experience in the lives of creative

persons:

Yet to be alone with the [creative] idea inevitably involves moments of agonizing disharmony, of Sisyphean effort, of doubt of not-knowing, of indecision. If his art is to be uniquely the artist's own, no one can make the image for him. Unaided he must tolerate times of turmoil, for no one will join him in the subterranean passages of his mind. Unaccompanied he must submit to what Robert Graves calls "his own killing love," so that death may be exchanged for a new beginning. As Nietzsche says, "I tell you: one must have chaos in one to give birth to a dancing star." (Newick, 1982:72-73)

Psychotic experience can also be seen in terms of an oscillation between good and evil - one of the themes frequently found in the personal documents of mystics:

As one oscillates between god realm and hell realm the extremes of these realms become personified within one's own body. The body can become a threshing floor for the struggle of good and evil. One is either the right hand of God, or the devil incarnate. Psychotic people can go through this cycle within a 24-hour period or a 20-year period, feeling themselves aligned with one side, then the other.

How does doubt in basic wholeness come about? It begins with an enormous insult to one's state of being, a *loss of honor*. It could be the loss of a lover, the loss of a child, or the loss of one's cover story - one's "identity"...

But why is such an opportunity seized? It is because there has developed a lifetime of conditioned contempt toward one's basic state of being. The basic ground of psychosis is an all-pervading self-hatred, self-disgust, and a suicidal impulse toward transformation. (Podvoll, 1980:25)

One can also find reports of inner turmoil from persons who while not mystics are nevertheless religious. This is frequently the case in many conversions. James cites several examples, the evangelist, Henry Alline, being one of them:

Everything I saw seemed to be a burden to me; the earth seemed accursed for my sake: all trees, plants, rocks, hills, and vales seemed to be dressed in mourning and groaning, under the weight of the curse, and everything around me seemed to be conspiring my ruin. My sins seemed to be laid open; so that I thought that every one I saw knew them, and sometimes I was almost ready to acknowledge many things, which I thought they knew; yea it seemed to me as if everyone was pointing me out as the most guilty wretch upon earth. I had now so great a sense of the vanity and emptiness of all things here below, that I knew the whole world could not possibly make me happy, no, nor the whole system of creation. (James, 1929:156)

While several mystics have experiences of inner turmoil highly reminiscent of those of creative persons, psychotics, and especially non-mystical religious persons, there are some distinctive features to the mystics' experiences. Most mystics see their struggle as leading somewhere - to an ultimate reality and along with that to a complementary transformation of themselves. In other words their experience is interpreted teleologically - it is understood as a preparation for further development. Another feature of the experience of many mystics is that of multidimensionality. In common with those who undergo dramatic conversion experiences, most mystics feel alienated from ultimate reality and they feel guilty about even slight moral transgressions, but often they refer as well to their frustration with their lack of competence and their inability to achieve a unification of their consciousness. The experience of inner turmoil reported by a number of mystics appears to be intense, pervasive and overdetermined, and hence they are highly motivated to find a solution, even a radical solution, for their inner conflict. The subjects of dramatic conversions may be content with a shift in institutional affiliation, but in the case of most mystics the conflict within themselves is too intense and multifaceted. Their response is a distinctive one - i.e., a program of self-disciplined asceticism and meditation, with a view to bringing about a transformation of themselves.

Having concluded an investigation of the descriptions of selected mystics' experiences of a mystical struggle and having articulated a descriptive definition of that struggle, the next step is to review descriptions, interpretations and explanations of the experience, offered in what Louis Dupre, in his article on mysticism in the *Encyclopedia of religion* (Vol.10:261), refers to as the "best works on mysticism in general" - i.e., William James' *The varieties of religious experience* and Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*. James and Underhill have been chosen because of the place they occupy at the beginning of mystical studies. They have also been chosen because, in addition to their classic phenomenological analyses, they provide incisive, although unelaborated, psychological explanations.

Since James and Underhill wrote their works however there has been considerable development in psychological research and theoretical formulation, particularly in the area of personality growth. As a result, the explanations provided by James and Underhill can be supplemented, modified and extended. One way in which this can be accomplished is by a comparison of the psychological interpretations found in James and Underhill with a theory of personality development. The personality model I have chosen for this task is Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration. In addition consideration will be given to a set of factors that seem to play some role in fostering a mystical vocation.

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM JAMES ON THE DIVIDED SELF

There are few lengthy studies of mysticism that fail to include at least a reference to William James' *The varieties of religious experience*. But rarely are the descriptive accounts, much less the explanations, of mystical phenomena found in the *Varieties*, given serious consideration. The one exception is James' four marks of mystical experience: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity. These have been cited (Stace, 1960:44; Happold, 1970:45-46; Greely, 1974:15-17; Ellwood, 1980:24-25 & Byrnes, 1984:33-34), criticized (Underhill, 1960:331-332; Bambrough, 1978; Katz, 1978; Moore, 1978; & Egan, 1982:6-8) and even operationalized in the form of a mystical experience questionnaire used in field research (Hood, 1970 & 1973). However no one, to my knowledge, has made an attempt to explicate James' theory of the mystical struggle: its nature, cause and function in the lives of various mystics.

In fact it is the position of one scholar that such an enterprise is inappropriate, if not impossible. According to James Dittes, William James,

...eagerly moved from chapter to chapter in the *Psychology* and *The varieties of religious experience*, moving from one conceptual framework to another, exploring and exploiting each decisively but no more feeling the need to stick to the framework adopted in one chapter while he was in the next than he did to integrate all the frameworks into a systematic whole. (Dittes, 1973:321)

While there is some truth in Dittes' assertion that James is a heuristic thinker and not a formulator of hypotheses for empirical research, to say that James did not consider his various types and explanations to be in any way related is to overstate the case. Alexander (1979) has argued that, in spite of Dittes' assertion to the contrary, James does make use of concepts developed in his *Psychology*, in the *Varieties*. But Dittes further claims that James is so indifferent to systematization and overall integration of concepts that even within a single work, such as the *Varieties*, there is no relation between ideas developed in one lecture and those provided in another. For example, it is Dittes' contention that the religious types of the healthy-minded and the sick-souled are not intended by James to be seen as in any way connected to his type of the divided self:

The description of the two types [healthy-minded and sick-souled] comes early in the book....This is...in my judgement...to establish, in their own way, that there *is* variety...Having established this decisively, the types have served their purpose, and there is not the slightest hesitation about going on to looking at similar and different data in different ways. The very next chapter introduces the "divided self," a category that has troubled no end of more "logically minded" (James's epithet) readers (for example Uren 1928), who have agitated themselves over whether this is a third type or a subtype or whether it fits in to the overall scheme begun by "healthy-minded" and "morbid-minded" in some different way. The difficulty makes James's point for him, even though it goes too often unheeded: there is no "overall scheme," experience is too rich for one. (Dittes, 1973:301-302)

Of course when Dittes refers to "James's point," he is assuming the very position he is attempting to argue. As we shall see, while the "point" is certainly Dittes' it is not that of James. If there were indeed so many "logically minded" readers agitating themselves over the connection between the two

typological approaches, it is strange that Dittes has to go back to a 1928 publication for an example. It is hard to imagine anyone missing the nature of the relation when James is so explicit about it himself. At the very beginning of his lecture on the divided self James states that the *psychological* type of the divided self is the basis of the *religious* type of the sick soul:

The psychological basis of the twice-born character [the sick soul] seems to be a certain discordancy or heterogeneity in the native temperament of the subject, an incompletely unified moral and intellectual constitution. (James, 1929:164)

Far from abandoning a typology or an explanation, after exploiting it in one lecture, James returns to his concepts again and again. For example, the divided (discordant or heterogeneous) self is employed, as we have seen, in his eighth lecture, as a psychological explanation for the religious phenomenon of the sick soul, but that is not the only place where he refers to this idea. In his first lecture on religion and neurology James refers to religious geniuses as often having "led a discordant inner life" (1929:8). Further the divided self is held to be unified in, and as a result of, conversion (1929:186 & 213) and mystical experiences (1929:172 & 407). In fact there is no major concept or type introduced by James in the *Varieties* that is not referred to prior and subsequent to the lecture in which it receives its most extensive treatment.

However some might argue that even if James does relate his various notions to each other, this does not amount to a systematic exposition of the mystical path. And in support of this position they might cite James' own remarks on the subject:

I cannot pretend to detail to you the sundry stages of the Christian mystical life. Our time would not suffice, for one thing; and moreover, I confess that the subdivisions and names which we find in the Catholic books seem to me to represent nothing objectively distinct. (James, 1929:399)

If we examine this statement closely, we see that by the "stages of the Christian mystical life" James does not mean the actual stages (as determined by empirical research or by scientifically informed analysis), but the stages as reported by the various Catholic writers. Unlike Evelyn Underhill he has little confidence in the extent to which such models correspond to reality. But that does not mean that James is not conscious of an attempt on his part to describe his own more empirically and psychologically informed scheme:

Now in all of us, however constituted, but to a degree the greater in proportion as we are intense and sensitive and subject to diversified temptations, and to the greatest possible degree if we are decidedly psychopathic [i.e., in possession of a low threshold for anxiety arousal], does the normal evolution of character chiefly consist in the straightening out and unifying of the inner self. The higher and the lower feelings, the useful and the erring impulses, begin by being a comparative chaos within us - they must end by forming a stable system of functions in right subordination. (James, 1929:167)

Not a very elaborate model to be sure: chaos followed by order. Elsewhere (1929:498-499) James describes the process of spiritual development in slightly more detail, but there are still only two

stages. The main point to be made here, however is that James is conscious of the fact that he is presenting a model of religious growth, the individual parts of which have been discussed in various of his lectures.

But more can be said in favor of any attempt to discern an overall scheme in James' (or any published author's) work. While one dimension of the meaning of a text is the intention of the author, it does not follow that the text, once it enters the public domain, does not communicate, in contexts quite different from the one that gave birth to it in the first place, still other meanings. Clearly this is true of literary and religious works, but it is no less the case for scientific studies. When looked at from the context of data to which the original author did not have access, his ideas can be seen to imply theoretical positions of which he was totally unaware. Even a purely logical analysis of a theory sometimes results in the discovery of implications not foreseen by the original author. Finally the interests and methodological tastes of the reader do not have to correspond to those of the author. A set of criteria originally intended to act as heuristic devices may very well lend themselves to operationalization for the purposes of empirically oriented, and even quantitative, research. That the author would never have done such a thing, or that she or he would have disapproved is entirely beside the point.

The healthy-minded and the sick-souled

Before undertaking an analysis of the various ways of being religious James first distinguishes between morality and religion two possible life-stances. Both are ways of relating to reality as a whole, but the religious option is the more enthusiastic of the two:

At bottom the whole concern of both morality and religion is with the manner of our acceptance of the universe....Morality pure and simple accepts the law of the whole which it finds reigning, so far as to acknowledge and obey it, but it may obey it with the heaviest and coldest heart, and never cease to feel it as a yoke. But for religion, in its strong and fully developed manifestations, the service of the highest never is felt as a yoke. Dull submission is left far behind, and a mood of welcome...has taken its place. (James, 1929:41)

The moral way of being in the world involves reliance on unaided reason (or at least imagining that such is the case) and on personal will power to conform behavior to the dictates of reason. The religious life-stance, on the other hand, includes an openness to sources of inspiration and energy that seem to lie outside, or below the surface, of the conscious self (James, 1929:42ff).

The next distinction made by James is between two types of religious persons: those who are healthy-minded and those who are sick-souled. Of the former he says that,

One can but recognize in such...the presence of a temperament organically weighted on the side of cheer and fatally forbidden to linger...over the darker aspects of the universe. In some individuals optimism may become quasi-pathological. The capacity for even a transient sadness or a momentary humility seems cut off from them as by a kind of congenital anaesthesia. (James, 1929:82)

The healthy-minded (also referred to as the once-born) are those who repress the less agreeable side of reality. Healthy-mindedness can be either a transient and involuntary mood which is common to most persons most of the time, or else a deliberate system of thought and behavior (James, 1929:86). Two examples of the latter are the nineteenth century American mind-cure movement and revivalist preaching. In James' view both advocate the relinquishing of efforts to transform oneself from an undesirable into a desirable being in favor of accepting oneself as already desirable. Although this may not seem to be an accurate theological description of the protestant evangelical position, James claims that it is accurate psychologically:

The mind-curers....have demonstrated that a form of regeneration by relaxing, by letting go, psychologically indistinguishable from the Lutheran justification by faith and the Wesleyan acceptance of free grace, is within the reach of persons who have no conviction of sin and care nothing for Lutheran theology. It is but giving your little convulsive self a rest, and finding that a greater Self is there. The results, slow or sudden, or great or small, of the combined optimism and expectancy, the regenerative phenomena which ensue on the abandonment of effort, remain firm facts of human nature, no matter whether we adopt a theistic [or] a pantheistic-idealistic...view of their ultimate causal explanation. (James, 1929:109)

The second of James' religious types is the sick soul. Sick souls are also called morbid-minded because they take the problem of evil seriously. To the healthy-minded evil is an illusion; to the morbid-minded on the other hand evil is not only real and significant, but even the key that makes the world explicable:

Now in contrast with...healthy-minded views...as a way of deliberately minimizing evil, stands a radically opposite view, a way of maximizing evil, if you please to so call it, based on the persuasion that the evil aspects of our life are of its very essence, and that the world's meaning most comes home to us when we lay them most to heart. (James, 1929:128)

The sick-souled are also called twice-born, because their melancholy and self-critical condition motivates them to undergo a search for self-transformation. Hence the sick soul is a dynamic religious type, whereas the healthy-minded type is static.

The healthy-minded and the sick-souled represent two fundamental, and opposing, ways of conceiving the world in religious terms. While the latter can have extreme pathological manifestations, it is clearly in James' view the more adequate of the two:

It seems to me that we are bound to say that morbid-mindedness ranges over the wider scale of experience...The method of averting one's attention from evil, and living in the light of good is splendid as long as it will work. It will work with many persons; it will work far more generally than most of us are ready to suppose...But it breaks down impotently as soon as melancholy comes; and even though one be quite free from melancholy one's self, there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a

genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth. (James, 1929:160)

James' philosophical criticism of healthy-mindedness, that it refuses to take account of the reality of evil, is of course, no argument at all. Since the healthy-minded refuse to see evil as a reality - they can only be refuted, on philosophical grounds, by an argument for the reality of evil based on presuppositions common to both the healthy-minded and the sick-souled. However the passage cited does contain an argument to the effect that the sick-souled stance is psychologically more adequate. To begin with James explicitly states that healthy-mindedness fails as a view of life in the event of a serious crisis. James is also implicitly alluding to the fact that it is the sick-souled who have mystical experiences and that it is through such experiences that other realms of reality are revealed. For James then, morbid-minded religion is the more interesting of the two types and it is the one that requires a detailed examination.

The divided self

James provides a psychological explanation for the religious attitude of the morbid-minded, or sick-souled type: such persons are possessed of a peculiar personality, which he most often refers to as the divided self. His description is as follows:

The psychological basis of the twice-born character seems to be a certain discordancy or heterogeneity in the native temperament of the subject, an incompletely unified moral and intellectual constitution....Some persons are born with an inner constitution which is harmonious and well balanced from the outset. Their impulses are consistent with one another, their will follows without trouble the guidance of their intellect, their passions are not excessive, and their lives are little haunted by regrets. Others are oppositely constituted; and are so in degrees which may vary from some thing so slight as to result in a merely odd or whimsical inconsistency, to a discordancy of which the consequences may be inconvenient in the extreme. (James, 1929:164-165)

James distinguishes between weak and strong forms of the divided self. As examples of the strong form he cites passages from, among others, St. Paul, Augustine and Al-Ghazzali. To summarize the condition James needs only four words: "Wrong living; impotent aspirations." The strong form of the divided self is the condition in which persons aspire to live according to an ideal, but find that other (less than ideal) interests preoccupy them a great deal, if not most, of the time, as we have already seen in examples of the phenomenon from the personal documents of several mystics from various religious traditions.

About the weak form of the divided self James does not have a great deal to say - he does however provide two examples, one of which is found in an excerpt from the autobiography of the well-known theosophical author, Annie Besant:

...when I have been lecturing and debating with no lack of spirit on the platform, I have preferred to go without what I wanted at the hotel rather than to ring and make the waiter fetch it. Combative on the

platform in defense of any cause I cared for, I shrink from quarrel or disapproval in the house, and am a coward at heart in private while a good fighter in public. How often have I passed unhappy quarters of an hour screwing up my courage to find fault with some subordinate whom my duty compelled me to reprove...An unkind look or word has availed to make me shrink into myself...while, on the platform, opposition makes me speak my best. (Cited in James, 1929:165-166)

James remark on Besant's psychological state is,

This amount of inconsistency will only count as amiable weakness; but a stronger degree of heterogeneity may make havoc of a subject's life. There are persons whose existence is little more than a series of zig-zags, as now one tendency and now another gets the upper hand. Their spirit wars with their flesh...and their lives are one long drama of repentance and of effort to repair misdemeanours and mistakes. (James, 1929:166)

The difference between the condition found, e.g., in the lives of many mystics and that of Annie Besant is for James merely one of degree. However a closer examination of the passage, cited from her autobiography, reveals that there is also a qualitative difference. Annie Besant is not failing in her effort to achieve an ethical or religious ideal as are the mystics; her inadequacy is one of lacking control over her shyness and her susceptibility to the opinions of others. From the perspective of Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration, as will be discussed below, Besant is at a lower level of personality than those who are at the beginning of the mystical path and in whom "their spirit wars with their flesh."

James also distinguishes between manifestations of the divided self in terms of completeness:

...whenever one aim grows so stable as to expel definitively its previous rivals...we...speak of..."transformation."

These alternations are the completest of ways a self may be divided. A less complete way is the simultaneous coexistence of two or more different groups of aims, of which one practically holds the right of way and instigates activity, whilst the others are only pious wishes, and never practically come to anything. Saint Augustine's aspirations to a purer life...were for a while an example. (James, 1929:191)

Here the distinction appears to be between the divided self before the experience of awakening and the divided self after awakening, when it is accompanied by asceticism and meditation. Initially the new center of interest is weak and only one of many competing centers. If it gains in strength, it becomes something of an obsession, as for example in the cases of Augustine, Al-Ghazzali and Kao P'an-lung. Still it is not strong enough, or complete enough, to dominate the life of the individual. Hence James refers to the new center of interest at this point as no more than a pious wish. If it

continues to extend itself into the consciousness of the individual a "transformation" takes place. The new center now dominates the life of the individual, but there are frequent lapses to previous centers of interest (deemed less worthy, or even repugnant) and now there occurs a struggle to eliminate the other centers, in which meditation and ascetical practices are employed. That these stages in the development of the new center of interest are continuous with and subsequent to the stage occupied by Annie Besant in the passage cited above will be clear after a discussion of Dabrowski's theory. For the moment it is sufficient to point out that James has identified three levels of the divided self: (1) the level represented by Annie Besant; (2) the level of the "pious wish"; and (3) the level of "transformation."

Temperamental basis of the divided self

In his lecture entitled, "Religion and neurology," James not only denies that it is his intent to reduce religion to physiological processes in order to disparage it, he vigorously argues against such a position, which he calls medical materialism. James begins his argument with a discussion of the temperament of "religious virtuosi," including mystics, admitting that they show signs of nervous instability, but then points out that the same temperament has been associated with genius in general, and that the works of genius are not thereby despised (James, 1929:7-8). The reason they are not is because one judges the value of works of genius, not according to their origins, but according to their effects or consequences (James, 1929:15). And to be consistent one should apply the same criterion to the experiences and ideas of religious virtuosi (James, 1929:19).

With respect to genius in general James has the following to say:

Borderland insanity, crankiness, insane temperament, loss of mental balance, psychopathic degeneration ...when combined with a superior quality of intellect in an individual, make it more probable that he will make his mark and affect his age, than if his temperament were less neurotic. (James, 1929:23-24)

His descriptions of the temperament of religious geniuses or virtuosi are similar:

...religious geniuses have often shown symptoms of nervous instability...Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy during a part of their career. (James, 1929:8)

In the psychopathic temperament we have the emotionality which is the *sine qua non* of moral perception; we have the intensity and tendency to emphasis which are the essence of practical moral vigour; and we have the love of metaphysics and mysticism which carry one's interests beyond the surface of the sensible world....

If there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it might well be that the neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite receptivity. (James, 1929:26)

From the above passages it can be concluded that, according to William James, religious virtuosi, including mystics, possess a dominant temperamental trait that can be characterized by terms such as nervous instability, emotional sensitivity or susceptibility, excitability and neurosis. James proposes that the consequences of such a trait are melancholy and a discordant inner life; but also heightened moral perception and moral vigour.

But if emotional sensitivity is a necessary cause for the experience of the divided self in a large number of mystics, it is not a sufficient cause. Emotional sensitivity, according to James himself, also accounts for creative genius and mental illness. Both have been referred to in the excerpts cited above, but in a fascinating passage toward the end of his second lecture on mysticism, James elaborates on the connection between mysticism and mental illness:

...religious mysticism is only one half of mysticism. The other half has no accumulated traditions except those which the text-books on insanity supply. Open any one of these, and you will find abundant cases in which "mystical ideas" are cited as characteristic symptoms of enfeebled or deluded states of mind. In delusional insanity, paranoia...we may have a *diabolical* mysticism....The same sense of ineffable importance in the smallest events, the same...words coming with new meanings, the same voices and visions...only this time the emotion is pessimistic: instead of consolations we have desolations....It is evident that...the classic mysticism and these lower mysticisms spring from the same mental level, from that great subliminal or transmarginal region of which...so little is really known. That region contains every kind of matter: "seraph and snake" abide there side by side. (James, 1929:417)

In other words emotional sensitivity leaves one open to a "transmarginal" region of consciousness, but from that region comes both mystical experience and mental illness -both seraph and snake. Egan (1982:10) faults James for excluding all experiences of desolation from the mystical realm, pointing out that the dark night of the soul is an experience of desolation which is far from being a "snake." In fact Egan has misunderstood James intention, for elsewhere in his lectures James refers to John of the Cross' notion of the dark night in a context that makes it clear that he does not consider it to be an example of mental illness (James, 1929:398).[29] However, and this is more relevant to the concern of the present study, James' proposition regarding a common origin for both mystical states and certain forms of mental illness, raises a question as to why some persons have mystical experiences while others suffer from debilitating delusions. James does not provide an answer.[30]

There is some suggestion in the *Varieties* that in addition to emotional sensitivity most mystics have a second temperamental trait - what could be called, a heightened capacity for imaginative absorption: "They have...been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions..." (James, 1929:8). What seems to be referred to here is a capacity for absorption in general and for imaginative involvement in particular. Although many mystics eventually unify themselves through mystical experiences, trances and visions, a capacity for imaginative absorption is not unique to mystics. Piechowski and Cunningham (1985) found that this trait, not

surprisingly, was characteristic of a selected group of persons involved in "artistic or creative work at professional, vocational or long-standing avocational levels."

A third temperamental trait referred to in the *Varieties* has to do with the intellect. James (1929:24-25) suggests that eminence results from the combination of emotional sensitivity and what he refers to as "a superior quality of intellect" or simply "a superior intellect." The absence of a strong intellect, James believes is the reason why some mystics are incapable of functioning in the everyday world:

You may remember the helplessness in the kitchen and schoolroom of poor Margaret Mary Alacoque. Many other ecstatics would have perished but for the care taken of them by admiring followers. The "other-worldliness" encouraged by the mystical consciousness makes this over-abstraction from practical life peculiarly liable to befall mystics in whom the character is naturally passive and the intellect feeble; but in natively strong minds and characters we find quite opposite results. The great Spanish mystics, who carried the habit of ecstasy as far as it has often been carried, appear for the most part to have shown indomitable spirit and energy, and all the more so for the trances in which they indulged. (James,1929:404)

To be a solid mystic capable of effective action requires more than a low threshold for anxiety arousal and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement; a "strong intellect" is also needed. However, while a "strong mind" may distinguish practical from impractical mystics, it does not distinguish mystics from creative persons (nor for that matter from the mentally ill).

To conclude, for James the divided self is due primarily to the temperamental trait of emotional sensitivity. But in the cause of the problem lies the germ of the solution: emotional sensitivity, combined with a heightened imaginative capacity, enables the divided self to gain access to the world of transmarginal consciousness, from which come mystical experiences. And James states explicitly that such experiences are both unifying in themselves (1929:274) and in their effects (1929:172). As to why some mystics are socially useful subsequent to the reunification of their consciousness (James gives the example of Ignatius of Loyola) while others are helpless in the execution of even ordinary tasks (the example offered, as we have seen above is that of Margaret Mary Alacoque), James holds that the former possess strong, the latter feeble, intellects. But an important question remains unanswered. Why do some divided selves choose a mystical solution to their condition, while others do not?

A teleological explanation of the divided self

James does not provide a very elaborate theory of the function of the divided self, but he does have such a theory and it is nicely summarized in his concluding lecture. The context is a discussion of the "common nucleus" of the world religions:

...there is a certain uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet. It consists of two parts:-

1. An uneasiness; and

2. Its solution.

1. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand.

2. The solution is a sense that *we are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connection with the higher powers.

In those more developed minds which alone we are studying, the wrongness takes a moral character, and the salvation a mystical tinge....

The individual, so far as he suffers from his wrongness and criticizes it, is to that extent consciously beyond it, and in at least possible touch with something higher, if anything higher exist. Along with the wrong part there is thus a better part of him, even though it may be but a most helpless germ. With which part he should identify his real being is by no means obvious at this stage; but when stage 2 (the stage of solution or salvation) arrives, the man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself; and does so in the following way: *He becomes conscious that this higher part is coterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck.*

It seems to me that all the phenomena are accurately describable in these very simple general terms. They allow for the divided self and the struggle; they involve the change of personal centre and the surrender of the lower self; they express the appearance of exteriority of the helping power and yet account for our sense of union with it; and they fully justify our feelings of security and joy. There is probably no autobiographic document, among all those which I have quoted, to which the description will not well apply....

So far...as this analysis goes, the experiences are only psychological phenomena. They possess, it is true, enormous biological worth. Spiritual strength really increases in the subject when he has them, a new life opens for him, and they seem to him a place of conflux where the forces of two universes meet; and yet this may be nothing but his subjective way of feeling things, a mood of his own fancy, in spite of the effects produced. (James, 1929:498-499)

James makes it clear that his concern is to explain the situation of those "more developed minds" for whom the sense of "wrongness takes a moral character, and the salvation takes a mystical tinge." Such persons experience a sense of "uneasiness" and that "something is wrong" about themselves; they are self-critical; and they identify with a "germinal higher part" of themselves.

In short, James is talking about those persons in whom the self is divided. Further, they are divided selves who will become unified through mystical experience - by becoming "conscious that [their] higher part is coterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality..." James chooses to focus on the moral dimension of the divided self, even though he also refers to the religious dimension (the lower part of the self versus the higher part that is in touch with something greater). And as we have seen in the analysis of personal documents and manuals, there are at least two other frequently mentioned dimensions (i.e., impulsivity versus self-control and distracted versus concentrated mind). But these details should not obscure the fact that James has suggested a teleological explanation for the divided self and the struggle that accompanies it in the lives of mystics.

The divided self represents a stage in the transformation of specially gifted, or favoured, individuals. On the one hand there is the condition of ordinary awareness (the lower self) and on the other hand there is the state in which one has access to the "more" which James later in the same lecture describes in psychological terms:

...since one of the duties of the science of religions is to keep religion in connection with the rest of science, we shall do well to seek first of all a way of describing the "more," which psychologists may also recognize as real. The *subconscious self* is nowadays a well-accredited psychological entity; and I believe that in it we have exactly the mediating term required. Apart from all religious considerations, there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of....Each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he knows....Much of the content of this larger background is insignificant. Imperfect memories....But in it many of the performances of genius seem also to have their origin; and in our study of conversion, of mystical experiences, and of prayer, we have seen how striking a part invasions from this region play in the religious life. (James, 1929:501-502)

Hence the divided self is a stage whereby one moves from ordinary awareness to gain access to a larger consciousness, the source, among other things, of the inspirations of genius. As we saw in the previous quotation, access to this region even has the effect of increasing one's psychobiological energy as well.

But that is not the end of the matter. Permanent transformation is one of the results of communion with the subconscious realm:

...the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. When we commune with it, work is actually done on our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change. (James, 1929:506)

James provides a detailed description of the transformed personality in his lectures on saintliness. For the present purposes it will be enough to mention the four features he identifies as characterizing a "composite photograph of universal saintliness." Saints are those whose identities extend beyond their usual body and ego boundaries to include an "ideal power;" they live in "willing self-surrender" to this ideal power (i.e., they live spontaneously, not self-consciously); they experience a great sense of elation and freedom; and finally their "emotional centre" has shifted "towards loving and harmonious affections" (James, 1929:266-267). If we can accept the term "ideal power" as a reflection of subjective experience, and not a theological assertion, then James' description of saintliness is a purely psychological one, and he has therefore successfully explained the divided self as a stage in a process of personality development. Considering the fact that his lectures were delivered at the turn of the century, his achievement is nothing short of remarkable. However there is more to the mystical struggle, as we have seen, than the divided self. Unlike some types of conversion, personality transformation of the kind reported by most mystics does not just happen. It requires active participation on the part of those being transformed. The form of this participation has already been referred to above - it is asceticism and meditation. James has taken account, albeit briefly, of these mystical practices.

The function of asceticism

James discusses asceticism primarily as something that follows the unification of the self, whether or not that unification is brought about through mystical experience. It is a consequence of that feature of saintliness which he refers to as surrender to the ideal power:

The self-surrender may become so passionate as to turn into self-immolation. It may then so overrule the ordinary inhibitions of the flesh that the saint finds positive pleasure in sacrifice and asceticism, measuring and expressing as they do the degree of his loyalty to the higher power. (James, 1929:268)

References to ascetical "excesses" are not wanting in the *Varieties*, as for example the following:

The older monastic asceticism occupied itself with pathetic futilities, or terminated in the mere egoism of the individual, increasing his own perfection. But is it not possible for us to discard most of these older forms of mortification, and yet find saner channels for the heroism which inspired them? (James, 1929:357)

After considering athletics and militarism, the saner channel advocated by James (1929:359-360) is voluntary poverty as an antidote to "the general scramble and pant with the money-making street." Once again this updated asceticism is a permanent acquisition, a fruit of saintliness - not a means to overcome internal division.

But James does recognize, even if he does not elaborate upon, the function of asceticism in the mystical struggle. There is a passing reference to renunciation of mere "natural good" as a first step in the direction of the "truth" (1929:163).

Perhaps James most extensive treatment of both asceticism and meditation is to be found in his discussion on the methodical cultivation of mystical consciousness in his second lecture on mysticism, the introduction to which is as follows:

We have now seen enough of this cosmic or mystic consciousness, as it comes sporadically. We must next pass to its methodical cultivation as an element in the religious life. Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and Christians all have cultivated it methodically.

In India, training in mystical insight has been known from time immemorial under the name of yoga....It is based on persevering exercise; and the diet, posture, breathing, intellectual concentration, and moral discipline vary slightly in the different systems which teach it. The yogi...who has by these means overcome the obscurations of his lower nature sufficiently, enters into the condition known as *samadhi*. (James, 1929:391)

James then provides a brief discussion of meditation in Hinduism and Buddhism, a lengthy quotation from the autobiography of Al-Ghazzali, and several pages of description of meditation, and its attendant states of consciousness, in Christianity. Finally James concludes his discussion of meditation with an allusion to asceticism:

To this dialectical use, by the intellect, of negation as a mode of passage towards a higher kind of affirmation [i.e., as a result of meditative experience], there is correlated the subtlest of moral counterparts in the sphere of the personal will. Since denial of the finite self and its wants, since asceticism of some sort, is found in religious experience to be the only doorway to the larger and more blessed life, this moral mystery intertwines and combines with the intellectual mystery in all mystical writings. (James, 1929:409)

Here we find implicit recognition of asceticism as an indispensable aid in the moral dimension of the mystical struggle. But overall the references to asceticism are few and brief, or else they treat asceticism as one of the characteristics of saintliness.

Limitations of James' analysis

In spite of numerous seminal insights into the nature, origins and consequences of the divided self as an essential condition for a beginning stage in the development of mystics, there are important limitations to James' analysis. Because he is concerned to demonstrate that the expressions of religion are many and varied, he does not elaborate upon the peculiar nature of the mystical path. In

fact, he reduces it to his two-stage model of general religious change, which consists of: (1) an "uneasiness" (the divided self); and (2) "its solution" ("the sense that we are saved from wrongness").

This model will suffice for an account of conversion experiences (one of the varieties of religious experience that James has in mind) but for most mystics, as Underhill has convincingly shown, there are at least two or three intermediate stages between the problem and the solution. Typically the majority of mystics begin by sensing that there is an ideal that contrasts with their actual inclination and behaviour. When this awareness becomes acute we have the uneasiness referred to by James. Next comes the awakening as Underhill calls it, and this in turn is followed by a period during which most mystics, while continuing to experience themselves as divided, struggle to detach themselves from the actual and conform themselves to the ideal.

Another limitation to James' account as an adequate description of mystical growth is that the qualitative difference between the divided self as found for example in the theosophist, Annie Besant, and as found in most of the classic mystics, such as Al-Ghazzali or Teresa of Avila, is not identified. In a passage cited from Besant the ideal she failed to attain was merely one of competence or self-assurance, whereas in most mystics the ideal contains ethical, religious and formal dimensions as well. Further James does not distinguish between qualitatively distinct types of personality reunification. The following passage may serve as an illustration:

...I shall next ask you to consider more closely some of the peculiarities of the process of unification....it may come through altered feelings, or through altered powers of action; or it may come through new intellectual insights, or through experiences which we shall later have to designate as `mystical'....But to find religion is only one of many ways of reaching unity....For example, the new birth may be....produced by the irruption into the individual's life of some new stimulus or passion, such as love, ambition, cupidity, revenge, or patriotic devotion. In all these instances we have precisely the same psychological event, - a firmness, stability, and equilibrium succeeding a period of storm and stress and inconsistency. (James, 1929:172-173)

Indeed there are a variety of *ways*, religious and non-religious, in which a personality becomes unified. But what remains unexplicated in James' account is the varieties of *unification*. Is the reunification experienced by many of the classic mystics in the unitive life psychologically equivalent to a personality united by a desire for revenge, or united as a result of what is commonly meant by the term religious conversion? Underhill (1960:176) insists that not even the awakening of mystics (much less the final reunification of their personalities) should be confused with "religious conversion as ordinarily understood." "The mechanical process may be much the same," she says, "but the material involved, the results attained, belong to a higher order of reality." I consider Underhill's objection to be valid, but requiring further elaboration. Therefore in Chapter Six, I will provide an analysis of the difference between mystical transformation and religious conversion in terms of personality development theory.

Finally mention should be made once again of the fact that while James notes a similarity in the temperaments of mystics, creative geniuses and mentally ill persons, he does not have an explanation for their differences. In other words he does not have an adequate explanation as to why some persons embrace a mystical struggle, others a struggle to be creative and still others are overcome by uninvited fears, delusions and depressions, and therefore he lacks an adequate account of those factors that foster the mystical path, and in particular the mystical struggle. In Chapter Six, I argue that a number of environmental as well as temperamental factors have to be considered.

James exclusive reliance on temperament as a causal factor was noted by Strout (1968), who explains it in terms of a reaction to the historical determinism current at the time:

Historical determinism was much in fashion in 1880 when William James published his essay on "Great Men and their Environment." He had to attack the superstition, derived from Herbert Spencer, that great men were mere resultants of that "aggregate of conditions" out of which both they and their society had arisen...James acknowledged that society, in Darwinian terms, could preserve or reject the great man, but it did not make him before he remade it. Physiological forces, with which social conditions had no discernible connection, genetically produced the hero...Society [merely] confirmed or refuted the spontaneous variations of ideas produced in great thinkers by the "functional activity of the excessively instable human brain." (Strout, 1968:1062)

In other words it is Strout's opinion that for James genetics is the primary determinant of genius; and the role of the environment, while real, is restricted to that of *selecting* what has already been produced.

On the basis of the same essay, and James' review of Dugale's study of the Jukes family, Taylor arrives at somewhat different conclusion about the role given to the environment in James' thought:

In 1878, he [James] became embroiled in a raging controversy with the social Darwinists over the role of the individual in the process of evolution. His review of R.L. Dugale's *"The Jukes": A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Heredity* acknowledged genetic factors in degenerative mental illness but at the same time stressed the importance of the environment in the final moulding of character. In 1880, James published his essay "Great Men, Great Thoughts, and the Environment," which supported the environmental view but further stressed the influence of our conscious choices...Consciousness, James said, particularly the consciousness of genius, was not a mere epiphenomenon, but rather an active and selective force in the process of evolution. (Taylor, 1982:465)

Thus according to Taylor, James' quarrel with the social Darwinists was not in terms of heredity versus

environment, but rather in terms of determinism of any kind versus free will. However, within the context of this debate, it is Taylor's understanding that James "stressed the importance of the environment," even though, as Strout emphasizes, the environment does not produce, but merely selects.

While James, in some of his writings, takes into account heredity, the environment and human freedom,[31] this is not true of the *Varieties*. In this study the constantly mentioned cause, and as far as I can discern, the only cause, is that of a unique temperament. Of course in the *Varieties*, James was concerned with the whole range of religious experience, and not just mysticism, and he discusses a number of issues that are not directly related to mysticism. But that is part of the point. In spite of the fact that there are few lengthy studies of mysticism that fail to include references to the *Varieties*, the work is not a comprehensive treatment of mysticism. There are a number of excellent observations and theories about mystical states, their origin and consequences, but they require further development, and the causal explanation given must be supplemented by a consideration of the role of environmental factors.

CHAPTER IV

EVELYN UNDERHILL ON THE PURIFICATION OF THE SELF

Evelyn Underhill was born in Wolverhampton, England, in 1875, the only daughter of a barrister. She was raised in an atmosphere of tolerance and agnosticism, and her post-secondary education consisted of studies at King's College, London, and travel on the continent. Prior to the publication of her most important work, *Mysticism*, in 1911, she took an interest in the occult and esoteric traditions,[32] the philosophies of Rudolf Eucken and Henri Bergson, which gave a central place to intuition and emphasized spiritual striving, and the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. The most significant influences on her life and thought, however, were those of two scholars of mysticism, William Ralph Inge, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and after the publication of *Mysticism*, the Roman Catholic priest, Friedrich von Hugel. While on a retreat at a Roman Catholic convent in 1907, Underhill experienced a sudden conversion and was about to join the Catholic church when the anti-modernist encyclical, *Pascendi*, was promulgated. Since her sympathies were with the modernists, she did not convert to Catholicism at that time nor subsequently.[33] However over time she became decidedly more Christian in her orientation and her later works reflect this shift, including a revised twelfth edition of *Mysticism* in 1930. In 1921 Underhill was invited to give a series of lectures in theology at Oxford University, the first woman to do so; in 1938 she received a doctor of divinity

degree from Aberdeen University; and in the early years of the Second World War she became a defender of the pacifist cause, just prior to her death in 1941.

The varieties of religious experience, by William James, is frequently cited, but his ideas are rarely given serious consideration. The one exception is his four marks of mystical experience. These have been frequently reproduced, but at the same time, as noted above, they have been, beginning with Evelyn Underhill, sharply (and I believe successfully) criticized. In fact the four marks have been one of the least interesting contributions made by James to the study of mysticism. Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*, on the other hand, is referred to less often, but when it is, the reference is to her *primary* contribution to mystical studies - i.e., her stages of mystical development (cf., e.g., Horne, 1978:45-54; Ellwood, 1980:167-172; and Egan, 1982:41-49).[34] In at least one study (Politella, 1964) many of Underhill's categories are employed for the purpose of making cross-cultural comparisons of the stages of the mystical path.[35]

The critical assessments of *Mysticism* raise a number of points. Some of these are made from a confessional viewpoint, an example of which is that of Egan (1982). An obvious admirer of Underhill's opus, Egan suggests that some might find in it a bias against non-Christian religions:

> Some would fault Underhill...for her lack of appreciation of the Eastern mystical tradition, for her tendency to treat mysticism from a Christian viewpoint, and for her failure to underscore the workings of God's grace even in non-Christian mysticisms. (Egan, 1982:50)

Egan does not give any references for these criticisms and neither does he appear to make them himself. The theological objection, in any case, is not relevant to a scientific study, but the other two are, it seems to me legitimate criticisms, to some extent of Underhill herself, but also of those who would imply that *Mysticism* is an adequate general study of the subject, as does Louis Dupre in his article on mysticism in the *Encyclopedia of religion* (Vol. 10:261). The fact is, however, that there are no adequate general studies of mysticism, or even of the stages of the mystical life, and until there are, *Mysticism* will retain its privileged position.

The most thorough critical analysis that I have encountered of *Mysticism* is that of Christopher Armstrong (1975). On the basis of correspondence between Underhill and a collaborator, Margaret Robinson, Armstrong (1975:101-106) demonstrates that Underhill did not first examine the writings of mystics and then arrive at her conclusions, but rather her selections were guided by prior theoretical interests. Further, in many cases, especially when the sources were in German, Underhill did not herself consult the writings of the mystics she cites, but had her collaborator do so.[36] In a letter to Robinson, we read:

I am writing - or trying to write - a "serious" book on Mysticism and of course I want to make use of the German mystics and some of them have never been translated whilst others have been done from such a controversial point of view that one dares not trust the translators. I am particularly hung up over Meister Eckhardt and Mechtild of Magdeburg, but there may be others. Now if I sent you the books, *would* you read them leisurely through, check any passages I sent you and extract and translate for me any bits you thought specially good bearing on points of which I would send you a list? (Cited in Armstrong, 1975:103)

Shortly afterward Underhill sent Robinson a copy of Eckhardt and another letter in which she provides the "points" she wishes Robinson to be guided by. The following is an excerpt:

Would you either translate or send a note of anything that strikes you as specially fine? I want most passages in metaphysical rather than definitely Christian language: i.e., references by name to Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin etc. or bits flavoured with scraps of Scripture aren't much good: but those in which the same thing are called the Eternal, the All, the Divine Love, etc. etc. will be useful. The book is not going to be explicitly theological as I want to make a synthesis of the doctrine of Christian & non-Christian mystics - so no "over-beliefs" are admissible. (Cited in Armstrong, 1975:104)

Underhill was not even concerned that her collaborator read the Eckhardt text particularly thoroughly. In a postscript to the letter just cited, she writes, "There's no need to read it *all*, you know - just skip through!"

Underhill's instructions to Robinson reveal something of her personal attitude toward mysticism: underlying apparent differences between mystics there is a common orientation - theological differences are not important since they are not of the *esse*. As Armstrong notes, Underhill's approach is acontextual:[37] With respect to the phenomenon under investigation in this study, i.e., the mystical struggle, I take the position that it is universal (i.e, transcultural and transhistorical) and I have cited and analyzed a number of reports to establish that this is the case. On the other hand I do not believe the phenomenon is inexorably determined by a vital force, nor do I think it has its origins solely in a genetic predisposition. In Chapters Eight to Ten, I argue that there are four major environmental factors that predispose persons to the mystical struggle. These factors are social and therefore are able to provide a basis for a (psychologically informed) sociology, anthropology and finally a history of mysticism.

It may not surprise anyone therefore that we should also describe her approach as `actual' rather than historical. Indeed it is thoroughly in keeping with this view of mysticism as an act of love that she should treat all apparently mystical experiences as in principle equally relevant, without too much regard for differences in historical period, cultural and geographical milieu, or theological creed. The

important thing is the experience itself...the other factors affect the mode according to which the experience finds its way into words, sometimes its depth and intensity, but none can detract from the unique common denominator of all mystical experience: men and women in love with God. (Armstrong, 1975:114-115)

Because Underhill sees the essence of mystical experience as love of God, those mystical traditions which denigrate the role of affect are considered less authentic. And, in spite of her intention to "make a synthesis of the doctrine of Christian & non-Christian mystics," the Eastern religions, along with neoplatonists, are considered by Underhill to belong to this category. As Armstrong (1975:125) points out, this is to treat the Asian forms of mysticism "with less than entire justice."

Although Armstrong does not remark upon Underhill's bias toward a genetic explanation for mystical potential, he does discuss the philosophical climate that contributed to her interpretation of mysticism. Underhill herself refers to the prevailing philosophical orientation as vitalism. Specifically she was influenced by both Henri Bergson and Rudolf Eucken. Of these two, Armstrong says,

Neither Eucken nor Bergson displayed any interest in mysticism yet both seemed to many of their disciples to advance a spiritual explanation of the universe...Both insisted that...progress in man must take the form of an ever-increasing improvement of his intellectual, artistic, creative, life-enhancing capacities. (Armstrong, 1975:118)

The philosophical emphasis of the day was on becoming, on the evolution of humanity toward a higher stage of consciousness, in which the noblest aspirations of the human spirit would find fulfilment - a kind of transcendental Darwinism. And the source for this process was considered to be internal to the organism itself.

Bergson, according to Underhill, saw the life of pure creativity as one which is "fed from within...[i]t evolves by means of its own inherent and spontaneous creative power" (Underhill, 1960:29). That this source is genetically determined seems to be clearly implied in the very opening words of *Mysticism*:

The most highly developed branches of the human family have in common one peculiar characteristic. They tend to produce - sporadically it is true, and often in the teeth of adverse external circumstances -a curious and definite type of personality; a type which refuses to be satisfied with that which other men call experience, and is inclined, in the words of its enemies, to "deny the world in order that it may find reality." (Underhill, 1960:3)

If the implied faculty for mystical consciousness is said to be found in the most "highly developed branches [i.e., races] of the human family," it must be absent, or virtually so, in the least highly developed "branches."

This implicit mixture of mystical vitalism, genetic origins and racism is far more explicit in a contemporary of Underhill's, i.e., R.M. Bucke,[38] to whom Underhill refers on a couple of occasions in *Mysticism*. In Underhill's case the racism is only implicit, but the main point is not that Underhill is a racist, rather that her study has a cultural context, which influences her explanation of mysticism, and prevents her from recognizing other possible explanations - e.g., that environmental factors may play a significant role in fostering a mystical vocation.

James Horne offers a critique of an entirely different nature. He argues that Underhill's psychological approach is merely descriptive and that it lacks explanatory power as indicated by the fact that it does not provide us with a testable hypothesis:

If there is any lingering feeling that the psychological process account of mystical experience is "scientific" and "objective," that can be dispelled quickly by asking ourselves whether an account like Underhill's five-stage description explains mysticism to us, in even the most elementary sense of "explain" as it occurs in a science. Does she provide us with a testable hypothesis about mysticism, one which we might confirm by a number of observations?...the answer just has to be "no." (Horne, 1978:59-60)

Horne is correct when he says that Underhill's psychological description of a five-stage model does not explain mysticism, for the simple reason that a description is not in itself an explanation. But a description in psychological terms is a necessary preliminary step for a psychological explanation, and, as we shall see, Underhill does have such an explanation. Although Underhill does not provide testable hypotheses herself, such hypotheses can be derived from her explanation as will be shown in the final section of this chapter.

The mystic way

While William James has a model of religious growth, especially for religious geniuses, as he calls them, it is far from elaborate. This is understandable given that the context for his discussion of the divided self is a survey of the horizon, or varieties, of religious experience. In her classic study, as the title suggests, Evelyn Underhill has chosen to focus on one of the varieties of religious experience, the mystical life, and to undertake a description of its progress through a series of stages.

Underhill's model consists of the following five stages: (1) the awakening of the self; (2) the purification of the self; (3) the illumination of the self; (4) the dark night of the soul; and (5) the unitive life. Underhill describes the condition of the self prior to awakening in the following terms:

That which we call the "natural" self as it exists in the "natural" world...is wholly incapable of supersensual adventure. All its activities are grouped about a centre of consciousness whose

correspondences are with the material world. (Underhill, 1960:199)

From this passage it would seem that there is no conflict between the ideal and the actual, between higher and lower values, prior to awakening. However in her account of the awakening of the self Underhill speaks of inner conflict both before and after the awakening, which event she equates with conversion. She insists, however, that mystical conversion is not to be confused with religious conversion from, e.g., unbelief to belief, or from one set of beliefs to another set (1960:176). She also mentions that mystical conversion can be gradual as well as sudden although,

Commonly...mystical conversion is a single and abrupt experience, sharply marked off from the long, dim struggles which precede it. It usually involves a sudden and acute realization of a splendour and adorable reality in the world - or sometimes of its obverse, the divine sorrow at the heart of things - never before perceived....however....the apparently abrupt conversion is really, as a rule, the sequel and the result of a long period of restlessness, uncertainty, and mental stress. The deeper mind stirs uneasily in its prison, and its emergence is but the last of many efforts to escape. The temperament of the subject, his surroundings, the vague but persistent apprehensions of a supersensual reality which he could not find, yet could not forget; all these have prepared him for it. (Underhill, 1960:178-179)

Thus Underhill identifies a period of "restlessness, uncertainty, and mental stress," a period of dissatisfaction and yearning, that occurs prior to the awakening. At this point the future mystic has no more than a vague, even if persistent, sense of the ideal which will subsequently come to occupy one of the poles of the divided, or oscillating, self.

If we combine Underhill's distinctions with the observations made regarding the reports of mystics in the second chapter of this study, a four-phase process can be described. The first is one in which individuals are focused upon the ordinary concerns of life (those of the "material world") and are perfectly content with this state of things. The next phase is one in which there is an apprehension, however dimly perceived, of something more; of another, axiologically superior, order of reality. This dim perception subsequently attains clarity in a moment of insight - the awakening of the self. At this point, the third phase, there is division within the self: on the one hand the newly perceived ideal, on the other the concerns of the "material world" which retain their appeal. This condition was described by Augustine, Al-Ghazzali and Kao P'an-lung. The final, or fourth, phase begins at the point where incipient mystics make a commitment to the mystical path - they decide to play an active role in favouring the ideal pole of their divided selves. The citations from both Al-Ghazzali and Kao P'an-lung contain accounts of this decision. Underhill seems to regard mystical awakening as synonymous with mystical conversion, but this is not born out in the testimony of at least some mystics. And in fact in all of those cases, cited in the second chapter of this study, where there is an extensive account, one finds a period of acute oscillation between two clearly understood options prior to a commitment to the mystical path.

The "long dim struggles" which *succeed* the awakening experience constitute the second stage in Underhill's model, that is to say, the purification of the self. It is a period marked by what James calls the divided self, and Underhill the oscillating self - a period of "discord between [a] deeper and [a] superficial self" (Underhill, 1960:213). But whereas James was content to focus primarily on the division within the self, Underhill emphasizes the response of those committed to the mystical way. At this point aspiring mystics engage in ascetical exercises, in order to gain control over what they perceive to be their lower desires, and in the practice of meditation, in order to concentrate their divided minds. During the course of their "purification" they may experience certain exalted states of consciousness, although these are more typical of the stage Underhill calls the illumination of the self. And in spite of the occasional states of elation in the lives of some aspiring mystics, this stage is more properly characterized as one of effort, self-recrimination and a sense of distance from the ultimate goal:

That which mystical writers mean...when they speak of the Way of Purgation, is...the slow and painful completion of Conversion. It is the drastic turning of the self from the unreal to the real life: a setting of her house in order, an orientation of the mind to Truth. Its business is the getting rid, first of self-love; and secondly of all those foolish interests in which the surface-consciousness is steeped.

"The essence of purgation," says Richard of St. Victor, "is self-simplification." Nothing can happen until this has proceeded a certain distance: till the involved interests and tangled motives of the self are simplified, and the false complications of temporal life are recognized and cast away.

"No one," says another authority in this matter [the *Theologica Germanica*], "can be enlightened unless he first be cleansed and stripped." Purgation, which is the remaking of character in conformity with perceived reality, consists in these two essential acts: the cleansing of that which is to remain, [and] the stripping away of that which is to be done away. (Underhill, 1960:204)

The purification of the self may last months, years or even decades; in fact for many it lasts a lifetime. Others however experience a permanent qualitative shift in awareness, which Underhill calls the illumination of the self:

[The mystic] has now...detached himself from his chief entanglements; re-oriented his instinctive life. The result is a new and solid certitude about God, and his own soul's relation to God: an "enlightenment" in which he is adjusted to new standards of conduct and thought....He achieves a real vision and knowledge, a conscious harmony with the divine World of Becoming: not yet self-loss in the Principle of Life, but rather a willing and harmonious revolution about Him....This character distinguishes almost every first-hand description of illumination:....pleasurable and exalted states...in which the sense of I-hood persists...a loving and joyous relation between the Absolute as object and the self as subject...which is really an enormous development of the intuitional life at high levels.

(Underhill, 1960:234)

The illumination of the self, according to Underhill, is a natural consequence of meditation, in which the mystic's "scattered energies" are concentrated, and asceticism, the purpose of which is to facilitate detachment from the "foolish interests in which the surface-consciousness is steeped" (1960:233). Withdrawal of interest from the outer world has the result of opening up another interior world: the world of voices, visions and ecstasies. Underhill (1960:240) also notes that the clarity of vision experienced by mystics in this stage is not necessarily restricted to the inner world but frequently applies to the phenomenal world as well.[39] Although some artists and poets are also privy to this transformed perception, they have occasional access to it only, whereas for those in the stage of mystical illumination the experience is ongoing (Underhill, 1960:233 & 235). Yet another feature of the illumination of the self is the occurrence of "automatisms." Since the self is purified of obstacles to the "energy of the intuitional...self," this energy is free to enter into consciousness in one form or another:

Now it [the energy of the intuitional self] seizes upon the ordinary channels of expression; and may show itself in such forms as (a) auditions, (b) dialogues between the surface consciousness and another intelligence which purports to be divine, (c) visions, and sometimes (d) in automatic writings. In many selves this automatic activity of those growing but still largely subconscious powers which constitute the "New Man," increases steadily during the whole of the mystical life. (Underhill, 1960:240-241)

Thus the three characteristics of the illumination of the self, according to Underhill, are an exalted sense of awareness of the ultimate reality, a transformed perception of the phenomenal world, and communication with the ultimate reality through the deeper levels of consciousness.

The illuminative stage is not however the terminus of the mystical path. Underhill stresses that "self-loss in the Principle of Life" has not yet taken place, and that "the sense of I-hood persists." The fourth stage in Underhill's model is the one in which the last vestiges of ego, or self-centeredness, are removed. This is the stage which she calls, after John of the Cross, the dark night of the soul. Just as illumination, in which mystics *perceive* the ultimate reality, is preceded by a purgation of the senses (the purification of the self); so union (the final stage in Underhill's model), in which mystics become united with ultimate reality, is preceded by a purgation of the will (Underhill, 1960:388 & 396).

The stage of illumination serves to some extent to unify the divided self but the union achieved is imperfect and must sooner or later dissolve. There are still, so to speak, remnants of opposition to the process of complete reunification. The dark night consists of a dissolution of the temporary unity of consciousness experienced during the illumination of the self, of an awareness of the insubstantiality of that union, and of a preparation for the complete union that is to come. Of the dark night, Underhill says it is "the last painful break with the life of illusion" (1960:401). In a sense it is an extension of the purification of the self (1960:388), except that it is a much more painful process (1960:392-393) and it

is one in which those who suffer it cannot play an active role - they must endure it passively (1960:399).

The result of the dark night is the unitive life. As in her treatment of each of the other stages, so in the case of the final stage of the mystical path, i.e., the unitive life, Underhill provides both a phenomenological description and a psychological interpretation. An example of the former is the following passage:

> The mystic....would say that his long-sought correspondence with Transcendental Reality, his union with God, has now been finally established: that his self, though intact, is wholly penetrated - as a sponge by the sea - by the Ocean of Life and Love to which he has attained....He is conscious that he is now at length cleansed of the last stains of separation, and has become, in a mysterious manner, "that which he beholds." (Underhill, 1960:417-418)

From the mystical point of view, the less desirable poles of the various dimensions of the mystical struggle have ceased to exist; the mystic is now totally focused on the Ultimate Reality. From a psychological perspective the unitive life represents a reintegration of personality:

From the point of view of the pure psychologist, what do the varied phenomena of the Unitive Life, taken together, seem to represent? He would probably say they indicate the final and successful establishment of that higher form of consciousness which has been struggling for supremacy during the whole of the Mystic Way. The deepest, richest levels of human personality have now been transformed, has at last unified itself; and with the cessation of stress, power has been liberated for new purposes. (Underhill, 1960:416)

The "higher form of consciousness" to which Underhill refers has, according to her, been struggling to emerge throughout the mystical path - it has given rise to the more valued poles of the dimensions of the oscillating self as well as to the motivation to make use of asceticism and meditation. In short, what emerges into full consciousness in the unitive way has been present all along, albeit covertly, as the dynamism behind the oscillation of the self and the mystical response to that oscillation.

The purification of the self

By the term purification of the self, Evelyn Underhill is referring to both a condition and a response to that condition. The condition is clearly the one that William James calls the divided self and which Underhill frequently speaks of as the oscillating self. Her schematic description of it is as follows:

The struggle of the self to disentangle itself from illusion and attain the Absolute is a life-struggle....It will sway now to the light and now to the shade of experience: its oscillations will sometimes be great, sometimes small. Mood and environment, inspiration and information, will all play their part.

There are in this struggle three factors.

(1) The unchanging light of Eternal Reality....

(2) The web of illusion, here thick, there thin; which hems in, confuses, and allures the sentient self.

(3) That self, always changing, moving, struggling - always, in fact, *becoming* - alive in every fibre, related at once to the unreal and to the real... (Underhill, 1960:229)

Elsewhere she refers to the oscillating self as "discord between [the] deeper and [the] superficial self," as a "war between the real and the superficial self," a "division of interests," a "natural but hopeless human struggle to make the best of both worlds," and a "battle between the inharmonious elements of the self" (1960:213 & 217). The condition is characterized by an "acute consciousness of unworthiness," or a "vivid consciousness of imperfection," and "diligent and instant self-criticism," and the response is an active employment of asceticism:

It is in this torment of contrition, this acute consciousness of unworthiness, that we have the first swing-back of the oscillating self from the initial state of mystic pleasure to the complementary state of pain. It is, so to speak, on its transcendental side, the reflex action which follows the first touch of God. Thus we read that Rulman Merswin, "swept away by the transports of Divine Love," did not surrender himself to the passive enjoyment of this first taste of Absolute Being, but was impelled by it to diligent and instant self-criticism. He was "seized with a hatred of his body, and inflicted upon himself such hard mortifications that he fell ill." It is useless for lovers of healthy-mindedness to resent this and similar examples of self-examination and penance: to label them morbid or medieval. The fact remains that only such bitter knowledge of wrongness of relation, seen by the light of ardent love, can spur the will of man to the hard task of readjustment. (Underhill, 1960:201-202)

The purification of the self is not merely a passive experience. Aspiring mystics stimulated by the awakening of the self make a decision to be actively involved in a struggle to live in conformity to the ideal values which they have accepted as ultimately desirable. Further elaboration on this point is made in the following passage:

The lives of the mystics abound in instances of...the deep-seated necessity which urges the newly awakened self to a life of discomfort and conflict, often to intense poverty and pain, as the only way of replacing false experience by true. Here the transcendental consciousness, exalted by a clear intuition

of its goal...takes the reins. It forces on the unwilling surface mind a sharp vision of its own disabilities, its ugly and imperfect life; and the thirst for Perfection which is closely bound up with the mystical temperament makes instant response. "No more sins!" was the first cry of St. Catherine of Genoa in that crucial hour in which she saw...her own self-centred and distorted past. She entered forthwith upon the Purgative Way, in which for four years she suffered under a profound sense of imperfection, endured fasting, solitude and mortification... (Underhill, 1960:200-201)

As well as emphasizing ascetical disciplines, Underhill devotes two chapters to describing, and explaining the function of, the practice of meditation at each stage of the mystical path. Initially, she explains, meditation requires an effort on the part of the aspiring mystic:

The beginning of the process of introversion, the first deliberate act in which the self turns toward the inward path...will be a voluntary and purposeful undertaking. Like conversion, it entails a break with the obvious, which must, of necessity, involve and affect the whole normal consciousness. It will be evoked by the mystic's love, and directed by his reason; but can only be accomplished by the strenuous exercise of his will. These preparatory labours of the contemplative life - these first steps upon the ladder - are, says St. Teresa, very hard, and require greater courage than all the rest. All the scattered interests of the self have here to be collected; there must be a deliberate and unnatural act of attention, a deliberate expelling of all discordant images from the consciousness - a hard and ungrateful task. (Underhill, 1960:313)

It is important to include within a descriptive model of the mystical path the period of active asceticism and meditation. The reason is that the conception of the mystical path forms the basis for the understanding of the mystical goal. For example, in James two-stage model of conversion (including conversion through mystical experience), the first stage is that of the divided self. For James this condition is spontaneous and passive. Future mystics, as well as other types of sick-souled persons, have no control over their situation. Equally the final integration of personality, and the mystical (or nonmystical conversion) experience upon which it depends, is also experienced as originating outside the conscious self.

Such a model will satisfactorily account for evangelical conversions, since they are believed to depend wholly upon God, but it will not do justice to the mystical traditions, which view the mystical goal as in some measure a personal achievement. This is not to say that the mystical traditions deny a role to "grace" or "other-power" (a term used in East Asian Buddhism). It is only to recognize that mystical traditions assign some role, whether major or minor, to the determination of mystics themselves. Since Underhill's description of stages has a place for the self-efforts of the mystics in response to the oscillation of the self, it more adequately represents the mystical path than does James' two-staged model.

An explanation offered by Underhill (1960:201-202) for the origin of the oscillating self is that it is a

reflex action which follows the experience of awakening. Although Underhill does not elaborate on this explanation, it is not difficult to do so. The presumption is that any unstable mental or affective state must be followed by its opposite, e.g., interest will be followed by boredom, mania by depression, and so on. Thus the exalted awakened state, being inherently unstable must give way to its opposite, or a state of desolation. Understood religiously, the exalted state is an experience of the presence of the sacred other, and conversely the desolation which succeeds it, is an experience of the absence of the sacred in which quite naturally the individual either becomes angry at the divine (not a real option) or at herself or himself. However an explanation of this kind really requires an explanation itself. Why do some persons, e.g., mystics, experience intense emotional states such as exaltation in the first place? Underhill, like James, answers this question in terms of temperament: mystics possess a unique temperamental disposition.

Underhill's psychological explanation of the mystical struggle

Throughout *Mysticism*, Underhill refers to a temperamental trait of mystics variously referred to as "great emotional...power" (1960:57), "the abnormal and highly sensitized type of mind" (1960:59), "thresholds of exceptional mobility" (1960:62), "extreme sensitiveness" (1960:223), "that mobile or `unstable' type" (1960:227), "extreme susceptibility to suggestions and impressions" (1960:364) and "extreme nervous instability" (1960:383). Her most elaborate treatment of this trait is in her chapter on the psychology of mysticism and the following passage nicely summarizes the essence of her position:

Now in persons of mystical genius, the qualities which the stress of life tends to keep below the threshold of consciousness are of enormous strength. In these natural explorers of Eternity the "transcendental faculty," the "eye of the soul," is not merely present in embryo, but is highly developed; and is combined with great emotional and volitional power. The result of the segregation of such qualities below the threshold of consciousness is to remove from them the friction of those counterbalancing traits in the surface mind with which they might collide. They are "in the hiddenness," as Jacob Boehme would say. There they develop unchecked, until a point is reached at which their [emotional] strength is such that they break their bounds and emerge into the conscious field: either temporarily dominating the subject as in ecstasy, or permanently transmuting the old self, as in the "unitive life." The attainment of this point may be accelerated by processes which have always been known and valued by mystics [i.e., meditation and asceticism] ... (Underhill, 1960:57)

Underhill's psychological theory of mysticism is that in all persons there is an inner self, which she here calls the "transcendental faculty" and the "eye of the soul." Elsewhere she refers to it as the "deeper or hidden self" (1960:67), the "transcendental self" (1960:68), the "ideal" (1960:224), the "transcendent personality" (1960:259), the "deeper levels of personality" (1960:330), and a "special psychological system" (1960:417).

In everyone this inner self remains hidden below the threshold of consciousness, lest it collide with the "counterbalancing traits in the surface mind," and for most persons it exists only in embryo. But in mystics the inner self possesses the emotional power to emerge, gradually or suddenly, into consciousness resulting in the first stage of the mystical path, i.e., the awakening of the self:

[The] awakening....is a disturbance of the equilibrium of the self, which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from lower to higher levels, with a consequent removal of the centre of interest from the subject to an object now brought into view... (Underhill,1960:176)

...it means the first emergence of that passion for the Absolute which is to constitute [the mystic's] distinctive character: an emergence crucial in its effect on every department of his life. (Underhill, 1960:177)

The characteristic feature of the inner self is that, unlike the surface self which is uncritically acquiescent to physiological and social pressures, it is conscious of and acquiescent to a transcendental end. In the awakening of the potential mystic, the inner self, with its focus on an ultimate reality, emerges into consciousness.

The way in which this emergence provokes the phenomenon of the oscillating self is explained by Underhill as follows:

The first thing that the self observes, when it turns back upon itself in that awful moment of lucidity...is the horrible contrast between its clouded contours and the pure sharp radiance of the Real; between its muddled faulty life, its perverse self-centred drifting, and the clear onward sweep of that Becoming in which it is immersed. It is then that the outlook of rapture and awe [that characterizes the awakening] receives the countersign of repentance. (Underhill, 1960:200)

On seeing the contrast between the perfection of ultimate reality (and therefore presumably the perfection that is possible for those conformed to this reality) and the actual condition in which they find themselves, future mystics enter into the state of the oscillating self. They engage in self-criticism, asceticism and meditation. But the experience of awakening is not in itself a transformation of personality; it is only an intimation of what is possible. To arrive at a total transformation requires a deliberate attempt to reorder the conscious self, so that it can be ultimately integrated with the inner self in the unitive life.

Underhill's explanation for the awakening of the self is that those who experience it are emotionally sensitive, i.e., possess a mobile threshold of consciousness plus an emotionally empowered inner self, which inevitably must result in an emergence of that inner self into consciousness. However this situation is not unique to mystics. As we have seen in the previous chapter, James makes note of the

similarity between mystics, creative persons and the mentally ill; and so does Underhill:

A "mobile threshold" may make a man a genius, a lunatic, or a saint. All depends on the character of the emerging powers. In the great mystic, these powers, these tracts of personality lying below the level of the normal consciousness, are of unusual richness; and cannot be accounted for in terms of pathology. (Underhill, 1960:62)

In those abnormal types of personality to which we give the name of genius, we seem to detect a hint of the relations which may exist between these deep levels of being and the crust of consciousness. In the poet, the musician, the great mathematician or inventor, powers lying below the threshold...clearly take a major part in the business of perception and conception....This is equally true of mystics, artists, philosophers, discoverers, and rulers of men. (Underhill, 1960:63)

Underhill's intention is clear - she wants to defend mysticism against those who would reduce it to psychopathology. She has done so by claiming a similarity between mysticism and creatives on the one hand, and arguing for the radical difference between mystics and the mentally ill on the other. However what can be noted here is the absence of any explanation as to why some become creative, others mystics and still others mentally ill - in other words the explanation as to why some persons become mystics is incomplete. At first glance it might seem that the explanation for why some persons become creatives or mystics, as opposed to pathological, is that their deeper level of consciousness is richer. But this is not an explanation; it is simply a description. Possibly the phrase contains the implication that mystics and creatives are just born that way or that the Absolute has gratuitously chosen to bestow this condition upon them. But if this is intended, it is a form of mystification that is unacceptable in the psychological study of religion.

Although the oscillation of the self is explained primarily in terms of the temperamental trait of emotional sensitivity, like James, Underhill also alludes to two other temperamental dispositions. In the chapter on voices and visions she describes the imaginative capacity of artists and then says that mystics also possess this trait:

In artistic subjects, the state of reverie tends easily to a visionary character: thought becomes pictorial, auditory or rhythmic as the case may be....Thus the painter really sees his unpainted picture, the novelist hears the conversation of his characters....In the mystic, the same type of activity constantly appears....Profound meditation takes on a pictorial or dramatic form. Apt symbols which suggest themselves to his imagination become objectivized. The message that he longs for is heard within his mind. (Underhill, 1960:272)

Just as artists and mystics share in emotional sensitivity, so do they also share in a heightened capacity for imaginative absorption. However the function of imagination in creatives is different from

its function in mystics:

Where...artistic "automatisms" [i.e., voices and visions] spend themselves upon the artist's work, mystical "automatisms" in their highest forms have to do with that transformation of personality which is the essence of the mystical life. They are the media by which the self receives spiritual stimulus; is reproved, consoled, encouraged and guided on its upward way...."Such automatisms as these," says Delacroix, are...systematic and progressive...they have a teleological character....they are the realization...of a secret and permanent personality of a superior type to the conscious personality...." (Underhill, 1960:272-273)

Thus the products of the mystics' active imaginations, inasmuch as they mediate reproof, contribute to the purification of the self. They also have a function at a later stage on the mystical path - they assist the mystics to realize their psychic reunification around a personality ideal.

The third temperamental disposition noted by William James was intellectual strength; and it is remarked upon by Underhill. Regarding the great contemplatives, she says that they were "almost always persons of robust intelligence and marked practical or intellectual ability" (1960:59). Not every impulse that comes from the interior depths is, to use James metaphor, a seraph; and it is "robust intelligence" that enables mystics to be able to discern the difference. As a negative example, Underhill cites the case of Madame Guyon:

Madame Guyon's value to the student of mysticism partly consists in this feeble quality of her surface-intelligence, which hence had little or no modifying or contributory effect upon her spiritual life....True to her great principle of passivity or "quiet," it lets the uncriticized interior impulses have their way....The wind that bloweth where it listeth whistles through her soul: and the response which she makes is that of a weathercock rather than a windmill. (Underhill, 1960:183)

A strong "surface-intelligence" it is suggested, enables mystics to discern critically their interior impulses and so better participate in the process of their purification and reunification of their personalities.

Underhill's theory: A final word

In *Mysticism* Evelyn Underhill has provided a psychological description of the progress of the mystical life in terms of an inner self, a surface self, and a usually immobile threshold of consciousness separating the two. In some persons, however the threshold is mobile and the inner self emerges temporarily into consciousness. This experience is so satisfying that its subsequent loss results in a conflict within the surface self: on the one hand the surface self would like to continue undisturbed in its habitual self-centred patterns of perception and behaviour, but on the other, it is attracted to the

inner self. When this attraction becomes sufficiently acute, the surface self makes use of ascetical practices and meditation to achieve its goal of a transforming union with the inner self.[40] So much for Underhill's *description*.

Underhill's *explanation* as to why this process begins in some and not in others is that the former possess a temperamental trait of emotional sensitivity. As is the case with any legitimate explanation, disconfirmable hypotheses can be derived from it. One hypothesis might be that a systematic examination of the early childhood years of mystics will show that they possess a greater than average degree of emotional sensitivity in the form of, let us say, attachment behaviour.[41] Further, the number of mystics possessing this need should be significantly greater than the 50% expected for a trait assumed to be normally distributed in the population.

In an unpublished doctoral dissertation, John David Spangler (1961) compared twenty-five classic European mystics with twenty-five schizophrenics in terms of categories derived from the need-press theory of Henry Murray. The results of these comparisons will be considered in more detail below (i.e., in Chapters Seven to Nine), but what is relevant at this point are Spangler's findings regarding the presence in the childhood of mystics of what Murray refers to as positive cathexes:

Children may become enduringly attached to certain objects: father, mother, sibling, animal, thing. They join such objects, play with them and relish their company, cling and adhere, conserve and protect them. They dislike the loss or dispossession of the object and are annoyed by the intrusion of a competitor. (Murray, 1938:317)

This would seem to describe attachment behaviour. On the basis of a content analysis of the autobiographies of the mystics, and other sources, Spangler (1961:64 & 68) found that more mystics possessed a need for positive cathexis than would normally be expected (the results were significant at the .01 confidence level).

Even though Spangler's data are virtually identical to the sources used by Underhill, it should be noted that Underhill's theory based on an impressionistic survey is confirmed by Spangler's more systematic analysis. But a similar hypothesis can be tested using an entirely different data base. It is not unreasonable to assume that people who undertake the practice of meditation have at least some orientation toward mysticism, and therefore on the basis of Underhill's theory, it can be hypothesized that meditators will possess a greater than average degree of emotional sensitivity. This has been found to be the case by Kanas and Horowitz (1977), who compared reactions of premeditators (volunteers from TM residence courses in San Francisco) and controls to stress films. Premeditators rated themselves as significantly more stressed than did the controls subsequent to viewing the films. They also scored higher on measures of nervousness, sadness and fear both before and after seeing the films than did the controls. Of course the real point to be made here is not that these hypotheses

are correct, nor is it that Underhill has herself proposed these, or any other, hypotheses that can be put to an empirical test, but simply that Underhill's theoretical explanation is capable of generating such hypotheses and hence has explanatory power. Horne (1978:60) is simply incorrect in his assessment of Underhill's achievement.

On the other hand, as we have seen above, Underhill's explanation is far from adequate inasmuch as it fails to explain why those who possess emotional sensitivity become mystics, as opposed to becoming, e.g., creative or mentally ill. In other words there must be other factors, in particular, environmental ones, involved in predisposing someone to the mystical struggle. Underhill's account, a product of the early twentieth-century milieu as Armstrong has so well explained, presents mystics as privileged individuals whose family and larger social context was of no consequence. Furthermore, while she provides a rich phenomenological description of the development of the mystical life, her psychological analysis of the mystical process is on the thin side - a more detailed account would be desirable. This is equally true of William James, and therefore it is helpful to make use of a developmental psychological theory that is both compatible with the insights of James and Underhill and at the same time provides a more elaborate account of personality stages corresponding to Underhill's mystical ones.

CHAPTER V

KAZIMIERZ DABROWSKI'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY DISINTEGRATION

In addition to their phenomenological analyses, James and Underhill provide interpretations of the mystical life in psychological terms. By so doing they are able to shed more light on the dynamics of personality involved. There is, it seems to me, a lot in common between their psychological descriptions of the mystical process and of the type of temperament that is predisposed to it. Both James and Underhill speak in terms of a final transformation in the lives of mystics following a period of inner conflict. Both see a temperament marked by emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement as an important predispositional factor. There are also a number of similarities between the psychological analyses of James and Underhill and the personality theory of Kazimierz Dabrowski, although Dabrowski's theory emerges primarily from his clinical work and not from a study of mystics. I introduce Dabrowski's theory of personality development in order: (1) to show the similarities between mystical development and personality development; (2) to provide a more elaborate model for analysing the developmental process in individual mystics; and (3) to lend some empirical support to James' and Underhill's theory of a mystical temperament.

Dabrowski (1902-1980) received an M.D. from the University of Geneva Medical School in 1929 and a Ph.D. in experimental psychology from the University of Poznan in 1932. He underwent psychoanalytic training and analysis with Wilhelm Stekel in Vienna, studied psychology and education with Jean Piaget in Geneva, and child psychiatry in Paris with George Heuyer and in Boston with Mcfie Campbell and William Healy. He was Professor of the Polish Academy of Science and Director of the Institute of Child Psychiatry and Mental Hygiene in the Academy. During the sixties and seventies he was a professor at Laval University and the University of Alberta in Canada. He has published, in Polish, French and English, over twenty books and almost a hundred articles.

Dabrowski's five-stage model of personality development, is referred to as the theory of positive disintegration, because it is based on the principle of disintegration and reintegration of personality structures. Persons are considered to be born in a psychological state of primitive integration. The process of personality development requires that they pass through a three-stage process of disintegration before reintegrating at a "higher" level of functioning, although progress, even beyond the first level is not inevitable. Dabrowski provides a detailed analysis of each stage, a causal explanation for personality growth in terms of a predisposing, genetically determined temperament, and empirical data consisting of clinical cases and biographical studies.

In Dabrowski's earliest formulations of his theory (1964 & 1967), and in every work written exclusively by him (e.g., his articles in Dabrowski, Kawczak & Piechowski, 1970), the approach taken is typological and phenomenological. However in the 1977 description of the theory (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) dimensions tend to replace ideal types and in the case studies these dimensions are assessed quantitatively. Subsequently Piechowski and his colleagues have developed questionnaires for measuring developmental level and temperamental dimensions. While I include references to empirical studies done by Piechowski and his colleagues, in general I treat Dabrowski's descriptions of personality stages and of temperamental overexcitabilities as ideal types.

Dabrowski's model of personality development[42]

Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration identifies five stages of personality development: (1) an initial stage of primitive integration in which emotional, imaginational and mental activities are subordinate to physiological drives or impulses; (2) three intermediate stages of personality disintegration; and (3) a final reintegration of the personality characterized by self-possession, responsibility, autonomy and authenticity, all of which flow effortlessly from a centre of consciousness that Dabrowski refers to as the "personality ideal." Persons do not automatically pass through these stages: some remain in the first, many are found in the second, a small number reach the third stage, but few indeed are those who progress to the stages beyond that. In other words personality development, in the sense described by Dabrowski, is not automatic.

Dabrowski and his colleague Piechowski (1977, Vol.I:21-29), suggest comparisons between the

stages of the theory of positive disintegration and those of other models of ethical, ego or personality development. The first two stages of Lawrence Kohlberg's model of moral development (i.e., the "punishment and obedience" and "instrumental hedonism" orientations) and Jane Loevinger's "impulsive" and "self-protective" stages correspond to an <u>extreme</u> form of "primary integration" (i.e., an extreme form of Dabrowski's first stage). Kohlberg's "good boy - good girl" and "law and order" orientations and Loevinger's "conformist" level, and possibly her "conscientious-conformist" level as well, are considered equivalent to a *mild* form of Dabrowski's first stage.

Although the authors do not say so explicitly, there are indications that Kohlberg's "social contract" stage of moral development and Loevinger's "conscientious" and "individualistic" levels of ego development might be compared to Dabrowski's second stage of personality. And Loevinger's "autonomous" level is explicitly stated to correspond to Dabrowski's third personality stage. These comparisons are brief and not based on empirical evidence. But Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977, Vol.II:157-222) provide some empirical support for an equivalence between Abraham Maslow's stage of self-actualization and Dabrowski's fourth stage in their analysis of Antoine St.-Exupery using both Maslovian and Dabrowskian criteria.

In Dabrowski's personality model, individuals in the two stages of integration (i.e., the first and the fifth stages of personality) are free from inner conflict. In these two stages, behaviour is spontaneous and characterized by a certain "innocence." In both, talk about levels of development makes no sense. Goals, values and striving rather characterize the levels of disintegration - particularly level III, called spontaneous multilevel disintegration.

But behind the surface similarities can be seen important differences. Level I persons are spontaneously controlled by their basic biological impulses, whereas in level V persons, biological impulses and drives are spontaneously and effortlessly directed by the fully manifest personality ideal. Another difference is that in fifth level individuals, the various personality dimensions (e.g., intellect, emotion and imagination) are all well-developed, differentiated, flexible and at the same time interpenetrate each other. In primary integration (level I) these functions, especially the emotional one, are undeveloped, or in the case where, for example, the intellect alone is developed, it is inflexible and isolated from the other personality dimensions.

Further, persons in the stage of primary integration are indifferent to altruistic concerns. Persons in secondary integration, on the other hand, are spontaneously yet dispassionately ready to sacrifice themselves for others, even to the point of giving up their lives. Level I persons come into conflict with others when the satisfaction of basic drives is frustrated - fifth level persons, when human ideals are threatened. In conflicts with others first level individuals lack consideration for others if they are perceived as weaker, and instead tend to humiliate and take advantage of them.

In order to gain a better understanding of primary integration it is useful to consider an example from one of Dabrowski's case studies. The subject is a school teacher, who likes his profession "not because he is especially interested in children, but because he enjoys long vacations." Dabrowski

offers the following assessment:

> Although this subject is intelligent, he shows no signs of inner culture. He lacks personal ideals, and is not motivated by inner values. Instead, his intelligence operates in service of his own immediate physical needs, and in strict conjunction with changing external events. His complete orientation toward externality makes him very familiar with, and very adaptable to, social-environmental circumstances. But at the same time, his orientation provides a dangerously narrow and simple attitude toward life. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:63)

With respect to the final level of personality (stage V) a description is provided by Dabrowski's colleague Michael Piechowski:

Secondary integration stands for the highest level of development. Here, the process of developmental synthesis leads to a harmonious unity as a function of the "fullest dynamization of the ideal." Those who achieve this level epitomize universal compassion and self-sacrifice, and, here, Dag Hammarskjold is a good example. There are no internal conflicts at this level in the sense of opposition between "what is" and "what ought to be." Developmental differentiation here reaches its full fruition. The lower "what is" is replaced by the "ought" of the highest level, which, thus, becomes the new and ultimate "what is." (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:29-30)

Piechowski distinguishes between two types of adult primary integration. The extreme form fits the general description of a psychopath or near-psychopath. The second or milder form is described as follows:

These individuals have a narrow scope of interest, limited horizons in thinking, aspirations, and affect, but they are not totally without feeling. While they may acquire skills...develop their abilities, become competent within the prescribed demands of the job market...there is no actual development in the basic underlying structure of their personality...It is true that... [a] time of stress...may occasion some reflection, but there is none of the reevaluation of oneself and one's life in a larger context of human existence that is characteristic of higher levels. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:21-22)

In order to progress to secondary integration it is necessary to pass through three levels of disintegration which Dabrowski has called unilevel disintegration, spontaneous multilevel disintegration and organized multilevel disintegration. All three are marked by inner conflict. In level II (unilevel disintegration) conflict is between a "multiplicity of wills" (or many selves) that are a result of the socialization process. Conflict is between circumstantial demands and may occur between incompatible expectations of others or between expectations of others and biological urges. Tension

resolution at level II is through recourse to substance abuse (e.g., drugs or alcohol), lower-level defense mechanisms[43] or psychosomatic illness:

Insight into oneself and self-awareness are weak in unilevel disintegration as is the capacity for inner psychic transformation of conflicts, difficulties, experienced tensions. Rather than being transformed, tensions must be released or converted. They may be transposed to the body, giving rise to psychosomatic disorders. They may be externalized as projections, distortions of reality, or hallucinations. They may be quelled with alcohol, drugs, or suicide. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:24-25)

An interesting example of level II is a case history of a 40-year old man who occupied a prominent scientific position. His case is instructive for what it reveals about religious thinking and behaviour, as well as many of the general features, at the level of unilevel disintegration:

His level of intelligence, mainly theoretical, though in some areas [on the] practical side was fairly good. Symptoms of magical thinking (for instance in the fact [of] how important to him was the ceremonial procedure of festive occasions in his church or in everyday routine)....On the one hand he exhibited the so-called "spiritual desires," and on the other hand excessive care for his own comfort and pleasure. In his religious practice ritualistic observance was dominant. He used ceremonial gestures, like raising a finger to make a point in discussion. Tendency toward underlining his own importance ....Rather weak inner psychic transformation. Lack of internal conflicts....Superficial hierarchy of values, not worked through and weakly realized in his life. To avoid feelings of guilt in his sexual relations with women he protected himself by an elaborate ceremonialism so that he as a superior being descended down to bring happiness to his humble female companions....He was very pedantic about his eating habits and also about his sexual relations for which he dressed up in a ceremonial manner. (Dabrowski, 1972:89-90)

Multilevel conflict is made possible with the advent of an intrinsic hierarchy of values. Here conflict is between satisfying biological drives and social expectations on the one hand, or altruistic and transcendental concerns on the other. Initially, multilevel disintegration is "spontaneous" - i.e., not planned by the individual - but as development proceeds the individual takes control and organizes her or his disintegration in order to bring it to completion. During the spontaneous phase intrapsychic processes begin increasingly to influence and direct behaviour. Conflict with the environment is acknowledged and occasions self-criticism. This is in contrast with the tendency of level II persons to avoid self-criticism by having recourse to lower level defence mechanisms, such as those mentioned above. While level II persons react to their inner conflict by lower level defences, substance abuse and psychosomatic illness, level III persons think more and more in terms of a need for self-transformation. Dabrowski provides a description of a 26-year old priest as an example of spontaneous multilevel

disintegration:

S.P. was a priest 26 years old. He came seeking advice regarding feelings of insecurity, scruples and an inability to see what is sin and what is not. The patient was sensitive and nervous from childhood; he was attracted to the life of prayer, and to understanding and helping others. He entered the seminary since he felt it was his vocation to help others as a priest. For several years he had recurring doubts as to whether he thought and acted properly. He had feelings of inferiority, and was convinced of being worse than others. He did not remember well positive things about himself and his actions except those that had a "shade of sin." The feeling of his sinfulness often grew out of proportion. If he saw a poor or sick person or was witness to violence and could not help, he had feelings of guilt and of having failed in his duty. He was very sensitive to the feelings in people and animals. The possibility of causing sorrow to another person made him feel very uneasy. (Dabrowski, 1972:30)

The second phase of multilevel development (level IV) is called organized because here individuals plan their own development. Autonomy from biological drives and social pressures is much stronger as is the intrinsically determined hierarchy of values. The result is that inner conflict becomes weaker as behaviour is increasingly integrated and oriented towards self-perfection and the service of others. A tireless effort is made to realize "what ought to be." Dabrowski and Piechowski suggest that Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is an example of organized multilevel disintegration:

In his writings, Saint-Exupéry extols the virtues of comradeship and dedication to duty, emphasizes spiritual values, opposes individualism by a sense of solidarity, responsibility and sacrifice, and far from rejecting scientific progress and technology, calls for man to transcend his technocratic enslavement and awaken to a vision of a world imbued with a spirit of brotherhood and love. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:160)

Subsequent to an content analysis of the works of Saint-Exupéry, the two authors summarize those qualities they feel demonstrate the characteristics of level IV. With respect to Saint-Exupéry's relationships with others, they say,

He cultivated friendships with a sense of their eternal value. They involved his very essence (unit 70) and they allowed him to perceive the individual essence of others and to transcend the differences (unit 87). To initiate personal relationships was awkward for him (unit 28) because he was aware of the slow development of a relationship, of the need for opportunity to share experiences, hardships and growth (units 69, 79, 80). The simple pleasures of life when shared with a friend acquired for him a special meaning (units 80, 103). In danger he feared more for a friend than for his own safety (units 70, 71), while the death of a friend brought the bitter realization that nothing could ever replace him

(unit 78). (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:192)

Other examples of level IV persons include the Polish psychologist, Jan Wladyslaw Dawid, Ludwig Wittgenstein (Dabrowski, 1972:196) and Eleanor Roosevelt (Piechowski & Tyska, 1982).[44]

Three features of multilevel disintegration, especially organized phase, are of particular relevance to this study. Two of these are referred to in Dabrowski's description of intuition at level IV:

Development and deepening of intuition is closely related to the increasing distance from lower levels of reality and closer approach to its higher levels....Intuition is, thus, developed by detachment from the needs of a lower level and by union with the personality ideal. Meditation and contemplation contribute to the growth of intuition. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:152)

One cannot help but recall at this point that one of the means used by most mystics to gain control over their minds and to communicate with their inner selves (i.e., Dabrowski's personality ideal) is the practice of meditation. The other means is asceticism, which Underhill subdivides into detachment and mortification. In the passage just cited, Dabrowski identifies detachment as a means of developing intuition. Underhill's other subdivision of asceticism is mortification. According to Dabrowski, mortification is based on what he refers to as the "instinct of partial death." In his discussion of the attitude toward death in level IV, Dabrowski says that,

As a factor in development, we observe the activity of an instinct of *partial death*. It is a conscious and deliberate program of eradication of the lower personality structures [i.e., those of levels I and II]. In order to accomplish this, the disintegrative activity of some [developmental] dynamisms...may be increased in order to destroy the residual structures of primitive levels of the inner psychic milieu. This can take the form of asceticism, of resignation from personal ambitions for the sake of others, or deliberate and voluntary frustration of one's basic needs. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:172-173)

A preliminary attempt at establishing correspondences would seem to indicate that an experience of ambiguity, dissatisfaction with life, a vague sense of longing, such as occurs in the lives of many mystics prior to their awakening is roughly equivalent to unilevel disintegration. The phenomenon of the divided, or oscillating, self, that takes place subsequent to awakening but prior to a commitment to the mystical way, would correspond to spontaneous multilevel disintegration. When the commitment to the mystical life has occurred and the aspirants have begun to engage in meditation and, especially in, deliberate and freely chosen, asceticism, then they would have entered into the level Dabrowski calls organized multilevel disintegration.

Temperamental traits that promote development

Movement from one level of personality to another is a function of one or more of three developmental factors: (1) genetic; (2) environmental; and (3) autonomous. The genetic, or temperament, factor consists primarily in what Dabrowski calls overexcitabilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977:30-36; and Piechowski, 1979). They are so called because they refer to a tendency, which can be observed in children, and in adolescents and adults as well, to overreact to stimulation. Dabrowski specifies five categories of stimuli to which there can be an overreaction: (1) psychomotor; (2) sensual; (3) intellectual; (4) imaginational; and (5) emotional. The presence of the last three, especially of emotional overexcitability, is essential for development.[45] Overexcitabilities are expressed in typical concerns and behaviours, examples of which will be cited following brief descriptions of the five forms of overexcitability. The examples are taken from an "autobiography"[46] of a 34-year old woman from Northern Manitoba.

Psychomotor overexcitability can be seen in manifestations of surplus physical energy, such as animated gestures, taking on self-imposed tasks and participation in strenuous games and sports. Other manifestations are various forms of nervousness, such as impulsive actions, some types of delinquent behaviour and nervous habits such as can be seen in these two excerpts:

I felt the same way [i.e., compulsive] about my fingernails, which had to pass inspection every Saturday bathtime. They never did, of course, as I chewed them constantly. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:108)

At this time I developed several tics, a second one taking hold as soon as I mastered the first. One was blinking, another, sniffing (twice), a third, tapping each utensil at my plate before starting to eat and, if disturbed during my meal, having to tap and start again. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:116)

Sensory overexcitability expresses itself in experiences of sensory sensitivity or heightened sensory pleasure and in the seeking of sensual outlets as a release from inner tensions. Examples of the last-mentioned include buying sprees, sexual promiscuity, a need for comfort, narcissism and a fondness for jewellery and ornaments. Examples of sensory sensitivity and overindulgence in sensual pleasure are found in these two quotations from Dabrowski's case study:

When I started school I remember....My mornings were difficult, for my clothes had to exert the same pressure on both sides of my body. One stocking had to be exactly as tight as the other, or I couldn't function. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:111)

Often I spent the extra time eating more than I needed, which led to a tendency to be overweight that

took years to understand and partially control. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:116)

In the absence of intellectual, imaginational, and particularly emotional, overexcitability, the sensual and psychomotor forms of overreaction contribute nothing to personal growth (in fact they are counterproductive) since they lack a necessary connection with processes of inner psychic transformation. For a purely sensual person, for example, sexuality never becomes the expression of a personal relationship as it would if emotional overexcitability were present.

Intellectual overexcitability is manifested in striving for understanding, probing the unknown, love of truth, intellectual curiosity, preoccupation with theoretical problems, reverence for logic, a sharp sense of observation and independence of thought:

My passion for books was never satisfied as we had no library in the small town, and the school library was very small. Consequently, I read *Anthony adverse* and *The sun is my undoing* before I was 12, followed shortly by Karl Marx's works. Although the first two books were forbidden to me, as soon as my parents went out, I read them! (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:115)

When I found myself in a situation that was painful, or boring...I began to wonder where "I" was. First I went through the process of wondering if "I" was located in my head or in my heart. Then it extended to wondering if "I" was in my finger or my toe. I was convinced that I could be mutilated without damaging the real "me." (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:126-127)

Imaginational overexcitability is expressed in frequent distractions, daydreaming, use of images and metaphors in conversation, fantasy, animistic thinking and vivid nocturnal dreams:

...I imagined small incidents into big ones. There was a tone sounded on the radio to signal the beginning of a certain program. It seemed furtive and menacing. I had dreamed that our house was on fire, and, when I wakened, the image remained, although there was no fire. I was panic-striken, and could even after, bring that scene clearly to mind. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:110)

When I came home from school, the washing machine was on, and the swish-swish of the clothes in the water seemed to be saying "You can do better - you can do better." Even when I covered my ears, the machine hounded me. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:112)

Emotional overexcitability can be inferred from the presence of such things as extremes of feeling, a strong affective memory, shyness, concern with death, various forms of anxiety, feelings of loneliness or great sadness, attachment to animals and fellow humans, concern for others, sensitivity regarding self-image and difficulty in adjustment to a new environment. Since emotional overexcitability is so essential for personality development, four examples will be given:

Several of my friends played near the edge [of a cliff] and I begged them to stop. When they didn't I couldn't bear to watch them, and would run away, filled with a sense of dread. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:109)

I don't remember being openly defiant, but my sister, eighteen months older, was, and when she was disciplined I made a note of never doing what got her into trouble. I wanted everything to be happy and couldn't stand the tension I felt around me at times. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:111)

One day my work page in school was all wrong, because I had misunderstood the directions. My sorrow was so great that it didn't ease for days. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:111)

A boy in my classroom broke his leg that year (Grade I), and when I heard this, I ran home crying and couldn't be consoled, no matter how much I was comforted. Later, when Bobby returned to school, I was overjoyed to see he still had his leg for I thought it had broken right off. My relief was so great, that I felt ecstatic. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:112)

In all cases an overexcitability is indicated to the degree that the response exceeds what normally might be expected. Another characteristic of an overexcitability is the intense absorption of the individual's response, be it emotional, imaginational, intellectual, etc. Overexcitabilities are considered to be channels of external and internal stimuli. The broader are these channels, the greater the amount and diversity of information received and consequently the likelihood of tension, conflict and dissonance, the resolution of which requires a more flexible, complex, differentiated and integrated system of information processing. In fact, over the course of personality development, the five forms of overexcitability become increasingly differentiated, and at the same time interact with one another to give rise to what Dabrowski calls "developmental dynamisms."

The role of positive environmental conditions

There are a number of environmental conditions that can facilitate the transition from lower to higher levels of personality functioning, and three types are mentioned by Dabrowski in *Personality-shaping through positive disintegration* (1967:150-166): (1) direct stimulation; (2) peaceful conditions; and (3) guidance from an advisor, counsellor or therapist. In a reference to the sources of direct stimulation that can be found in libraries, museums, the theatre and scientific institutions, Dabrowski suggests that,

At times a book presenting a story of a hero which, in its psychological and ideological aspects, makes the nuclear dynamism sensitive to the development of personality may be an important factor in stimulating this development. The same is true of theatre plays and many works of plastic art. A proper scientific, social, or artistic environment which stimulates one to creative work, presence at a

discussion, taking part in an excursion in the company of proper people may constitute a positive factor and consequently an auxiliary medium stimulating the personality. (Dabrowski, 1967:150)

Specific examples of artistic and literary stimulation given by Dabrowski include the works of Michelangelo, Van Gogh, Camus, Faulkner, and Gandhi's autobiography.

For those individuals already stimulated, and especially for those experiencing a period of great creative tension (i.e., conflict between "what is" and "what ought to be"), what is needed is an interruption of active stimuli (as occurs in reflection and meditation) in order to allow the emergence of inner resources that can order and give meaning to conflicting impressions. External aids conducive to this are isolation, tranquil surroundings and music. For those in the stage of spontaneous multilevel disintegration (level III), solitude becomes an important need:

[an] Increasing need for reflection, meditation, and contemplation augments the need for solitude as a necessary condition of developing the dynamisms of multilevel disintegration. The search for true friendship and true love often leads to isolation from a group. There is, also, a need for solitary contemplation of nature and art. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977. Vol.I:170-171)

In some of the passages cited in Chapter Two from mystical autobiographies, a need for isolation is expressed subsequent to the advent of a hierarchy of values and the division of the self which accompanies the values hierarchy. Kao P'an-lung and Al-Ghazzali, for example, both expressed a need for social isolation and meditation. But the same is true of the many other mystics cited as well.

Dabrowski emphasizes the value of an advisor, particularly in the early phases of personality development. But even when the autonomous developmental factor becomes dominant some outside help is still required, although at this point assistance is given at the request of the developing personality and it is characterized by mutuality. Some of the functions performed by an advisor are: (1) pointing out contradictions in behaviour; (2) providing insight into negative and positive personality characteristics; (3) strengthening positive qualities, such as responsibility; (4) interpreting behaviour from a moral perspective; (5) encouraging self-criticism, independence of thought and behaviour, and empathy;(6) training the individual to struggle against subordination of intelligence to instincts and against egoism; (7) developing a capacity to organize the interior life; and (8) teaching the individual to meditate.

A function, which Dabrowski makes use of in his clinical practice is providing patients with a new, and optimistic, cognitive map:

We don't deal here with a psychoneurosis as a sickness, but rather with symptoms of the process of positive disintegration in its multilevel phase, with basic dynamisms of that phase such as disquietude,

feelings of inferiority towards oneself, sense of guilt, feverish seeking of a disposing and directing centre at a higher level and a personality ideal, which would express the ability to feel the most universal needs of man, to have empathy towards those needs and aims.

The normal clinical diagnosis of anxiety psychoneurosis with existential traits gives us little to go on. The patient is in a condition of a very strong emotional tension with depressional and anxiety components. The essential help for him is the confirmation of the conviction that his symptoms have elements of creative, positive psychic development. (Dabrowski, 1972:280-281)

The role of the advisor then is to help clients to identify their anxieties and other sources of discomfort as manifestations of an overall growth process. Where inner conflict is missing, or weak, or where the advisor feels it could profitable be increased, he does so by, amongst other things, assisting in the formation of a hierarchy of values, encouraging self-criticism and pointing out contradictions in behaviour. When the process of disintegration is well established, the advisor strengthens positive qualities, trains the client to struggle against the domination of the instincts and teaches meditation. These functions sound very similar to the traditional role played by a guru, sheikh, a rebbe or a spiritual director.

Another aspect of the environment, which has a potential effect on personality growth, should be remarked upon, and that is crises, shocks, frustrations and other forms of serious disappointment. One such is the death of a close friend or relative:

A normal person on the death of even an intimate friend or relative usually suffers a slight shock which does not leave deeper impressions. Not so with psychasthenics or neurasthenics, who are inclined to exaggerated self-analysis, phobias, and depression, "striving for ideals and homesick for eternity." (Dabrowski, 1937:29-30)

For Dabrowski, neurosis (of which psychasthenia and neurasthenia are subtypes[47]) is an expression of emotional overexcitability and therefore an indicator of developmental potential.[48] The therapeutic interventions recommended by Dabrowski (1972:255-287) for various psychoneuroses (from obsession to existential anxiety) include, in addition to relaxation, emotional support, etc, fostering an awareness in patients of their creative and developmental potential. For example regarding Wittgenstein's neurotic condition, Dabrowski (1972:194) remarks that, "In the opinion of many he maintained his wisdom in spite of his psychoneurosis, and in my opinion, *because* of his psychoneurosis." Thus in the above passage, Dabrowski is suggesting that those who possess a high degree of emotional overexcitability will be more profoundly affected by the death of someone close to them.[49] Such persons overreact, not only to death, but to any form of stress such as prolonged separation from parent, serious illness and radical alteration of life style due, for example, to loss of property, migration, or war.

However, in spite of the passages cited above, it must be pointed out that the environment does not play a significant role as a causal factor in the theory of positive disintegration. Whenever Dabrowski discusses environmental influences such as the ones indicated above, his remarks are brief, no theory of environmental effects is elaborated upon and the role of the environment is not considered to be critical. In the theory of positive disintegration the essential causes of personality development are the genetically determined traits of intellectual, imaginational and emotional overexcitability. Environment might influence the direction of growth at any given moment, or even temporarily retard it, but the presence of the overexcitabilities, especially emotional overexcitability almost guarantees personal development.

Developmental dynamisms

With the exception of primary integration, each level of personality contains a set of psychic dynamisms that promote development. In primary integration development is chiefly a function of the genetic factor - i.e, whether or not one will develop beyond primary integration will depend on the presence or absence of psychic overexcitability, especially of the emotional type. Environmental conditions play a much smaller role. On the other hand, the presence of emotional, imaginational, and to a lesser extent intellectual, overexcitability, renders one susceptible to the opinions of others. This susceptibility, which Dabrowski calls the *second factor*, is one of three developmental dynamisms that characterize unilevel disintegration (level II). Without this dynamism socialization, understood as the internalization of societal norms, would be impossible. The other two dynamisms are *ambivalences* (fluctuations of evaluation) and *ambitendencies* (desire for two irreconcilable things at the same time). Their existence is a result of psychic overexcitability and the fact that, due to the second factor, the individual no longer has a single goal in life as was the case in primary integration.

In level I the single goal was to respond to one's physiological needs as they arose. In level II, in addition to one's physiological needs, there are also the demands of others, to which one is susceptible. Inner conflict now becomes inevitable, especially in those cases where psychic overexcitability is particularly strong. This stage is called unilevel because the individual possesses no intrinsic, or autonomous, criterion by which to determine which demands should take priority over the others.

A qualitative difference exists between the situation in level II and that in level III. The structure of spontaneous multilevel disintegration (level III) is composed of *hierarchization*, or the critical perception and assessment of experience, behaviour, attitudes and orientations in terms of higher and lower values; a set of self-critical dynamisms, such as *guilt*, *shame*, *astonishment* and *disquietude* with oneself; and *empathy*. There is also a sense of *inferiority* toward what one "ought to be" and a refusal to adjust or conform to unauthentic values, which refusal Dabrowski calls *positive maladjustment*. In level II there was inner conflict, but it lacked a directional focus; in level III that direction is supplied by the hierarchy of values.

Organized multilevel disintegration (level IV) is determined by dynamisms that reflect an increasing capacity of individuals to direct their own developmental processes. There is *subject-object-in-oneself*, or the ability to objectively evaluate oneself with a view to initiating change; the *third factor* that decides what is to be changed according to an increasingly autonomous, but sensitive, hierarchy of values; and *inner psychic transformation*, the actual process of personality change. The dynamism of inner psychic transformation includes the transcending of somatic determinants of personality such as age and sex and the transcending of psychological type (i.e., extravert or introvert). Other dynamisms found in level IV are *self-awareness*, or pervasive knowledge of one's uniqueness; *self-control*, or regulation of the developmental process and checking of regressive tendencies; and *education-of-oneself*, or constant conversion of experience and behaviour into means of personal growth. Somewhat similar to, or derived from, those dynamisms already mentioned are *self-perfection* and *autopsychotherapy*. Typical of this stage is the identification with universal values - as opposed to the personal values adhered to in level III. The dynamisms of level IV also reflect the fact that individuals are now in control of their own disintegration - i.e., they can determine and plan for the removal of obstacles to their growth.

The final level of personality, secondary integration, has four dynamisms, the chief of which is the *personality ideal*. This ideal, which was present already in level III in embryonic form as the hierarchy of values, is one which undergoes its own development. In fact, Dabrowski deliberately allows some degree of vagueness in describing it since it is "only in the process of coming nearer and nearer...[to it, that]...we may become more aware of its true content" (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Piechowski, 1970:8). This dynamism is best considered as a process in which one intuitively and spontaneously unites oneself with the highest levels discovered in one's experience. The following excerpt from Hammarskjold's *Markings* is presented by Piechowski as an experience of the personality ideal:

When the worries over your work loosen the grip, then this experience of light, warmth, and power. From without - a sustaining element, like air to the glider or water to the swimmer. An intellectual hesitation which demands proofs and logical demonstration prevents me from "believing" - in this, too. Prevents me from expressing and interpreting this reality in intellectual terms. Yet, through me there flashes this vision of magnetic field in the soul, created in timeless present by unknown multitudes, living in holy obedience, whose words and actions are a timeless prayer. (Cited in Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:30)

The other dynamisms of level V are *responsibility* (the highest level of empathy), or the taking on of tasks for the sake of others and one's own development; *authentism*, or the successful integration of unique and universal human qualities; and *autonomy*, or the complete freedom from biological drives and immunity from social pressures (not to be confused with sensitivity to social needs).

Dynamisms are compounds of intuitional, intellectual, emotional and volitional elements which together constitute specific dispositions toward the shaping or development of the personality. It is

these dynamisms that constitute the structure of the individual's inner psychic milieu, which can be non-existent (as in the first level of personality), unilevel (as in the second stage) or multilevel (as in the third, fourth and fifth stages). A multilevel structure, composed of multilevel dynamisms, is one in which there exists an awareness of the direction of development, i.e., from the "lower" to the "higher," from the simple to the complex, from the automatic to the voluntary and from the rigid to the flexible. A unilevel structure, by comparison, is one in which no developmental direction can be discerned.

Dabrowski and Piechowski (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Piechowski, 1970:65-81) divide multilevel dynamisms into three groups: (1) those that are characterized by spontaneity and a lack of definite organization (found in level III); (2) those that organize and shape the process of positive disintegration (found in level IV); and (3) those that promote the reintegration of the personality (found in level V). From the perspective of the development of personality, the function of the biological and environmental factors is to facilitate the emergence of the autonomous factor, and this autonomous factor is synonymous with the presence of the multilevel dynamisms, especially of the fourth and fifth levels. In other words, the primary stimulus for the transition from level I to level II is genetic (psychic overexcitability); for the transition from level II to III, genetic and environmental (a result of the susceptibility to the influence of others found in level II); for the transition from level III to IV, genetic, environmental and autonomous (since there is now a much richer development of the inner life). In the transition from level IV to V, the autonomous factor plays an even greater role.

Asceticism and meditation

Multilevel disintegration is a process in which there is an oscillation between lower and higher values, between instinctual, or automatic, impulses and an ideal of personality. Asceticism and meditation play a role in this process. References to asceticism, in Dabrowski's writings, are few and the discussion is brief, but the purpose of asceticism is clearly indicated. It is a conscious attempt to take control of the development of personality:

Asceticism in the present meaning of the term *consists in the dampening of natural instincts with a view to attaining a higher goal*, usually of a religious and moral character. *We see in ascetic practices* a clearly conscious introduction of multilevel disintegration into the process of self-perfection, through *a multilevel struggle* between soul and body, *between instincts and higher aspirations*... Individuals practising asceticism manifested, on one side, enormous sensitivity to the ideal and its realization, and on the other, very strong sensual experiences, and affectional and sensual excitability ...*Ascetic exercises and struggles with the instincts made one capable of separating oneself from one's lower level.* [My emphasis] (Dabrowski, 1967:130)

Through asceticism, those caught in the disintegrative process can gain some measure of control over their situation, and participate in their own development by "dampening" or "separating" themselves from instinctive levels of functioning.

Although Dabrowski, in the above quotation, states that asceticism is a "conscious introduction of multilevel disintegration into the process of self-perfection," he does not mean that asceticism is found equally in both spontaneous and organized forms of multilevel disintegration. The fact that the employment of asceticism is conscious, or deliberate, implies the stage of organized multilevel disintegration. This is clearer in the following passage where the drive behind asceticism is referred to as the instinct for partial death and this drive is associated with dynamisms that operate in organized multilevel disintegration:

As a factor in development, we observe the activity of an instinct of *partial death*. It is a conscious and deliberate program of eradication of the lower personality structures. In order to accomplish this, the disintegrative activity of some dynamisms (for example, the rejection aspect of [the] third factor, the critical aspect of subject-object in oneself, or the containing aspect of self-control) may be increased in order to destroy the residual structures of primitive levels of the inner psychic milieu. This can take the form of asceticism, of resignation from personal ambitions for the sake of serving others, or deliberate and voluntary frustration of one's basic needs. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:172-173)

Asceticism, and other forms of self-denial, are manifestations of what Dabrowski calls the "instinct of partial death" - the drive to eliminate cognitive, affective and behavioural patterns that are in opposition with the newly formed ideals of personality.

Asceticism is invariably accompanied by the practice of meditation. As is the case with religion in general, and mysticism and asceticism in particular, Dabrowski has not extensively discussed meditation in any one place. Nevertheless there are numerous references to the practice scattered throughout his works making it possible to piece together a description of the role of meditation in personality development and hence in the psychological changes that underlie the struggle reported by many mystics.

What I propose to do at this point is to review Dabrowski's comments on: (1) the role of meditation in promoting the various dynamisms active in the process of personality disintegration; and (2) the way in which meditation produces these effects. Dabrowski refers to meditation under a variety of terms, e.g., reflection, prospection, retrospection, isolation, concentration and contemplation. They are not used synonymously but precise definitions of each term are not required for the brief review that will be made here. According to Dabrowski (1967:166) all the dynamisms of multilevel disintegration are promoted by prospection, retrospection and periodic isolation of oneself, and for the emergence of higher level dynamisms meditation is even considered essential (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol. I:170-171).

Specific higher level dynamisms explicitly mentioned as resulting from meditation are the ideal autopsychotherapy inner psychic transformation (1977, Vol.I:141, 51-52 & 109; and Dabrowski,

Kawczak & Sochanska, 1973:82), the disposing and directing centre - i.e., that part of the self making decisions (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:171), self-awareness and self-control (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Piechowski, 1970:70), empathy (Dabrowski, 1972:129 & 191) and hierarchization (Dabrowski, 1967:166). Meditation is also said to regulate the synthesis of the fourth stage dynamism, the instinct for self-perfection, from the dynamisms of the previous stage (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Sochanska, 1973:32 & 38).

Meditation, in common with asceticism, plays a "negative" role. It is said to bring about a separation from one's instinctive structure (Dabrowski, 1967:130), to purify impulsive tendencies (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:121 & Dabrowski, 1967:33), to enable one to relinquish lower level values to which one has been attached (Dabrowski, 1967:32-33) and to disintegrate the self-preservation instinct thus making possible the development of the personality (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:179). On the other hand meditation also has a "positive" role to play in the evolution of the disintegration and reintegration of personality. It is described as encouraging intuitive and synthetic thinking (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:55, 152 & 219; & Dabrowski, Kawczak & Sochanska, 1973:188), the ability to evaluate one's mental structure (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Sochanska, 1973:82), an awareness of one's weaknesses and achievements and a humble respect for higher human values (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:121 & 187).

In addition, meditation is considered to aid the processes of developing a more flexible personality style -i.e., introverts become more extroverted and vice versa (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:51); sublimating of sexual energy (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:82); and shaping important interests and abilities that contribute to personality enrichment, such as the ability to form exclusive bonds or the ability to develop a feeling of "oneness" and self-identity (Dabrowski, 1967:167). The way in which contemplation plays a role in the formation of higher moral principles is by aiding the development of intuitive and synthetic thought (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:219). Solitude and concentration promote the dynamism of autopsychotherapy in two ways. The first is by containing the areas of conflict and tension (i.e., by inducing a state of relaxation) and second by transforming psychic conflicts into processes which promote development (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:51-52) - i.e., through meditation an increasing number of external conflicts become internalized as the dimensions of personality disintegration.

In general the way in which meditation promotes growth, in Dabrowski's view, is by making possible an awareness of the complexity of one's psychic structure (Dabrowski, 1967:130). Once this awareness exists the individuals are then able to assess themselves, consider alternatives and make plans for self-improvement (Dabrowski, 1967:133). The first way in which meditation assists in this process is by withdrawal of attention away from external stimuli, thus reducing their influence and at the same time, by creation of an inner space for self-observation (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Sochanska, 1970:75).

Various of Dabrowski's remarks on the effects of meditation are indicative of how the effects are achieved -and some are even suggestive of operational hypotheses. Contemplation, an advanced

form of meditation, is described as a process of gathering psychic strength enabling both better control over one's instinctual nature (Dabrowski, 1967:34) and at the same time facilitating internal reshaping of the personality (Dabrowski, 1967:130). The implication is that contemplation is a means of focusing the various forms of overexcitability in order to more effectively apply them to developmental tasks. This sounds similar to what I have called the formal dimension of the mystical struggle - i.e., focused, or concentrated, mind versus scattered, or distracted, mind. The more focused the mind the greater the emotional, imaginational and intellectual energy available for the developmental tasks that are indicated by the three content dimensions of the mystical struggle - i.e., the separation from primitive impulses, manipulation by others and selfishness, in favour of altruism and a flexible but compelling ideal of personality.

Many of Dabrowski's statements on meditation receive support from empirical research. One example is the inhibiting effect of meditation. In order for the disintegration of personality to take place, habitual, or automatic, behaviour has to be inhibited (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Piechowski, 1970:136). Dabrowski suggests that this will occur as a result of meditation - i.e., the practice causes a separation from the instinctive structure (Dabrowski, 1967:130) and a purification of impulsive tendencies (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:121 & 1967:33). Confirmation of this is given in the experimental work of Deikman.

Deikman (1966) found that meditators experienced "deautomatization of the psychological structures that organize, limit, select and interpret visual stimuli" (1966:220). Just as a motor behaviour sequence, once learned, becomes automated and intermediate steps used to learn the behaviour disappear from the conscious mind (as, e.g., in learning to drive a car), so also after perceptual and cognitive patterns have been learned in stages and have become established as habitual, the intermediate stages are forgotten. This exclusion is very practical as it frees psychic energy for other tasks. At the same time, however, it leaves the individual "stuck" with a particular set of perceptual and cognitive habits. Meditation, by deautomatizing these habits, opens the way for a new mode of perceiving and thinking, and even clears the way for a new level of perceptual and cognitive organization.

In his description of meditation effects Dabrowski does not mention the dynamism of subject-object in oneself (defined as "observation, critical evaluation, and reflection on oneself and others") by name, but he does say that meditation leads to an ability to evaluate one's mental structure (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Sochanska, 1973:82) and an awareness of one's weaknesses and achievements (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:121). This seems to imply the dynamism of subject-object in oneself. Daniel Goleman (1971) proposes that self-criticism is made possible through a process of global desensitization - i.e., the anxiety normally associated with self-criticism is diminished as a result of the deep relaxation which meditation produces, thus freeing meditators to critically evaluate themselves.

Since the dynamism of self-awareness is a function of the activity of subject-object in oneself (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:156) since self-awareness includes responsibility (Dabrowski &

Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:44), one would expect that as self-awareness increased so also would responsibility. One could further expect that if meditation leads to an increase in self-awareness, it would also lead to an increase in responsibility. And in fact, Dabrowski has stated as much (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:204). The results of two studies done by Shapiro (1978 & 1980) found that meditation does lead to such an increase.

A dynamism complementary to subject-object in oneself is that of self-control. Dabrowski claims that an increase in self-control (one of the dynamisms of organized multilevel disintegration) can be a consequence of meditation. Evidence in support of this contention comes from Hjelle (1974), who found that as a result of meditation his subjects experienced a shift away from an external toward an internal locus of control - i.e., a shift from perceiving others, or fate, as the source of control in their lives, to a conviction that their decisions and actions can bring about desired changes (and correspondingly are responsible for undesirable outcomes). Another example of empirical confirmation is in the area of empathy. Dabrowski maintains that meditation leads to an increase in empathy toward others (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:55) and he cites Wladyslaw Dawid as an example of someone whose empathy increased as a result of meditation (Dabrowski, 1972:191). This is confirmed by several studies, including those of Lesh (1970), Leung (1973) and Schuster (1979). All three researchers found that subsequent to meditation practice, whether an internal or external focus technique was used, their subjects, counsellors, increased in empathy toward their clients.

Given a hierarchy of values, asceticism and meditation have the effect of detaching practitioners from the activities, affects, imaginings and behaviours that are disvalued according to the hierarchy. Meditation has the additional effect of heightening the salience of the ideals held by the practitioners as well as providing them with the relaxation and awareness necessary for their actualization. These last-mentioned functions of meditation work together. For example, an affective insight into the value of altruism, heightens motivation and thus makes that virtue easier to meditate upon as well as to practice. On the other hand, in times of emotional aridity, continued efforts at concentration upon altruism both facilitate its internalization and increase the probability of an ecstatic experience, even if only of moderate intensity and short duration.

Evaluation of Dabrowski's theory

Critical evaluation of the theory of positive disintegration, to the extent that theory has been recognized at all, has tended to be generally appreciative. Nevertheless a number of specific problems have been identified. When *Positive disintegration*, the first extensive formulation of the theory, was translated into English and published in 1964, Jason Aronson wrote the introduction. Aronson felt that many of the concepts required more precise definition and that the implicit criterion whereby some values are said to be "higher" than others ought to be made explicit.

As examples of concepts requiring clearer definition Aronson mentioned the third factor and the disposing and directing centre. One suspects that it was this criticism, whether from Aronson alone, or from others as well, that led Dabrowski and his colleagues, Andrzej Kawczak and Janina Sochanska,

to publish *The dynamics of concepts* in 1973. In this work a number of the terms used in articulating the theory were extensively discussed in a rather unique way. Each concept was defined in a general way and then in terms of its significance for five levels of personality.

Aronson also cited the terms unilevel disintegration and multilevel disintegration as ones needing further elaboration. Both terms were discussed in detail in *Positive disintegration*, but the relationship the two bear to one another as stages in a hierarchical model is somewhat obscured in that publication by virtue of the fact that Dabrowski is describing many types of disintegration, and not just a simple linear model of personality development. In subsequent expressions of the theory a clear presentation of a five-stage personality model is made, and this is kept distinct from the other types of disintegration discussed in *Positive disintegration*.

Aronson's point regarding the necessity of a clear criterion measure for determining "higher" from "lower" values, is addressed by Kawczak (1970) and Dabrowski and Piechowski (1970). Kawczak's analysis distinguishes between the descriptive and the normative evaluations of personality growth (and by implication all the values expressive of that growth):

From the standpoint of the theory of positive disintegration there are two qualitatively different types of mental life: the heteronomous, determined by biological or environmental factors, and the autonomous, self-conscious, self-determined, and self-controlled. Mental development of man consists essentially in the transition to and deepening of the second type of life. This statement has a two-fold sense in the theory of positive disintegration. It is descriptive, because it gives an account of transformations of mental functions discernible in empirical observations. It carries, at the same time, an evaluative connotation because the more autonomous factors and forms of mental life which gradually emerge and assume control, are considered not only later in time, but also "developmentally" higher, and therefore, more beneficial and desirable. (Kawczak, 1970:11)

If the term "higher" is used simply as a qualifier of personality functioning (e.g., increased complexity, integration, flexibility, adaptability), then there can be no objection to its use. This is the position Kawczak seems to take when he states that,

...the inclusion of the evaluative-normative element into the theory of positive disintegration does not mean that the study ceases to be empirical and free hand is given to smuggle into the theory someone's moral prejudices and subjective points of view. (Kawczak, 1970:13)

However something more may be implied when Dabrowski and Piechowski (1970:108) claim that Gandhi's reverence for Christianity and other faiths is an expression of the dynamism of "authentism," found only in most advanced levels of personality.

Teresa of Avila is considered by these two authors (1977:208) to possess a psychological awareness characteristic of the final level of personality and yet she did not share Gandhi's religious tolerance - she had little tolerance, for example, of Lutheranism.[50] This is not to say that a value such as tolerance is thereby proved to be entirely culturally relative, but it does suggest that the environment (e.g., Gandhi's mixed religious background versus counter-reformation Spain) has more than a little to do with the way in which a dynamism such as authentism is expressed.

Hobart Mowrer's criticism of Dabrowski's 1967 expression of the theory, i.e., *Personality-shaping through positive disintegration*, is in terms of what he perceives to be an omission in the method of treating guilt symptoms:

If a therapist or "advisor" feels that confession or social reintegration are importantly related processes, the question arises as to how he can most effectively induce estranged, secretive, "neurotic" persons to become more honest...*Mere explanation* of the guilt theory of neurosis is sufficient to permit some persons to unburden themselves. But in most instances things go much faster if the therapist, sponsor, adviser will himself *exemplify* the behaviour which he wishes the other person to develop, namely, deep candour and truthfulness about himself. [my emphasis] (Mowrer, 1967:xxxii)

Whatever the relevance of Mowrer's comment, on the value of setting an example, for the clinical efficacy of the theory of positive disintegration, his point that an advisor can do more than explain is pertinent to the investigation of the mystical struggle. Certainly in religious institutions, to be discussed in Chapter Nine, a guru or spiritual mentor does more than explain guilt. The religious specialist also makes conscious efforts to provoke guilt if it is judged to be too weak, or to diminish it, if it appears to be too intense.

The most thorough criticism of Dabrowski's notion of guilt results from an analysis of seven psychological theories of guilt in terms of the theory of positive disintegration by M. Kay Ogburn (1976). Ogburn locates the seven theories of guilt, which she examines, in one of three of Dabrowski's levels of personality disintegration. Thus she shows that the Freudian superego is typically a phenomenon of a low or initial level of personality disintegration, whereas the "existential guilt" described by Medard Boss and Rollo May's "ontological guilt" possess elements of an advanced level of disintegration.

Relevant to the theory of positive disintegration, however, is Ogburn's conclusion that, guilt as such cannot always be assumed to promote personality development. Guilt is developmental, if it is of the kind described by Dabrowski, but there are in all likelihood adevelopmental, and even antidevelopmental forms of guilt. Dabrowski tends to assume in his references to guilt that it is always developmental, therefore Ogburn's study is a valuable corrective.

In the theory of positive disintegration there are two stages only in which the personality is clearly stated to be integrated - the first and the last stage. Therefore for the many persons who are in the stages in between these two, their personalities are said to be in one form or another of disintegration. In her review of *Theory of levels of emotional development*, the 1977 expression of the theory, Louise Bates Ames calls attention to this point:

The entire system is very elegant in its construction. The authors' elaboration of their system and their case illustrations are enlightening. The present reviewer might have been more comfortable with the system had there been some intermediate stage of integration between the lowest level and the highest. (Ames, 1979:653)

Since a large number of people are not at either of the levels of integration and yet show few overt indications of personality disintegration, there must be intermediate levels of integration of one kind or another. In fact, such intermediate levels can be inferred from scattered and brief remarks made by Dabrowski and his colleagues on the idea of partial integration. But this aspect of the theory requires further elaboration.

Limits to Dabrowski's explanation of the causes of personality development

Some consideration is given in the theory of positive disintegration to the role of the environment in fostering personality development. I have already mentioned, above, the value, noted by Dabrowski, of direct stimulation (e.g., exposure to libraries, museums, cultural institutions, inspiring biographies, etc), peaceful conditions (e.g., quiet reflection in relaxing surroundings) and an advisor who can guide the developmental process.

Dabrowski also sees an important role for various forms of environmental stress, such as experiences of frustration, which result in a lack of security:

Positive inner psychic transformation occurs where children and youth do not have all the things necessary to fulfil their basic needs and where conditions do not lead to the feeling of complete security...

The author wishes to emphasize that, in his opinion, such transformations cannot take place when there is complete security... (Dabrowski, 1970:35)

Hence environmental frustration of basic needs is important for inducing a condition of insecurity within individuals if they are to have potential for personality development. Some specific forms of frustration or stress are identified:

Dabrowski (1937, 1964, 1967) described and analyzed a wide range of phenomena of disintegration ...particularly stressful experiences such as loss of property, position, youth, or beauty, spouse, or child, or the event of a serious illness...in psychoneurotic, gifted, creative, and eminent personalities. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol. I:16)

Various types of losses, including the loss of a family member, can play a role in the disintegration of personality. Dabrowski's explanation for this is that losses cause persons to lose interest in superficial routines:

Disappointments, suffering, inner conflicts, breakdowns, force one to depart from peaceful adjustment to automatic activities such as daily routine, pursuit of money, pleasures of eating, primitive joys, or superficial, easily resolved conflicts. (Dabrowski, 1970:37)

At the same time as facilitating the withdrawal of interest from values of a more superficial, or lower, kind, experiences of loss are occasions for reflecting upon higher, or more meaningful values:

It is also a necessity to have some sadness and grief, depressions, hesitations, loneliness, awareness of death and various other painful experiences which lead us to replace our bonds to what is common, sensual, easy to replace, superficial but direct us to that which is individual, exclusive, lasting, etc. (Dabrowski, 1970:36)

Dabrowski (1970:36) specifically mentions empathy for, or sensitivity to, other people (a prerequisite for intrinsically oriented altruism) as an example of a higher value that can result from the experience of loss.

However, while environmental stress is considered in the works of Dabrowski and his colleagues, the discussion is not nearly as extensive as that of the temperamental factor of psychic overexcitability. In fact Dabrowski seems to minimize the role of loss by suggesting that in the absence of psychic overexcitability, there would be no significant effect on personality disintegration:

A normal person on the death of even an intimate friend or relative usually suffers merely a slight shock which does not leave deeper impressions. Not so with psychathenics or neurasthenics, who are inclined to exaggerated self-analysis, phobias and depression, "striving for ideals and homesick for eternity." (Dabrowski, 1937:29-30)

In his earlier formulations of the theory of positive disintegration Dabrowski tended to employ the categories of psychopathology when speaking of developmental potential; the formulation of the five forms of overexcitability was something that evolved over the period of his research and writing. The

critical factor is not the loss as such, but the temperament of the one sustaining the loss. This point is made even more emphatically by Piechowski:

External events triggering periods of disintegration cannot account for the great individual differences in how these events and their consequences are experienced and handled. Even less can they be invoked to account for those instances where a person deliberately seeks frustration and stressful conditions so that he would not stagnate in his development. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol. I:16)

In cases where emotional sensitivity is quite marked, it is easy to see that almost any environmental reverse would induce some measure of personality disintegration, and therefore that the temperament would be the most significant of the two factors. But in persons with only moderate sensitivity, surely the quantity and quality of loss would be decisive.

The same tendency to minimize the effect of the environment in favour of temperament can be found in the treatment of another factor - i.e., emotional support. Very little is said about the influence of family background in determining the development of personality by either Dabrowski or his co-authors. There are however a few references contained in analyses of case histories. In one of these, an analysis of a married woman of forty-four years, there seems to be the suggestion that in the absence of emotional support, a stressful event, such as war, can inhibit personality development. If so, then emotional support would be an essential factor contributing to development. The analysis is as follows:

The subject was exposed to a great deal of deficit in human relations. Her mother was emotionally cold; her faith in her father was shaken...

The cruelties of the Second World War left their mark on her. This source of traumatic memories cannot be underestimated in people with emotional overexcitability...Individuals who have experienced war directly can be damaged in their development in two ways: by the very trauma of the war experience, and by having to function in social relations where the psychological consequences of such an experience are not taken into consideration.

Such people are left without the special psychological and emotional support which they need. There is no doubt that because of their lowered resistance to crisis situations, they do need special emotional support. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:103-104)

While it is explicitly stated that emotional support is needed, a careful reading of this passage reveals that even when emotional support is absent (i.e., an emotionally cold mother and a father who is inaccessible) the trauma associated with the Second World War in Poland "can" (not will) "damage"

(not halt or eliminate) the individual's development.

The analysis of one other case study confirms the impression that while emotional support is somehow important, whatever importance it has is not decisive for personality development:

The life history of the subject [a married woman of thirty-four years] *shows a series of major environmental stresses beginning in childhood and continuing during her first marriage*. Her emotional overexcitability was developing under these stressful conditions. They produced, repeatedly, severe states of anxiety and depression. During the time *she had no systematic help* guiding her to channel these tensions. Her developmental potential and her moral value[s] were not recognized in her [social] milieu (with the exception of her father). The stresses together with the mostly unfavourable conditions of her milieu *did not arrest her development nor did they produce any significant deformations of its main thrust*. Nevertheless, under these circumstances her development could not be as uniform and universal as her potential would indicate. [My emphasis] (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:155-156)

In spite of severe and ongoing stress, and in spite of a lack of emotional support and understanding, apparently there was no "arrest" nor were there "deformations" in the subject's development.

The implication is that the subject's temperament ("all five forms of psychic overexcitability are present with the emotional clearly the most pronounced" - cf p.246) was virtually the only determinative factor. Whatever may be true in the case of this particular subject, I believe it would be a mistake to generalize and say that for all persons who are emotionally sensitive, environmental factors such as stress and emotional support are negligible. In the Chapters Seven to Ten evidence will be presented in support of the effect of childhood and adolescent environment as major determinants of outcome. The argument I make is that emotionally sensitive persons may undergo a development of their personalities (either as mystics or else in accord with a secular model), but that is by no means inevitable. They may instead become creatives or mentally ill. What influences the course of their life is very much their childhood and adolescent (and even their adult) environments.

If only a minor role is given in the theory of positive disintegration to the environment, the major determinant of personality development, and hence of personality disintegration, is a genetically determined temperament. To be precise, developmental potential is a function of psychic overexcitability. Of the five forms of psychic overexcitability, the most important are intellectual and imaginational, and especially emotional. Unless subordinated to these three, the other two forms of overexcitability (i.e., sensual and psychomotor) actually retard development. These have already been described above. While there are numerous references to psychic overexcitability as a causal agent in personality development in the writings of Dabrowski and his co-authors, there is not a fully detailed theory as to how psychic overexcitability gives rise to the various developmental dynamisms.

Dabrowski (1973:66-67) argues that persons possessing psychic overexcitability, will react to stressful

situations by withdrawing and then internalizing the conflict. Both Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977, Vol.I:ix-x & 36) regard the overexcitabilities as channels of information, so that, e.g., persons who are emotionally sensitive and who possess rich imaginations, will experience a greater variety of stimuli and they will experience these in a more intense way. What is required however is an explanation as to how this greater variety of stimuli give rise to multilevel dynamisms.

Nevertheless in spite of the limitations described above, Dabrowski's model for a number of reasons can make a contribution to the psychological investigation of mysticism: (1) he provides a model of stages of adult personality development beyond maturation - and a more elaborate description of the process than that given by either James or Underhill; (2) he describes progress toward development in terms of a series of stages of personality disintegration which, as I will indicate in the next chapter, is like the struggle reported by many mystics; (3) he has identified, in the form of psychic overexcitability an important predispositional factor for personality development - and, as I argue in Chapter Eight, for mystical development as well. The theory of positive disintegration was not developed for the purpose of analysing the mystical life, but it can be put to this end as I hope to show in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI

APPLICATION OF THE THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION TO

MYSTICAL STRUGGLE

In this chapter I argue that viewed from a psychological perspective the mystical struggle is like the process of personality disintegration described by the Polish clinical psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski. An examination of the inner turmoil reported by many mystics from the perspective of Dabrowski's theory makes it possible to obtain: (1) greater insight into the dynamics of an experience I refer to as a mystical struggle; (2) a more detailed explanation of the temperamental factors that are predispositional of such an experience; and (3) a description and explanation, in psychological terms, of the role of asceticism and meditation in the disintegrative process.

I begin this chapter by comparing psychological descriptions of the goal of mystics as found in James and Underhill with the final goal of personality development as given in Dabrowski's theory in order to show some of their common features. I then compare James' and Underhill's psychological descriptions of what I have called a mystical struggle to Dabrowski's personality stages of spontaneous multilevel disintegration and organized multilevel disintegration in order to show the

parallels between personality disintegration and mystical struggle. Next I show how the theory of positive disintegration can supplement the insights of James and Underhill and thus make a contribution to the study of mysticism - e.g., by indicating in what way mystics are related to non-mystics in terms of their personality structure and in what way the mystical path is different from non-mystical religious conversion.

The similarities between the mystical goal, psychologically understood, and the final goal of personality disintegration (and between the struggle reported by many mystics and the stages of disintegration in personality development) indicate that Dabrowski's model of personality could be of use in analysing the personal documents of mystics. In order to demonstrate this I examine the lives of Teresa of Avila and Satomi Myodo from a Dabrowskian perspective. Finally I discuss the fact that while Dabrowski relates the origins of personality development to a unique temperament, just as James and Underhill relate mystical development to a similar temperament, there is a need to identify what environmental factors play a role in fostering a mystical vocation.

The goal of mysticism and secondary integration

From the perspective of personality development, the value of the disintegration process described by Dabrowski, is that it makes possible a reintegration of the personality around a freely chosen and flexible ideal of personality. Since the details of any given individual's ideal of personality will vary from person to person and from one level to another, all attempts at a general description are necessarily vague and imprecise. Dabrowski describes the ideal primarily in terms of its function in the process of self-actualization:

It is first perceived intuitively in broad outline; later, it becomes the empirical model after which the personality is shaped. As development advances, personality ideal becomes more and more distinct and plays an increasingly significant role in the synthesis of the inner psychic milieu [the internal mental environment]; it does this by guiding the activity of the disposing and directing centre [the internal centre that determines behaviour]. The process of development and its goal become clearly defined, in good measure through states of meditation and contemplation in which the individual realizes the existence of a superior hierarchy of personality as the highest self-chosen, self-affirmed, and self-aware structure attainable in human development. In consequence of this realization, the individual strives to unite himself with the highest levels that he discovers in his experience . This is the discovery of the ideal as the goal of personality development. This process is called the *dynamization of the personality ideal*. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:54-55)

From this passage we learn that the personality ideal is apprehended intuitively (in meditative states) and that it increasingly serves as a guide to personality development. We also learn that the personality ideal is the most salient of the values contained in the individual's hierarchy of values.

Additional information on this dynamism is provided in the glossary of *Psychoneurosis is not an illness*, where we are told that the personality ideal is,

An individual standard against which one evaluates one's actual personality structure. It arises out of one's experience and development. At first the ideal may be an imitation, nevertheless, with the growth of individual awareness it becomes authentic and autonomous to eventually become the highest dynamism in the development of personality. (Dabrowski, 1972:301)

The ideal grows in accordance with the cognitive, imaginational and affective capacities of the individual. When the dynamism first appears with any strength (in the third level of personality) it is to some large extent an internalization of an ideal provided by the culture; subsequently it becomes less stereotyped (i.e., more personal) and more adaptable (i.e., varying from one situation to another).

James seems to have something like the personality ideal in mind when he refers to the "better part" of the self or to a "religious centre of personal energy." In a description, cited above, of his two-stage model of religious conversion, James describes the nature of the uneasiness within sick souls:

Along with the wrong part there is...a better part of him, even though it may be but a most helpless germ. With which part he should identify his real being is by no means obvious at this stage; but when stage 2 (the stage of solution or salvation) arrives, the man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself... (James, 1929:498)

If the better part is analogous to the personality ideal, and it would seem to be by definition, then James is referring in this passage to a stage in personality growth just prior to the emergence of a hierarchy of values. This stage would then correspond to the transition from level II (i.e., unilevel disintegration) to level III (spontaneous multilevel disintegration).

In his lectures on saintliness, James seems again to be referring to something akin to the personality ideal. Only at this point he refers to it as the "religious centre of personal energy," and he is describing it as it would appear at a more advanced stage of personality (i.e., at the stage of the saint):

The man who lives in his religious centre of personal energy, and is actuated by personal enthusiasms, differs from his previous carnal self in perfectly definite ways. The new ardor which burns in his breast consumes in its glow the lower "noes" which formerly beset him, and keeps him immune against infection from the entire grovelling portion of his nature. Magnanimities once impossible are now easy; paltry conventionalities and mean incentives once tyrannical hold no sway. The stone wall inside him has fallen, the hardness in his heart has broken down. (James, 1929:261-

262)

James' description could be applied to simple conversions that are no more than shifts in affiliation, but only with difficulty, since his remarks, (e.g., "Magnanimities once impossible are now easy") describe a developmental change in personality.

In order to provide a psychological explanation for the unitive life (i.e., the final stage of the mystical path) Underhill has recourse to Delacroix's notion of a "special psychological system," the description of which appears to suggest an analogue to Dabrowski's personality ideal and James' "better part" or "religious centre of personal energy." Underhill quotes the following description from Delacroix:

"The beginning of the mystic life," says Delacroix, "introduced into the personal life of the subject a group of states which are distinguished by certain characteristics, and which form, so to speak, a special psychological system. At its term [i.e., at the point where it first emerges], it has, as it were, suppressed the ordinary self, and by the development of this system has established a new personality, with a new method of feeling and action. Its growth results in the transformation of personality: it abolishes the primitive consciousness of selfhood, and substitutes for it a wider consciousness..." (Cited in Underhill, 1955:416-417)

Underhill's own comments following this quotation refer even more explicitly to a notion analogous to Dabrowski's personality ideal:

"That secret and permanent personality of a superior type" which gave to the surface-self constant and ever more insistent intimations of its existence at every stage of the mystic's growth - his real, eternal self - has now consciously realized its destiny: and begins at last fully to <u>be</u>. In the travail of the Dark Night [the stage prior to the unitive life] it has conquered and invaded the last recalcitrant elements of character. It is no more limited to acts of profound perception, overpowering intuitions of the Absolute: no more dependent for its emergence on the psychic states of contemplation and ecstasy. *Anima* and *animus* are united. (Underhill, 1955:417)

Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it is possible to provide a great deal more evidence in support of the similarities between James' *saintliness*, Underhill's *unitive way* and Dabrowski's *secondary integration*. And the stage Underhill calls the illumination of the self can be shown to resemble the upper half of level IV (i.e., the upper half of organized multilevel disintegration) and the lower half of level V (i.e., the beginning of secondary integration).[51]

James does not have an equivalent stage for the illumination of the self. In his model, there are only the two stages of the sick soul (or divided self) and saintliness. One value of the theory of positive disintegration is precisely that it more clearly articulates the process of the divided self by

distinguishing two structurally distinct stages. However the passages cited above are at least sufficient to indicate that the *telos* of James' divided self and Underhill's oscillating self are similar to Dabrowski's secondary integration.

A Dabrowskian view of the mystical struggle

Dabrowski's notion of spontaneous multilevel disintegration bears a marked similarity to what James calls the divided self and Underhill the oscillating self. This can be seen in part by comparing the remarks made by the three authors on Augustine's condition as described in Books Seven and Eight of the *Confessions*. At the end of Book Six Augustine relates that his female companion, with whom he had a child, was forced to leave him due to pressure from Augustine's mother, Monica. Augustine was beside himself with grief and in response he "procured another woman." He then informs us that the only thing keeping him from yet "a deeper maelstrom of carnal pleasures was the fear of death and [God's] judgement to come."

Dabrowski's comments on this fear of death and judgement are as follows:

This fear deepened disintegration and led to a valuation of his inner attitudes, to a hierarchical structuring of his aims, to phenomena typical of multilevel disintegration and to the beginnings of integration at a higher level. It should be made clear that St. Augustine's apprehension, resulting from a fear of justice and of punishment for his early life, was at that time not the manifestation of pure selfless love toward the highest Ideal; it was fear of a lower level, which in later years changed into selfless love. [Subsequently] There developed an intense feeling of his own guilt and the feeling of shame in relation to himself, which were lacking in the former period. (Dabrowski, 1967:220-221)

At this point, according to Dabrowski's analysis, Augustine was on the verge of spontaneous multilevel disintegration. To illustrate the subsequent "intense feeling of his own guilt and the feeling of shame in relation to himself" (indicative of spontaneous multilevel disintegration) in Augustine, Dabrowski (1967:221) cites the following passage from Book Eight of the *Confessions*: "...where I had placed it (his soul) so that I might see it not...that I might see myself, how deformed I was, how sordid, how full of spots and sores." Dabrowski also cites, from Book Eight, the passage (which can be found in Chapter Two of this study) on the two wills as an additional example of the multilevel struggle experienced by Augustine.

In a study on religious and moral education, Hague remarks upon the apparent correspondence between James notion of the sick soul (underlying which is the divided self) and Dabrowski's concept of multilevel disintegration:

...there is a remarkable consensus between Dabrowski's higher level individuals and the twice born described by James. In contrast to the once-born or "healthy minded" individuals who bear much resemblance to people at Dabrowski's lower levels, the sick soul is searching, agonizing, hungering

after truth and justice, dying and being born again in a process of positive disintegration. (Hague, 1986:156)

This impression of similarity is supported by the fact that just as Augustine's passage on the two wills is for Dabrowski an example of multilevel disintegration, so for James it is a classic example of the divided self. Following his citation of the passage James comments to the effect that,

There could be no more perfect description of the divided will [a synonym for the divided self], when the higher wishes lack just that last acuteness, that touch of explosive intensity, of dynamogenic quality (to use the slang of the psychologists), that enables them to burst their shell, and make irruption efficaciously into life and quell the lower tendencies forever. (James, 1929:170)

Underhill likewise sees this period in Augustine's life (specifically a quotation from Book VII, Chapter 17) as an example of the oscillating self characteristic of the beginning of the mystical life:

The "two thirsts" of the superficial and spiritual consciousness assert themselves by turns. Each step towards the vision of the Real brings with it a reaction. The nascent transcendental powers are easily fatigued, and the pendulum of self takes a shorter swing. "I was swept up to Thee by Thy Beauty, and torn away from Thee by my own weight," says St. Augustine, crystallizing the secret of this experience in an unforgettable phrase. (Underhill, 1955:178)

Augustine is the only mystic whose life Dabrowski has analyzed in any detail, and he has not written extensively about religion or mysticism in a theoretical way. However a number of references found in his works suggest that the psychological aspects of the mystical struggle are similar to the dynamisms of multilevel disintegration. Before citing the relevant passages it is necessary to recall that Dabrowski divides multilevel disintegration into two distinct levels: *spontaneous* multilevel disintegration and *organized* multilevel disintegration. In the first of these two levels (level III in the overall set of stages) individuals are aware that there is a standard (i.e., a hierarchy of values) to which they are not living up, hence they experience frustration with themselves, shame and guilt.

While Dabrowski, and his colleague Piechowski, take the position that the inner conflict experienced in level III (*spontaneous* multilevel disintegration) has numerous dimensions, three can be seen as parallel to the content dimensions I have used to describe the mystical struggle. To begin with the moral dimension is considered to be essential to multilevel conflict (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:46 &48). Two other dimensions explicitly identified are "subordination to primitive drives" versus "autonomy" and "adjustment to social norm" versus "adjustment to norm derived from personality ideal" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:68-69).

It is not difficult to see that "subordination to primitive drives" versus "autonomy" bears some similarity

to the competence dimension of the mystical struggle. But the equivalency between "adjustment to social norm" versus "adjustment to norm derived from personality ideal" and the world versus spirit dimension of the mystical struggle is perhaps less obvious. The correspondence becomes somewhat more apparent when we look at an example of the dynamism of the personality ideal given by Piechowski. It is a quotation from Dag Hammarskjold's *Markings*:

Where do we travel to in those dreams of beauty satisfied laden with significance but without comprehensible meaning? Etched into the mind far deeper than the witness of the eyes. Where all is well - without fear, without desire. (Cited in Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:30)

At the lower levels of personality individuals are subordinate to primitive drives and tend to conform to social expectations (regardless of their intrinsic worth). At the higher levels of personality there is found consideration of the needs of others, control over primitive drives, and access to a transempirical ideal state, such as the one described by Hammarskjold. At the stage of *spontaneous* multilevel disintegration, one is caught in a conflict between the two poles of these dimensions.

Dabrowski has briefly commented upon the types of religion that are found at the five levels of personality. Regarding religion at the stage of *spontaneous* multilevel disintegration, he explains,

Humility which grows out of a sense of personal relationship with God increases while authoritarian attitudes grow weaker. Religious attitudes and feelings undergo distinct *differentiation into many levels* due to *dissatisfaction* with oneself, feeling of *inferiority* toward oneself, feelings of *shame* and *guilt*...Religious attitude based on that "*which ought to be*" rather than that "*which is*," that is, a growing *need to be consistent* in one's religious beliefs and one's actions...one's religious attitude becomes *experiential*, *mystical*, and, also, *empirical*. [My emphasis.] (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol. I:216)

Dabrowski states explicitly that at this level religion contains a mystical element. That he means the stage of mysticism I am calling the mystical struggle is suggested by the fact that there is a differentiation into many levels. This differentiation, or hierarchy of values, is one of the major characteristics of the mystical struggle - specifically the conflict between spirit, virtue and self-control (that "which ought to be") on the one hand, and matter, vice and powerlessness (that "which is") on the other. The perception of the self in the light of the hierarchy of values induces shame, guilt, dissatisfaction and feelings of inferiority which in turn motivate a program of remedial action.

In *organized* multilevel disintegration the hierarchy of values is more personal or less stereotyped; it is consciously chosen, reformulated and modified; it is also followed with greater success. In general those at the level of *organized* multilevel disintegration play an active role in their development, utilizing their expanded awareness and self-control to that end. Dabrowski describes religion at

organized multilevel disintegration in terms that are indicative of the phase of the mystical struggle that is subsequent to a commitment to the mystical path:

Appearance and development of the "instinct of partial death," that is, the aim, in striving for self-perfection, to destroy all that is undesirable, negative, and an obstacle in development. This can be accomplished through *deliberate frustration of one's basic needs* (cf. Frustration). Turning away from excessive institutionalism and dogmatism of religious organizations. Distinct action of developmental dynamisms causes separation of higher from lower religious levels. A strong need to feel and realize love in relationship with others. [My emphasis] (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:217)

An important means to the goal perceived in *spontaneous* multilevel disintegration, is now made use of by persons in *organized* multilevel disintegration. They discipline, or eliminate where necessary, desires that are obstacles to the development of their personalities. In other words those who are at level IV are actively engaged in the disintegration, and reshaping, of their personalities, just as persons in the second phase of the mystical struggle are actively engaged, through asceticism and meditation, in the task of spiritual perfection.

From the perspective of the theory of positive disintegration, the three content dimensions of the mystical struggle can be considered as equivalents to three major aspects of personality development. For personality growth it is necessary to gain control over physiological impulses; it is also necessary to gain autonomy from social control and to create and follow one's own ideal; and finally egocentricity must be relinquished in favour of altruism. What I call the formal dimension of the mystical struggle is concentrated versus scattered, or distracted, mind. While Dabrowski's descriptions of personality disintegration provide a detailed analysis of the contents of consciousness (i.e., the developmental dynamisms), very little is said in those descriptions about the formal dimension.[52]

As noted in the previous chapter Dabrowski (1973:66-67) argues that persons possessing psychic overexcitability, will react to stressful situations by withdrawing and then internalizing the conflict. It was further mentioned in the previous chapter that both Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977, Vol.I:ix-x & 36) regard the overexcitabilities as channels of information, so that, e.g., persons who are emotionally sensitive and who possess rich imaginations, will experience a greater variety of stimuli and they will experience these in a more intense way. Although further elaboration is not provided by either Dabrowski or Piechowski, I would like to suggest that persons experiencing a greater variety of stimuli are likely to be more sensitive to conflicting value-claims, and therefore would correspondingly be under pressure to resolve such conflicts in order to reduce their anxiety.

On the other hand, imaginational overexcitability, perhaps in combination with some measure of intellectual overexcitability, would enable persons to internalize, and evaluate, possible solutions originating in the cultural environment. A standard method for resolving the conflict is to construct a hierarchy of values. However while the hierarchical model will reduce anxiety arising from the

competing value claims, it is at the same time the cause of another anxiety - i.e., that regarding the inability to live in accordance with the highest values. Confusion regarding competing value claims is replaced by guilt, shame, dissatisfaction and disappointment over failure to live in a way that is consistent with the newly accepted ideals.

As long as persons are confused about competing values, they see the source of their anxiety as external and therefore they are not responsible for it. Once they internalize an existing values hierarchy, or synthesize one of their own, and realize that they are not living in accordance with it, the problem is perceived as internal, and hence the anxiety engendered manifests as guilt, shame, frustration with the self, etc. At this point, therefore, there exists a motive for employing whatever means are available to assist in the struggle to become detached from the values perceived as lower and in the effort to realize the values considered higher. The means traditionally adopted for this purpose by most mystics are asceticism and meditation.

Advantages of the theory of positive disintegration for the study of mysticism

Dabrowski's theory of personality development both confirms the insights of James and Underhill and at the same time provides further elaboration. Underhill has described mystical purification as arising out of a condition she calls the oscillating self. James' term for this condition is the divided self, although for James the divided self is not unique to mysticism (in the more restricted sense of the term) - it is also found in descriptions of religious conversion. An examination of the oscillating or divided self from the perspective of Dabrowski's theory of personality development reveals that it is an instance of an even broader phenomenon - i.e., personality disintegration.

Further, the experience of the divided self, while certainly experienced as a problem in its own right, represents a solution to the dilemma faced by persons in unilevel disintegration. In unilevel disintegration there is a sense of dissatisfaction, alternation of moods and confusion as to which values are the most desirable ones. Spontaneous multilevel disintegration represents an advance over this situation because it has as part of its fundamental structure a hierarchy of values and so is able to provide persons with a directional focus, or meaning to life.

While the quality of personality disintegration found in the reports of a mystical struggle (i.e., multilevel disintegration) is relatively rare, it is not discontinuous with a much more common type of disintegration (i.e., unilevel disintegration).[53] Therefore, by applying the stage-model described by Dabrowski, it can be conjectured that the experience of inner division reported by many mystics, considered psychologically, may well be an expression of a stage of personality development (i.e., spontaneous multilevel disintegration or level III) which immediately follows that stage (i.e., unilevel disintegration or level II) frequently found in the population at large, especially the population of university students.

Most of the examples James provides of the divided self are of the type I have called the mystical struggle, and, as we have seen, the dimensions of that type are similar to characteristics of

spontaneous multilevel disintegration. But in James' lecture on the divided self can be found the citation from Annie Besant, already given above, and a passage from Alphonse Daudet, and in neither case is the internal division reported of a multilevel kind. Both are illustrations of unilevel disintegration.

In the passage James (1929:165-166) cites from Annie Besant we see that she possesses two selves. One self is painfully shy in the presence of servants; the other is assertive, and even aggressive, in public debate. These two selves are not poles in a hierarchy but rather are opposite, but complementary, traits on the same level of personality. They correspond to the ambitendencies and multiplicity of "wills" that Dabrowski (1977, Vol.I:41 & 42) describes as characteristic of unilevel disintegration (level II). An important feature found in level II is the dynamism of the second factor, one expression of which is a need for recognition and approval from others (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:41). Its presence can be inferred from the following remark in the passage James cites from Besant: "...I was full of eager gratitude to any one who noticed me kindly."

In the passage James cites from Alphonse Daudet, it is not possible to find any indication of multilevelness. To be sure there is an inner division, but this is between two selves that are on the same level. Once again the two selves are opposites but complementary:

The first time that I perceived that I was two was at the death of my brother Henri, when my father cried out so dramatically, `He is dead, he is dead!' While my first self wept, my second self thought, `How truly given was that cry, how fine it would be at the theatre.' I was then fourteen years old.

This horrible duality has often given me matter for reflection. Oh, this terrible second me, always seated whilst the other is on foot, acting, living, suffering, bestirring itself. This second me that I have never been able to intoxicate, to make shed tears, or put to sleep. And how it sees into things, and how it mocks! (Cited in James, 1929:164-165)

The second self is clearly the new self, but it is far from the ideal self that one finds in the mystical struggle, or any other expression of multilevel disintegration. It consists of a set of tendencies that are in opposition to the other, or first self. The first self experiences the socially acceptable emotions on the death of his brother - the second self reacts against what is socially accepted, and therefore is indifferent to the loss, and mocks the father's expression of grief. In both cases, whether in conformity or in reaction, the expectations of others are salient. In both cases we have a manifestation of a dynamism found in unilevel disintegration (level II), i.e, the second factor.

In a general sense the two passages just examined can be said to reflect a divided self. Further, this same type of division (i.e., unilevel) is reported in the autobiographies of a number of mystics. An example can be found in the *Life* of Teresa of Avila:

I began...to fear that if I were to die I would go to hell. And although my will did not completely incline toward being a nun, I saw that the religious life was the best and safest state, and so little by little I decided to force myself to accept it.

I was engaged in this battle within myself for three months, forcing myself with this reasoning: that the trials and hardships of being a nun could not be greater than those of purgatory...

And in this business of choosing a state [i.e., marriage or the convent], it seems to me I was moved more by servile fear than by love. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:40)

The competing values (i.e., convent versus marriage) appear to represent a multilevel hierarchy, but from a more careful reading it can be seen that the basis of Teresa's struggle is the need to make a "practical" decision.

Given her belief that after this life there is heaven, purgatory and hell, the practical problem is to determine which state will result in the greatest amount of comfort, or the least amount of discomfort. Teresa's religious quest is not intrinsically motivated. Her concern is, as she herself says, motivated by "servile fear." Multilevel fear is more concerned with one's lack of perfection and the suffering of others than it is with blatant self-interest (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:86-87). Further evidence in support of this assessment comes from the fact that at this point in her life Teresa is very much concerned about the opinion of others (an expression of the level II dynamism of the second factor).[54]

While unilevel disintegration can be found in the personal documents of several mystics, it is not itself the mystical struggle. Rather it is a struggle characterized by ambivalence, ambitendencies and the second factor (or susceptibility to the opinions of others) - a structure that is frequently encountered in many non-mystical autobiographies and in the general population. On the other hand, spontaneous multilevel disintegration consists of an interaction between a different set of dynamisms, i.e, the hierarchy of values, a set of self-critical dynamisms and positive maladjustment (defined as independence of social opinion). As we have seen above this structure is the psychological basis for the mystical struggle. Further, in those mystical autobiographies where unilevel disintegration is described it occurs prior to multilevel disintegration. In fact the latter condition can be seen to replace the former. James (1929:166) sees the division within Besant as quantitatively different from that within, e.g., Augustine. Dabrowski (1967:74) considers the difference between unilevel and multilevel disintegration to be quantitative; but, in his theory, the two stages are qualitatively distinct as well.

The theory of positive disintegration is also of value in the task of articulating the distinction between the divided self as a passive experience and the active attempt (found in most mystics) to organize the process of division in such a way as to bring about a reintegration of the personality. James' systematic description of religious change is a two-stage one with apparently little consideration given to what Underhill calls the purification of the self. However, as we have seen, subsequent to the

passive experience of inner division (similar to Dabrowski's spontaneous multilevel disintegration) but prior to mystical liberation or the unitive life (similar to Dabrowski's secondary integration), there is an important period in the lives of many mystics. Underhill refers to this as the purification of the self, and its psychological basis, in terms of the theory of positive disintegration, is organized multilevel disintegration.[55] It is during this level of personality that recourse to meditation and asceticism (or frustration of primitive impulses) is usually found. The psychological structure of this level is the interaction between a set of dynamisms that reflect an increasing awareness of developmental possibilities and an increasing capacity to take control of the development of the personality.

Once the process of the mystical struggle has been described in terms of personality development, the question of distinguishing between ordinary religious conversion and mystical transformation can be addressed. James tends to see one process with many varieties; whereas Underhill sees the mystical path as completely different from what is ordinarily meant by religious conversion. This is not the place to develop a very elaborate model of religious conversion from the perspective of the theory of positive disintegration, but a brief statement can be made.

Mystical growth has already been described in terms of Dabrowski's stages. However to do the same for religious conversion is not as simple, because under the rubric of conversion are grouped a wide variety of phenomena, from shifts in religious affiliation that involve no growth in personality, to experiences that are barely distinguishable from what Underhill calls mystical awakening. Many of the examples cited by James fall somewhere in between the two. What Underhill has in mind are undoubtedly those conversions that are little more than a change in affiliation.

Dabrowski does not address the question of shifts in institutional affiliation. But it would not be difficult to provide an explanation in terms of his theory. Although to do so requires the introduction of a new concept - i.e., that of *partial integration*. It is explained by Piechowski as follows:

Development does not occur at an even pace. There are periods of great intensity and disequilibrium (psychoneuroses, depression, creative process), and there are periods of equilibrium. Development achieves a plateau, and this may occur at any level or "between" levels when the dynamisms are active in controlling behaviour but do not carry on further transformation and restructuring. This may denote *partial integration*. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:19)

Conversion could thus be explained as a shift from one form of partial integration, through a disintegration phase (the type of which would vary from one individual to another), to a second type of partial integration at the same level as the first. In other words, the convert has a different set of interests around which she or he is integrated, but remains at the same developmental level.

In some cases there is even what appears to be the beginnings of a developmental advance during the disintegration phase of the process, but once the individual has attained a reintegration around the

new set of interests, development is arrested. Dabrowski sees just such a process occurring, at least for some people, at various points in the life cycle:

We come into contact with [the non-hierarchical or partial] type of secondary integration in...cases ...connected with...maturation and climacteric periods.

A considerable majority of changes in the period of maturation consist of psychophysical changes in which a fundamental component, a "new thing" in the psychic life, becomes important, namely the sexual instinct. These new forces reorganize the whole psyche of an individual and form new disposing and directing centres. They organize new needs, a new hierarchy of values, new sensitivities. However, in the majority of cases, the psychic richness, after the maturation period, decreases considerably as compared with the richness of that period. The nuclear inclinations to self-criticism, to dissatisfaction with oneself, very often vanish, and the sensitivity to values and needs of other people weakens. It results in a gradual stiffening of psychic structures and dynamisms around new disposing and directing centres. The individual engaged in social and professional life finds his place...[but] With respect to moral value, value of ideals, internal refashioning, and...sensitivity...to external and internal environments, there are, in fact, no essential changes. The new instincts which arise and act are really new, but their level, their capacity for reshaping, and their richness does not greatly differ from the former genotypic driving forces. (Dabrowski, 1967:135-136)

The factors, suggested by Dabrowski, as possible precipitators of personality disintegration are internal to the individual, e.g., puberty and menopause. But the same process of partial secondary integration through disintegration to partial reintegration could be precipitated by an environmental stimulus. If it can be assumed that partial integration is based on a self-identity provided by one or more social roles, then when those roles cease to exist, a process of disintegration could take place.[56]

This could be the case, for example, of persons who leave their community of origin for a large urban centre in search of better career opportunities. Bereft of community and family support for customary roles, they begin to show signs of manifest personality disintegration. If at this point they encounter, e.g., members of a new religious movement, and if they join this movement (and hence accept new social roles), their personalities will undergo a partial reintegration. Their personality level has remained constant, but to those who knew them they seem like different persons.[57] They are different persons. They now possess a whole new set of interests upon which they focus their attention, and from which they derive their purpose in life, but developmentally speaking they have stood still - i.e., they have neither advanced nor regressed.[58]

The concept of partial integration is one that appears to be implicit in the James critique of healthy-mindedness:

The method of averting one's attention from evil, and simply living in the light of the good is splendid as long as it will work. It will work for many persons; it will work far more generally than most of us are ready to suppose...But it breaks down impotently as soon as melancholy comes... (James, 1929:160)

Implicit in James' remarks is the position that the condition of systematically avoiding a confrontation with evil is based on a positive mood which is not stable. Sooner or later it must give way to melancholy. True melancholy, because it entails a measure of reflection, is considered by Dabrowski to be an experience associated with personality disintegration; those in primary integration may experience displeasure or disappointment, but not melancholy (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:129-130). Thus it is possible to express James' critique of healthy-mindedness in terms of the theory of positive disintegration. The healthy-minded are those who have formulated a religious view of life based upon a condition of partial integration, but at critical moments, e.g., life cycle crises or loss of an important social role, they will loose their base, and hence their view will no longer be meaningful.

James also refers implicitly to partial integration, in his description of the personality unification that follows conversion:

...I shall next ask you to consider more closely some of the peculiarities of the process of unification... it may come through altered feelings, or through altered powers of action; or it may come through new intellectual insights, or through experiences which we shall later have to designate as `mystical'...

But to find religion is only one of many ways of reaching unity...For example, the new birth may be... produced by the irruption into the individual's life of some new stimulus or passion, such as love, ambition, cupidity, revenge, or patriotic devotion. In all these instances we have precisely the same psychological event, - a firmness, stability, and equilibrium succeeding a period of storm and inconsistency. (James, 1929:172-173)

James has thus indicated a variety of ways in which a divided (or disintegrating) self may achieve personality reunification, but he does not make systematic qualitative distinctions between these ways. Indeed he understands them to be fundamentally "the same psychological event." However psychological, as well as phenomenological, differences can be detected. With the theory of positive disintegration it is possible to determine if any given reintegration is total (Dabrowski's term is global) or partial. A total, or global, reintegration is synonymous with secondary integration (Dabrowski's fifth, or final, level) and this occurs in the case of those mystics who reach the end of the illumination of the self or the unitive life. Further, as we have seen, the theory of positive disintegration allows for distinctions between various levels of partial integration, and therefore any given case can be assessed in terms of a shift within one level of personality, a shift from a lower to a higher level, or a

shift from a higher level to a lower one.

The merit of both James and Underhill is that their psychological descriptions, or interpretations, of the mystical struggle are non-reductionist. One might say that their psychological approach is phenomenological in the sense that it is possible to recognize the experiences examined, i.e., the mystical struggle, in the psychological description. This is equally true of the theory of positive disintegration. Not only can parallels for the content dimensions of the mystical struggle be found in the 26 psychological dimensions, identified by Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977, Vol.I:68-69), as characterizing the disintegration of personality, these parallel dimensions are fundamental to Dabrowski's five stages of personality.

Domination by one's passions, or instinctual desires, is typical of the first level of personality. The other pole of the competence dimension, subordination of the passions (or self-control), is characteristic of the fourth level of personality. The religious dimension of "world" versus "God" can be seen as a reflection of the second factor (of level II) versus the personality ideal (of level V).[59] Finally, the moral dimension is implicitly acknowledged as the essence of the third level of personality:

The hallmark of level III [is inner conflict]. The nature of multilevel conflict is, in essence, the opposition between "what is" against "what ought to be;" it is a *moral conflict*. [My emphasis] (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:48)

The three content dimensions of the mystical struggle can thus be seen to bear an essential or fundamental relationship to the Dabrowski's five levels of personality.

On the other hand the theory of positive disintegration can provide a far more detailed analysis of the mystical struggle than is given in the psychological descriptions of either James or Underhill, which makes it possible to undertake more careful analyses of the lives of individual mystics.[60] James and Underhill both remark on the similarity between the mystical life and mental illness, but Dabrowski locates mental illness within the context of personality development, and he does so in some detail.[61] Many forms of mental illness, especially those he refers to as psychoneuroses, Dabrowski considers to be indicators, not of a failure to adapt, but of a potential for personality development. This approach is helpful for placing the idiosyncratic behaviour of mystics into the overall context of their mystical growth.[62] Further, because many of the concepts of the theory have been operationalized, and can now be measured quantitatively, there is a growing body of empirical research, especially in the areas of gifted child research and creativity studies.[63] This means that more rigorous testing of the insights of James, Underhill and others is now possible.

In addition to providing a more detailed description of the psychological basis of the mystical struggle,

the theory of positive disintegration offers a more elaborate *explanation* of the mystical struggle - i.e., in terms of a predisposing temperament of psychic overexcitability. According to Dabrowski all the dynamisms of spontaneous multilevel disintegration (level III) have their origin specifically in emotional overexcitability and the greater the intensity of emotional overexcitability, the greater the power of the level III dynamisms (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:116 & 43). When imaginational overexcitability is present, the manifestation of level III dynamisms is more extensive (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:117).

Persons who are emotionally sensitive and who possess rich imaginations experience a greater variety of stimuli and they experience these in a more intense way (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:ix-x, 36 & 116). It follows that they would therefore have a high probability of perceiving conflicting value-claims, and would be correspondingly under pressure to resolve the conflict in order to reduce their anxiety. A rich imagination enables persons to internalize possible solutions, originating in the environment, and to evaluate them (1972:66-67).

An obvious way to resolve conflicts of this kind is to construct, or borrow, a values hierarchy. However, while the hierarchy reduces anxiety with regard to competing values-claims, it is at the same time the cause of another anxiety - i.e., the anxiety resulting from the inability to live in accordance with the hierarchy. Confusion regarding competing value-claims is replaced by guilt, shame, dissatisfaction and disappointment over one's failure to live in accordance with what one has come to accept as the higher values. Hence one has a motive for the adoption of those means that make possible the detachment from lower values and the realization of higher values.

Analysis of Teresa of Avila in terms of the theory of positive disintegration[64]

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) entered the Carmelite convent in her native Avila in 1535, at the age of twenty. At twenty-three she suffered a serious illness for three years consisting of heart pains, continuous fever, lack of strength and appetite, nausea, hyperesthesia and paralysis. During this illness she developed the capacity, which she apparently lacked prior to the illness, to meditate. Until her thirty-ninth year, during which occurred what she refers to as her conversion, she was a divided self.

I suggest that the form of inner division she experienced during this period of her life was similar to what Dabrowski has called spontaneous *multilevel* disintegration. I would further suggest that prior to her illness Teresa's inner conflict was more of the kind Dabrowski refers to as *unilevel* disintegration. Following her "conversion" and especially her first "rapture" (illuminative mystical experience) her struggle was of a qualitatively different nature. I believe that at this point her condition resembled the stage of personality described by Dabrowski as *organized* multilevel disintegration. Because Teresa of Avila' *Life* is one of the most detailed accounts of a mystic's development in terms of intentions, thoughts and especially feelings, it is an excellent source for a psychological study of a mystic. I will begin my analysis of Teresa's life with her adolescent years.

In the process of individual maturation there occurs at least some measure of personality disintegration, noticeable particularly during adolescence. According to Erik Erikson (1963:261) this is caused by the physiological revolution, initiated at puberty, and the anticipation of the demands of adulthood. Dabrowski (1972:60) sees in the increased thyroid activity of the period a physiological substrate for adolescent disintegration, which may or may not pass beyond the unilevel stage (1967:64-65 & 71-72). Although signs of multilevel disintegration are not absent during Teresa's adolescence, on reading her account of those years one has a marked impression of unilevel disintegration. As Dabrowski notes, even at this stage, "there may arise certain [but] short-lived glimpses of the 'ideal'," which occur "in the transitions from one set of tendencies to another" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:178).

In level II there is a "concern for the preservation of one's line or tradition" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:178). Teresa mentions more than once that at this time she had a fear of losing her honour and reputation. Also characteristic of level II are what Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977, Vol.I:41) refer to as ambitendencies: indecision, wanting and not wanting, or wanting two irreconcilable things at once. This dynamism can be seen in Teresa's request to the nuns in the convent school for prayers that God show her what vocation she is to follow.[65] Then she adds immediately that as yet she had no desire to be a nun and even asks God not to give her this vocation. At the same time she informs the reader that she also feared the prospect of marriage (1976:39). Finally she did decide to become a nun, but the decision was one that she forced on herself out of fear of going to hell (1976:40). Such a motive typifies the level II approach to religion (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:142).

One of the most prominent traits found in unilevel disintegration is the susceptibility to social opinion, guidance of one's behaviour based on a need for recognition and approval, and internalization of values from external sources (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:41). Teresa speaks repeatedly of her desire to please, of how she enjoyed being esteemed, or of how she was worried that others would see how vain she was (1976:35, 38 & 39), and this concern remained with her up until the time of her illness just after her religious profession (1976:46).

Following this illness, there was a marked change in the quality of Teresa's inner conflict. Instead of preoccupation with what others will think of her and the concern for her reputation, typical of unilevel disintegration, can be seen a typical multilevel conflict. In addition to the examples cited in Chapter Two there are numerous expressions of this new dynamic in her *Life*. The following examples will serve as illustrations:

...for more than eighteen of the twenty-eight years since I began [mental] prayer [i.e ., meditation], I suffered this battle and conflict between friendship with God and friendship with the world. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:66)

On the one hand I found great comfort in sermons, while on the other I was tormented for through

them I understood that I wasn't what I should have been - not by a far cry. I begged the Lord to help me. But I must have failed...because I did not put all my trust in His Majesty and lose completely the trust I had in myself. I searched for a remedy, I made attempts, but I didn't understand that all is of little benefit if we do not take away completely the trust we have in ourselves and place it in God. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:70)

In the above quotations can be discovered virtually all the dynamisms of spontaneous multilevel disintegration. There one can find a hierarchization of values: in Teresa's case it was God versus the world. Her concern to trust in God was not a desire to please other nuns, but was a value to which she was intrinsically committed. There is dissatisfaction, disquietude and astonishment with herself. There is anguish over moral failures and frustration that she was unable to live according to her chosen ideal. This situation is an advance over the unilevel one, since her conflict took on a directional focus. She was no longer dominated by ambitendencies - she had one tendency, to surrender herself completely to her highest value.

Life-span psychologists unanimously consider the mid-life transition to be at least as critical a turning point as that of the adolescent to adulthood transition. Here also Dabrowski (1972:70) assigns a causal role to the increased thyroid activity at this period. Another cause may be the increasing awareness of one's mortality (Levinson, 1978:215 & 218). Whatever gives rise to this point of transition, it is particularly intense and dramatic among highly creative people (those who possess a low threshold for anxiety arousal). In his study of painters, composers, poets, writers and sculptors of "undoubted genius," Elliot Jacques (1980) discovered that the crisis attending the mid-thirties to mid-forties transition expressed itself in three ways: it ended a creative career; began one; or marked a distinctive shift in its quality or direction. For Teresa of Avila this transition period was the occasion of a shift from spontaneous to organized multilevel disintegration.

The critical feature of the *organized* phase of multilevel disintegration is increased self-awareness, and control over the developmental process. Again there is no better way to demonstrate the change that occurred within Teresa than to quote her own words:

It was the first time the Lord granted me this favour of rapture. I heard these words: "No longer do I want you to converse with men but with angels..." These words have been fulfilled, for I have never again been able to tie myself to any friendship or to find consolation in or bear particular love for any other persons than those I understand love Him and strive to serve Him...from that day on I was very courageous in abandoning all for God, as one who had wanted from that moment...to change completely... (Teresa of Avila, 1976:161)

Her reference to "particular love for any other persons" should not be misunderstood. As Culligan's analysis of her letters reveals, Teresa took an active interest in the welfare of others. She wrote to the King in an effort to get John of the Cross freed from prison; she was constantly concerned with the

spiritual and material conditions of her nuns and defended them against unjust accusations; and she encouraged many priests and lay persons in their spiritual journey. At the same time she was devoted to her family, assuming an active role in the raising of her brother's illegitimate son, and succeeding in persuading the parents of her twenty-one-year-old niece, who had been having an affair, to let her move to Avila in order to restore her reputation.

But what made this human concern possible was the freedom she had from the opinions of others. Her desire was no longer to please others, but to please God by serving others. She now possessed fortitude and a heightened intuitive capacity (1976:171). Whereas in level II she felt remorse following her failures, now she is able to anticipate and therefore avoid them (1976:171). But Teresa's struggle was not over; it had merely undergone a qualitative shift:

During the remaining years [subsequent to her first rapture]...the cause of the war [between friendship with God and friendship with the world changed, although the war [that remained] was not a small one. But since it was...for the service of God and with knowledge of the vanity that the world is, everything went smoothly... (Teresa of Avila, 1976:66)

In continuing with this struggle, Teresa was preparing herself for the culmination of her spiritual and psychological development.

Although the extant version of Teresa's autobiography was written when she was around the age of forty-nine, and therefore contains nothing about the last years of her life, there are other sources of information, including numerous letters. There are also the Spiritual Testimonies, or short accounts of her experiences and state of mind. In one of these (cf 1976:363-365), written at the age of sixty-six, she explains how she no longer experienced the anxieties and fears that were so much a part of her earlier years. She had learned to live in a state of inner peace without any need for the learned men she once depended upon for guidance. The periodic imaginative visions she had formerly enjoyed had ceased, but in their place was a constant intellectual vision of the trinity and of the humanity of Christ.

She continued to suffer, in fact more intensely than ever, but it was only on the surface and it never occasioned a loss of inner peace, for as she puts it: "The soul is [now] like a Lord in his castle..." And she adds that the soul "goes about so forgetful of self that it thinks it has partly lost its being." According to Teresa, in this state everything is directed to the honour and glory of God. The previously experienced conflict between higher and lower values was resolved. One final indicator of the condition Teresa experienced in these last years can be found in her attitude toward death. For someone in the final state of personality development, death is deeply felt to be the door to the transcendent, and at the same time death is placed within the context of responsibility for others (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:172 & 173). Teresa longed for death in order to be permanently united to God, and yet these desires were overcome by another desire, to be able to serve God more by serving others. An expression of the radical altruism that characterizes secondary integration

(Dabrowski's level V) can be found in the following lines:

And if through my intercession I could play a part in getting a soul to love and praise God more, even if it be for just a short time, I think that would matter more to me than being in glory. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:365)

In a number of passages, Teresa discusses the role played by meditation and asceticism in the evolution of her mystical life. She refers to the benefit she personally received from reflective meditation on the passion of Christ in the context of recommending this practice to the reader:

...returning to what I was saying about Christ bound at the pillar; it is good to reflect awhile and think about the pains He suffered there, and why, and who He is, and the love with which He suffered them. But one should not always weary oneself in seeking these reflections but just remain there in His presence with the intellect quiet. And if a person is able he should occupy himself in looking at Christ who is looking at him, and he should speak, and petition, and humble himself, and delight in the Lord's presence, and remember that he is unworthy of being there. When he can do this, even though it may be at the beginning of prayer [i.e., when one is just beginning to practice meditation], he will derive great benefit; and this manner of prayer has great advantages - *at least my soul derived them* [my emphasis]. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:96-97)

In another passage, one treating non-discursive or one-pointed meditation, Teresa is more explicit about one of the "advantages" of the practice:

...the torment my distracting thoughts gave me...is a characteristic of the method in which you proceed without discursive reflection on the part of the intellect. For such a method requires that the soul be very advanced, or lost; I mean lost with regard to discursive reflection. In its progress it advances a great deal because it advances in love. But to reach this point the cost is very high, except in the case of persons whom the Lord desires to bring quickly to the prayer of quiet, for I know some. Those who follow this path of no discursive reflection will find a book can be a help for recollecting oneself quickly. It helped me also to look at fields, or water, or flowers. In these things I found a remembrance of the Creator. I mean that they awakened and recollected me and served as a book and reminded me of my ingratitude and sins. As for heavenly and sublime things, my intellect was so coarse that it could never, never imagine them until the Lord in another way showed them to me. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:71-72)

The particular advantages of meditation mentioned here are that it results in awareness of ingratitude and compunction for sins - i.e., the Dabrowskian dynamisms of spontaneous multilevel disintegration.

Another closely related effect of meditation is that it enabled her to more easily avoid behaviours she had come to disvalue: "For when I practised [mental] prayer, I offended God one day but then others I turned to recollection and withdrew more from the occasions" (Teresa of Avila, 1976:60).

This is an expression of the "negative" role played by meditation (Dabrowski, 1967:32-33). According to Teresa, this increased sensitivity to disvalues and an increased capacity to live in conformity with values is one of the consequences of mortification as well:

He [her spiritual director] ordered me to perform some mortifications which were not very pleasing to me. I did everything because it seemed to me the Lord commanded it, and God gave him the ability to command me in such a way that I obeyed him. My soul began so to feel any offense I committed against God, however small, that if I was holding on to some superfluous thing, I could not recollect myself until I gave the thing up. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:159)

Mortification also seems to have played some role in Teresa's first illuminative experience (referred to by Teresa as a rapture):

This father [her spiritual director] began to lead me to greater perfection. He told me that to please God completely I must leave nothing undone; he did so also with great skill and gentleness because my soul still was not at all strong but very fragile, especially with regard to giving up some friendships I had. Although I was not offending God by them, I was very attached...He told me to commend the matter to God for some days and to recite the hymn *Veni Creator* so that having spent a long time in prayer and begging the Lord to help me please Him in all things, I began the hymn; while saying it, a rapture came upon me so suddenly that it almost carried me out of myself. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:160)

Teresa feels she profited from the quality of the spiritual direction she received. If she is correct in her assessment, then it can be said that from the perspective of theory of positive disintegration, spiritual direction assisted her in the transition from spontaneous to organized multilevel disintegration. By encouraging her to mortify certain attachments, her spiritual director hastened the process Dabrowski calls partial death - or the "conscious and deliberate eradication of the lower personality structures" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:172). Spiritual direction is one of the benefits or services provided by a mystical institution, which in turn appears to be one of the factors that fosters a mystical vocation, as will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

Analysis of Satomi Myodo in terms of Dabrowski's stages of personality development

In spite of her references to her worldly inclinations, Teresa of Avila led a relatively sheltered

existence, going from her parental home directly into a Carmelite convent. Such was not the case with the Japanese Buddhist nun, Satomi Myodo (1896-1978). Although born at the end of the last century in a small farming village on the culturally conservative island of Hokkaido, Satomi was a relatively free spirit. She had aspirations to become a writer, studied at Tokyo University, had a child with a man to whom she was not married, performed in an acting troupe, served for a time as a Shinto medium, and at mid-life became a Zen Buddhist nun.

From at least young adulthood Satomi experienced periods of spontaneous multilevel disintegration. If Dabrowski is correct in his analysis, the developmental resolution to the spontaneity (powerlessness) of this stage is organization, or taking control over the process of one's disintegration and reintegration. However in Satomi's case this "teleological need" was not adequately met until she had access to a mystical institution - i.e., a Zen Buddhist monastery and the teaching, modelling, direction and support that it provided.

At the age of twenty, Satomi, involuntarily pregnant, reluctantly returned home from her studies in Tokyo. Her description of her feelings indicates a condition of hopelessness:

Everyday the three of us [Satomi's parents and herself] silently arose, and silently we went to work in the fields. As for me - with my body, which couldn't be more shameful, and my face, which one could hardly bear to look at - I just wanted to crawl into a hole and disappear. Looking like a barrel whose hoops were about to burst, and in a condition of utter despair, I was incapable even of dying. I could do nothing but sit back and watch my shame grow. I felt wretched, miserable ashen - as if I were travelling alone at night through an endless wilderness, wearily dragging one foot after the other. (Myodo, 1987:7)

There is a strong emphasis here on shame, which is the name Dabrowski gives to a dynamism operative in the stage of spontaneous multilevel disintegration. However the dynamism Dabrowski has in mind is a self-critical one and implies that the person has a goal or direction but has failed to pursue it. In the passage cited above shame is more a reflection of what Dabrowski calls the second factor (susceptibility to the opinion of others and a need for recognition and approval), and is accompanied by despair, or a lack of direction. In other words the passage indicates a condition similar to the one Dabrowski calls unilevel disintegration.

At this point Satomi had an emotional experience of a noetic character. It may not have been as intense as the type of experience referred to by Underhill as an awakening, and the content is more moral than religious, but it seems to have served a similar psychological function:

I had never known such a wonderful world as the one I experienced in that moment. I saw the grass and trees, the hills, river, fields, and stones, the hoe and sickle, the birds and dogs, the roofs and

windows - all shining brightly under the same sun. For me it was a wonderful breath of fresh air. Both the animate and inanimate were vividly alive, familiarly addressing me and waving their hands. Struck by the unearthly exquisiteness of this world, I broke into tears and lifted up my face, weeping, in ecstasy. I saw right through myself and completely emptied my bag of emotional problems. All those words about morality that I had heard in elementary school, and that I had thought were just lectures to be forgotten, suddenly took on the form of living truth for me. (Myodo, 1987:9)

The experience opened up a new direction for Satomi, and it resulted in a measure of self-criticism typical of spontaneous multilevel disintegration:

I never realized that until this time I had been impure and cold-hearted. I had never so much as shed one tear for truth. I had never thought of others nor felt the need to do so. Self-centred and capricious, I had thought I could play with others in any way I wanted. I had thought "honest person" was another term for "great fool." I had cherished the superiority complex of an evil person. I was haughty, but in truth I was an insignificant nobody. (Myodo, 1987:10)

The father of her child came to stay with her and her parents, during which time he worked in the fields with the family. He and Satomi were married, Satomi became pregnant again, the husband had a quarrel with Satomi's father and then left for Tokyo.

Sometime after the child was born, Satomi left one of her children with her parents and returned to Tokyo with the other. She attended classes at Tokyo University, leaving the baby alone at home during this time. Her husband came with his mother and his aunt and took the baby away, as a result of which Satomi experienced a particularly intense period of disordered grieving. So intense that it precipitated a nervous breakdown and she had to be institutionalized. On her release Satomi joined an acting troupe, had a relationship with a man several years her junior and then began training to become a Shinto medium.

Throughout this period Satomi experienced a sense of dissatisfaction with the direction of her life. Various manifestations of spontaneous multilevel disintegration, or of the interface between unilevel and spontaneous multilevel disintegration, can be discerned, an example of which is the following:

"What makes life worth living?" I wondered. "Surely it is to exhaust all one's strength for the sake of the world and for the sake of humanity and to sacrifice oneself to this end." Thus I gave my projects my all and ran about in all directions. I couldn't find satisfaction in any other way.

And yet, no matter how much I ran busily about, a touch of sadness and dissatisfaction remained deep in my heart. Feeling my spirit wasn't getting enough nourishment, I began to read everything on moral self-cultivation that I could lay my hands on. (Myodo, 1987:64)

Satomi was not at this point entirely certain about the direction her life ought to have taken, but there was an incipient hierarchy of values, as is indicated by her engagement in community service and her feelings of sadness and dissatisfaction at not having a clearer set of values.

Satomi discovered her life purpose in Zen Buddhism. She attended lectures and these were the occasion for a deepening of an inner conflict of a multilevel type:

I was gloomy. Dissatisfied with the Hoganji Temple's Dharma talks, I felt I had no spiritual home. When I saw the perfectly peaceful appearance of my fellow seekers, I felt that I was the only one who hadn't found spiritual liberation. (Myodo, 1987:70)

Her multilevel condition intensified with her decision to engage in prolonged and intensive meditation practice (an expression of the emergence of the dynamisms of the third factor and self-control):

At first I felt I would reach satori within a week. Then the spring equinox came and went, then the fall equinox approached. I had still not achieved satori! I didn't intend to meet Roshi personally until I achieved satori; I thought it would be useless. In truth, I thought I would easily attain satori and then meet him. But the more I practised *zazen*, the less things turned out the way I expected. (Myodo, 1987:73)

Although Satomi is beginning to take responsibility for her development, she still did not have control over either her behaviour or her unruly mind. However after continued practice she had her first *kensho*, or enlightenment, experience and then worked on deepening it. Her struggle did not cease, but at this point she had greater control over herself and was more content:

Since *kensho*, I have been working with koans, one after another. Every time I penetrate a koan, a thin skin peels off my mind. Layer by layer, the mind's foundation is gradually becoming clear. Thus the more I enter into the ocean of the Buddha Dharma, the more I understand how deep it is. And yet its content is nothing at all. A human life filled with this "nothing at all" is a marvellous thing. (Myodo, 1987:109)

If Satomi Myodo's experience of the mystical path is compared to that of Teresa of Avila, it can be seen that both women, although from different times and cultures, underwent a shift from unilevel to spontaneous multilevel disintegration at about the same time - i.e., in their twenties. The transition actually took place in Satomi's life a few years earlier than it did in Teresa's. But while Teresa had immediate access to a mystical institution and therefore to models of spiritual development, information on how to practice meditation, spiritual direction, financial support and emotional encouragement, Satomi did so only after years of search. This difference seems to be one of the most

important reasons why Teresa's *Vita* shows solid evidence of organized multilevel disintegration from the time of her forty-second year onward, while the same stage is not reached by Satomi until she is fifty-nine years old (the age of her first *kensho* experience).

Like Teresa, Satomi, as indicated in a passage cited above, made use of meditation in her spiritual growth process. She also engaged in asceticism, although the first employment of such practices, in her twenties, were undertaken to assist her in becoming a Shinto medium:

Ever since I first woke up to [the significance of] sincerity [the experience cited above as an awakening] ...I couldn't help being aware of my moral ugliness. Tortured with guilt, all I could think of was to somehow wipe away the defilements with which I was stained and to develop the ability to understand myself. Thus I zealously began ascetic practice. At first I would take a vow and set about my asceticism for set periods of seven, fourteen, or twenty days. As might be expected, during the period of ascetic practice, with my body purified, deluded thoughts had no chance to put in an appearance. I felt that, in accordance with my goal, I was becoming completely pure. However, as soon as I fulfilled my vow and took a breather, my true character revealed itself, and in the end I saw that I was no better off than I had been before. (Myodo, 1987:46)

Since Satomi's purpose at this time was to become a *miko*, or Shinto medium, one might suppose that the above passage is more an expression of a "shamanic struggle" rather than a mystical struggle. However, by Satomi's time, Shinto had been influenced by both the ethical orientation of Confucianism and the mystical approach of Zen Buddhism.[66] The above passage illustrates the function of asceticism described by Dabrowski (1967:130) as consisting "in dampening of natural, instincts with a view to attaining a higher goal, usually of a religious and moral character." Satomi continued to engage in an ascetic lifestyle even after she became committed to the practice of Zen:

In order to practice meditation, I quickly left my family [in the village in Hokkaido] ("severing all karmic bonds") and moved into a hut attached to the back of that Kannon shrine by the waterfall where, until the previous year, an old charcoal maker had lived...Inside, the hut was gloomy. The coarse tatami mats were sooty and laid out loosely, unattached to anything...Living the most meagre of lives, I continued with *zazen*. (Myodo, 1987:72-73)

At this point Satomi's asceticism is less severe, and she consciously relates it to her practice of meditation, but it serves a similar function - i.e., one of deliberately frustrating a lower level structure of dependency, in order that the dynamisms of a higher level of personality might emerge, as indeed they do with her first *kensho* experience.

Consideration of Teresa of Avila and Satomi Myodo from the perspective of the theory of positive

disintegration makes it possible to trace a number of changes in their personalities over the years covered by the personal accounts of their lives. Through an identification of developmental dynamisms, the evolution of their personalities from unilevel to spontaneous multilevel and to organized multilevel disintegration can be seen. A comparison of the two lives indicates the importance of the mystical institution, especially for the transition from spontaneous multilevel to organized multilevel disintegration. And even in these very brief analyses one can see something of the psychological function of asceticism and meditation in the process of disintegration.

Limitation of James and Underhill and Dabrowski

As has been remarked upon above the theory of positive disintegration virtually ignores the role played by the environment in the development of personality. According to the theory, initially growth is determined by the presence of emotional, imaginative and intellectual overexcitability. At the third stage of personality what Dabrowski calls the "third factor" (the internal decision making ability of the developing person) enters the picture and plays an increasing role thereafter. Thus both sources of personality growth are internal to the organism.

While Dabrowski does discuss some environmental conditions that are supportive of personality development (e.g., various cultural institutions, inspiring biographies and consultation with an "advisor"), he does so in the context of descriptions of treatment for clients. He does not have a systematic analysis of environmental factors that are predispositional of personality disintegration, and he does not because he feels that the primary stimulus for disintegration comes from within the person. Even crises that have their origin within the organism, such as puberty or menopause, occasion no more than a temporary disintegration of a unilevel kind, if emotional overexcitability is not present. And if it is present, personality disintegration is considered to be virtually inevitable, whether there are internal or external crises or not.

I attribute this emphasis, whether explicit or implicit, on heredity to the virtual exclusion of the environment, in James, Underhill and Dabrowski, to two influences. The first influence is from religion. Both Dabrowski and Underhill were very familiar with the notion of spiritual development in Christianity, in which tradition it was believed to be caused by the presence of God within the mystic. In effect, what these two authors have done is to supplement (in the case of Underhill) or replace (in Dabrowski's case) a supernatural notion of development with a psychological model, and a supernatural notion of causality with a natural explanation, i.e., a genetically determined predisposition. In both cases individuals are determined by some inner dynamism that operates independently of the environment.

While James had little use for traditional Catholic stage models of the mystical life, he was familiar with Protestant notions of the operation of grace in conversion experiences, and these appear to have been the source of inspiration for his two-stage model, so in James as well irresistible grace appears to have been replaced by an irresistible temperament. We have already seen that James' explanation, in the *Varieties*, for conversion, genius and mental illness is a peculiar temperament, but in that work

James is not willing to commit himself entirely to a genetic basis for that temperament:

Heterogeneous personality has been explained as the result of inheritance - the traits of character of incompatible and antagonistic ancestors are supposed to be preserved alongside of each other. This explanation may pass for what it is worth - it certainly needs corroboration. (James, 1929:166)

It is not entirely clear from these words, if James is cautious regarding *any* explanation in terms of heredity or only the particular one of antagonistic ancestral traits.

In any case, in the *Principles*, heredity is clearly considered to be responsible for the fundamental psychological orientation of *all* persons (and therefore, logically, all mystics, creatives and mentally ill persons):

I shall try...to make plain....That the features of our organic mental structure cannot be explained at all by our conscious intercourse with the outer environment, but must rather be understood as congenital variations, "accidental" in the first instance, but then transmitted as fixed features of the race.

On the whole, then, the account which the apriorists give of the *facts* is that which I defend; although I should contend (as will hereafter appear) for a naturalistic view of their *cause*. (James, 1952:851)

The naturalistic view which James contends for is heredity in combination with the Darwinian notion of natural selection (1952:894).

The second influence, which I believe is relevant in explaining the emphasis in James, Underhill and Dabrowski on heredity, is the intellectual climate of the times, as exemplified in the writings of Darwin, Hegel, Bergson and others. Much of Armstrong's discussion of the intellectual background to Underhill is applicable to James and Dabrowski. Human progress, among those who thought along these lines, was considered from either a biological or an idealistic perspective. On the one hand, this idea took a revolutionary form that there was a vanguard of humanity, perhaps temporarily neglected and even oppressed, but ultimately destined to triumph. On the other hand, a more conservative expression legitimated privileged individuals and populations in their positions by virtue of the fact that they were, in a secular sense, "chosen" - they were determined to be creative, eminent and rulers because of some inner necessity.

Whether James, Underhill or Dabrowski were of the revolutionary or conservative persuasion, or fell somewhere in between, is irrelevant to the issue under consideration. The point I wish to make is simply that they, like all of us, have been influenced by an intellectual climate. An intellectual climate opens up theoretical possibilities, but it also contains a built-in bias against others. The value of a tradition of scholarship stretching over several generations is that it presents a broader range of theoretical options. Therefore perhaps as we reach the end of the twentieth century, it is possible to

consider the origins of personality development and of the mystical path in broader terms than appears to have been the case for the three authors considered above.

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CHAPTER VII

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FACTORS PREDISPOSITIONAL OF A MYSTICAL STRUGGLE

In previous chapters consideration is given to the internal conflict reported by many mystics and to an interpretation of this conflict in terms of a theory of personality development. Some mention is made of a temperamental predisposition to the mystical life as well. William James and Evelyn Underhill have given what appear to be similar descriptions of a unique temperament that they believe is a factor in fostering a mystical vocation. In Dabrowski's theory a similar temperament is considered to be a promoter of personality disintegration. While other researchers also feel that this factor is present in the lives of many mystics, I suggest that there are additional social psychological factors to be taken into consideration.

The model presented here is not meant to be a final statement about mystics in general, much less is it claimed that it will fit every individual case. It is a synthesis of data and hypotheses from many, and varied, sources. The approach taken is a preliminary and tentative effort to identify salient factors which influence or predispose persons in the choice of a mystical career. I have no doubt that there are other factors that have been ignored in my discussion; and certainly the five factors that I have included need to be more carefully defined. But the purpose of Chapters Seven to Ten is to propose a heuristic framework for investigations of particular cases (which in turn should influence the reconceptualization of the model).

It should also be mentioned that the attempt to discover influences of a social or temperamental kind is not meant to be an expression of a narrow or exclusively determinist position. Rarely can a whole range of behaviours, thoughts, feelings and imaginings such as one finds in mystics (creatives or mentally disturbed persons) be reliably predicted from a small number of influences external to the psychic life of the individual. At the same time in any area of investigation, given a wide enough range of data, a variety of theoretical input and a measure of reflection, inevitably patterns emerge to make some sense out of what formerly appeared as chaos. This model is one such pattern.

Finally, I should say that in the case of an individual mystic evidence may not be found for the presence of all five factors; there may even be evidence of its absence. And even when all five factors can be clearly discerned, other influences may be more salient. Thus I would say that the factors are first of all not inexorable causes, rather they are influences. And secondly any given factor is not

necessary or sufficient in any given individual case. However it is my suggestion that most of the factors will be found to be at work in a large number of mystical lives.

As a means of describing both the temperamental factor and the social psychological, or environmental, factors that predispose a number of persons to the mystical life, a comparison will be made, in the Chapters Seven to Ten, between mystics, creative persons and the mentally ill. Following a review of relevant literature, evidence will be presented for five factors I consider to be frequently predispositional. While the quantity and quality of the evidence in support of each of the factors varies, I believe that it provides an adequate basis for at least the consideration of the five factors under consideration.

The first factor is a temperamental one and consists of emotional sensitivity on the one hand and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement on the other (i.e, something akin to Dabrowski's emotional and imaginational overexcitabilities). The second factor is that of loss in childhood and adolescence. A loss is an event that induces a state of insecurity, such as separation from the mother, death of a parent or sibling, serious illness, war, migration and extreme poverty. I argue that these two factors are frequently found in mystics, creatives and the mentally ill.[67]

Due to their imaginative capacity and their hypersensitivity, the experience of loss is probably more painful than it is for others. When children who are emotionally sensitive, and given to living in the world of their imagination, sustain serious losses they are all the more vulnerable to subsequent losses, such as those that arise in adolescence. The result is they may well come to regard the world in which these events occur as unreliable. At the same time such persons still have needs and so they often search elsewhere for their fulfilment.

In some cases the search meets with frustration, and in those cases where it does not, the nature of the search can vary considerably. In the case of the mentally ill the search is frequently avoided or else a method of procedure is followed that is ineffective and dysfunctional. Creative persons can seek to compensate for their losses and to fulfil their needs by engaging in projects which have as their intended result a service or product that is valued by society. Mystics may also seek to compensate for their losses and to fulfil their needs, but if they do so it is often by engaging in a process analogous to personality transformation - one they understand in terms of intimacy with an ultimate reality.

Three factors that seem to be predispositional of successful searching are: emotional support, family training and modelling and institutional support. All three are frequently found in the lives of mystics and creatives; they are generally absent, to one degree or another, in the lives of the mentally ill.[68] Emotional support from family members or close friends would provide children with the necessary sense of self-worth and self-confidence to proceed with a search. As a result of emotional support children are able to express, and discipline, their intense feelings of grief, which often arise as a consequence of their sensitivity to loss.

In addition to a strongly felt need, and confidence to pursue its fulfilment, most future creatives and future mystics receive childhood (and adolescent) training and modelling in a system of meaning (e.g., science, the humanities or religion) by which they can interpret their insecurity or sense of loss in terms of a program of action. Science, the humanities or the arts are valued in the homes of future creatives; there is frequently encouragement to discover through reading or experimentation; lessons may be provided; one or more senior members of the extended family may be creative persons who thus act as role models. In this way the search for security may be shaped into a quest for truth or for a better understanding of the human condition.

In the lives of incipient mystics there is often found someone who is intrinsically religious and from an early age children are told religious stories and encouraged to engage in devotions. The view of the world that is typically communicated is one of a set of binary oppositions: matter versus spirit; good versus evil; and self-control versus domination by unpredictable, and dangerous, passions. Hence the stage is set for a mystical struggle in the future.

The final factor is institutional support. It, like the preceding two factors, is rarely found in the lives of the mentally ill. But creatives and mystics often have access to institutions (e.g., universities and monasteries) that provide continued emotional support and a further development of the meaning system acquired in childhood and adolescence through family training and modelling. In this way future creatives and mystics are usually encouraged to continue their quest for security and to do so in a disciplined manner. Moreover the institution, as was the case with family teaching and modelling, can be considered to provide a specific direction to the quest for security. For creatives, the search for security (as well as acceptance and approval) typically becomes one of producing products or services that are uniquely valued by society. In the case of mystics, that same search characteristically leads to a commitment to a program of self-transformation. Finally in their respective institutions creatives and mystics are provided with the skills (through exercises and critical feedback) that are needed for pursuing their respective goals.

A brief summary of the theory of the five factors that are predispositional of the mystical struggle is as follows. Those who have engaged in the mystical struggle are likely to be persons who possessed a temperament (primarily genetically determined) characterized by emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement which made them vulnerable to loss. In childhood most of them experienced some form of acute loss or an ongoing situation of stress and this in turn rendered them even more susceptible to further losses and stress. Continued losses (acute or cumulative) appear to have induced in many, a condition of intense grieving over their insecure state. At the same time they were typically given sufficient emotional support to engender in them confidence in the eventual attainment of security.

This confidence combined with the religious teaching and modelling received in their family environments can be seen as having shaped their desire for security or fulfilment into a religious quest, in which they sought to balance religious claims over against the claims and desires of ordinary life. In late adolescence or in adulthood usually mystics-to-be had access to mystical institutions in

which the religious world view they learned in childhood was reinforced, in which they were taught the value of a concentrated, as opposed to a distracted, mind and in which they were taught the exercises and skills needed to undertake the mystical struggle.

Studies of mystics, creatives and the mentally ill

Comparisons between mysticism and mental illness, or between mysticism and creativity or between all three are frequently found, either as chapters in books on mysticism or else as independent articles.[69] In their studies on mysticism, both Scharfstein (1974) and Greely (1974) provide chapter-length discussions of mysticism and creativity and mysticism and mental illness. Roland Fischer has done a number of comparisons between creative, psychotic and mystical states of consciousness (cf. e.g., Fischer, 1972). Kubose and Umemoto (1980) argue for a correspondence between the stages of the creative process and those undergone by Zen practitioners as they struggle with a koan to experience a breakthrough in *satori*. Batson and Ventis (1982:56-96) make a similar comparison, using cases of religious experience from the West (many of them mystical). Comparisons of mysticism (usually mystical experience) with mental illness (psychotic episodes, depression, etc) are legion. Aaronson (1967), Wapnick (1969) and Buckley (1981) describe characteristics which distinguish mystical experiences from those of schizophrenics. Mary Jo Meadow has been particularly prolific in this enterprise, describing differences between mysticism on the one hand and on the other, narcissism and masochism (1979), schizophrenia (1980a), paranoia (1980b), and depression (1984).

Silverman (1975), Prince (1979) and Lukoff (1985) have suggested that mystical experiences that resemble psychotic episodes (as well as many psychoses with religious or mystical features) are really attempts, often successful, at personal problem-solving. Prince suspects that mystical experiences, would on investigation, be found to relate to life crises:

A spontaneous healing mechanism is also apparent in a good proportion of extrovertive mystical experiences.... Koestler's [24] mystical experiences occurred while he was imprisoned during the Spanish Civil War and waiting to face the firing squad; Muggeridge [25] reported an experience which saved him as he was wading out to sea to drown himself. I suspect that a majority of mystical experiences would be found to be related to life crises if the matter were systematically investigated. (Prince, 1979:179)

Not only mystical experiences, but as we shall see below, the mystical life itself appears to be related to life crises, as well as to other environmental factors.

James, Underhill and Dabrowski

James and Underhill have suggested that mystics, creative geniuses and the mentally disturbed share a common temperament. For example, James relates mental illness and mysticism in the following

words:

As regards the psychopathic origin of so many religious phenomena....Few of us are not in some way infirm, or even diseased; and our very infirmities help us unexpectedly. In the psychopathic temperament we have ....the love of metaphysics and mysticism which carry one's interests beyond the surface of the sensible world ....If there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it might well be that the neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite receptivity. (James, 1929:25-26)

Likewise James is of the opinion that geniuses, or eminent persons, share in the same "psychopathic" temperament found in mystics:

Borderland insanity, crankiness, insane temperament, loss of mental balance, psychopathic degeneration ....has certain peculiarities and liabilities which, when combined with a superior quality of intellect in an individual, make it more probable that he will make his mark and affect his age, than if his temperament were less neurotic. (James, 1929:23-24)

We have seen as well how Underhill considered that a mobile threshold of consciousness "may make a man a genius, a lunatic, or a saint" (1960:62), and that "mystics have...extreme susceptibility to suggestions and impressions which is characteristic of artistic and creative types" (1960:364). Dabrowski, as one might expect given his clinical background, exercises more care in speaking of mental illness and distinguishes between psychosis, which he considers rarely has a positive outcome, and psychoneuroses which in his opinion are not forms of illness at all, but characteristic of the essential stages of disintegration in the evolution of personality towards a higher (more mature and adaptable) form of integration (1972:163).[70] Regarding the connection between psychoneurosis and creativity Dabrowski contends that,

Psychoneurotics...create works of culture because of their high moral sensitivity, their capacity for introspection, their ability to estimate their own and other people's attitudes, and...because of their susceptibility to the processes of disintegration, especially of those of multilevel disintegration .

In connection with these remarks, it is pertinent to quote a passage from Proust's novel *Le Coté de Guermantes*: "All that is great we owe to neurotics. They, and no others, have founded religions, created masterpieces..." (Dabrowski, 1964:80-81)

In particular Dabrowski notes the visionary activity that the mentally ill and creative persons have in common (the same sort of thing that one often finds in mystics as well):

Hyperaesthesia and hyperalgesia, occurring in many mental diseases, may reflect general sensitivity or periodic hypersensitivity, which, like depression, may play a positive role in development (objective, critical attitude). A feeling of estrangement and freshness of sensations in relation to various types of stimuli may have creative significance and is often observed among poets. Illusions are characteristic not only of the mentally sick but also of the majority of writers, painters, and people with highly developed emotions and capacity for phantasy. Furthermore simple and conjugated hallucinations have often been observed in prominent people in the period of their mental diseases (Beers, Mayer, Kandinsky) and in other outstanding people who were not suspected of such disease (Wagner, Wladislaw Dawid). (Dabrowski, 1967:78-79)

If "saints" can be taken as roughly equivalent to mystics, then, in a passage from the preface to the 1977 presentation of his theory, Dabrowski can be understood as making an explicit connection between both creatives and mystics, and mental illness:

On the basis of detailed biographical studies, I saw that the geniuses and saints of mankind manifested psychoneurotic processes, even borderline psychosis, combined with the highest level of experience, as well as understanding and attaining the highest levels of reality. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:xii)

Thus it would seem as though the peculiar temperaments noted by James, Underhill and Dabrowski as predispositional of mental illness, creativity and mysticism are similar to each other.[71] However, as stated above in the analyses of their respective theoretical positions, these authors do not suggest reasons why some become mystics while others become creatives or mentally ill. Notably absent in the discussion of causes by James and Underhill are environmental factors. Dabrowski, as we have seen, does see a role for some environmental conditions which facilitate the development of personality, but he has little to say about which environmental factors contribute *specifically* to a creative, much less a mystical, vocation. Further in spite of the fact that he indicates a role for certain environmental influences in therapy, he holds the opinion that there is little potential for growth if emotional overexcitability is absent and little that can prevent growth if it is present.

Models of factors predispositional of the mystical life

Mention, if not extensive discussion, of factors predispositional of the mystical life (including environmental factors) can be traced to works written at about the same time as the *Varieties* and *Mysticism*. In 1901 the Jesuit priest, Augustin Poulain, in his then popular treatise on mystical theology, written in part as a manual for spiritual direction, describes the mystical temperament in these words:

It seems impossible to deny that certain temperaments seem more fitted for the unfolding of the mystical states. By this I mean not only the physical temperament, but moral, the turn of mind, the dispositions of the heart. Affective souls, delicate and refined, reflective and interior, of nervous temperament, almost morbid, are not all mystics; but they show some mystic tendency, in the profane sense of the word, in their bearing and their affections; and it seems that, if there are fields predisposed, as it were, for the graces of mystic prayer - and everything shows that this is so - these are such in a special degree. (Poulain, 1978:xcii)

If Poulain appears to be even slightly reticent in his proposal, it is because he realized that it was based on impressions, albeit of one well familiar with the subject, and he recognized that the details of the mystical temperament required further study. He felt the same regarding environmental factors:

The same remarks [i.e., the need for further study] apply with regard to the influence of the environment, of reading, of exterior circumstances on the blossoming (or atrophy) of the mystic graces. This influence is not always sensible, but it often is so, just like that of temperament... (Poulain, 1978:xcii)

Access to reading (presumably spiritual reading), then, is one of Poulain's environmental factors. He also mentions another:

Are these favoured persons to be met with in such and such particular surroundings?....

These states are more frequent in religious communities, and especially in enclosed Orders. It is clear that a life of recollection [i.e., as would be practised in an enclosed order] would be favourable to the graces of interior prayer. (Poulain, 1978:520)

Thus Poulain indicates a temperamental factor, one which is important for James and Underhill as well, and one that appears to be similar to Dabrowski's emotional overexcitability. Poulain's two environmental factors can be described as access to religious instruction in the form of reading and access to religious institutional support.

Seven years later, Baron Friedrich von Hugel, the Roman Catholic philosopher and student of mysticism (also the spiritual director of Evelyn Underhill), in *The mystical element of religion*, describes the mystical temperament in the following manner:

...a certain special degree of at least potential psycho-physical sensitiveness and adaptability must be

taken to be, not the productive cause, but a necessary condition for the exercise of any considerable range and depth of mind and will, and hence of sanctity in general; and that the actual aiming at, and gradual achievement of, sanctity...spiritualizes and further defines this sensitiveness, as the instrument, material, and expression of the soul's work. (von Hugel, 1961, Vol.II:41)

Here is not only something like emotional overexcitability, but, in embryo, something akin to Dabrowski's idea that the differentiation of emotional overexcitability gives birth to various developmental dynamisms. But immediately after the passage just cited, von Hugel seems to identify an additional factor, at least implicitly, which closely resembles imaginational overexcitability:

And this work of the heroic soul will necessarily consist, in great part, in attending to, calling up... fixing and ever renovating certain few great dominant ideas, and in attempting by every means to saturate the imagination with images and figures...as so many incarnations of these great verities.

We get thus....a spiritual mono-ideism and auto-suggestion....But, at this stage, these activities and their psycho-physical concomitants and results will...be no more abnormal than is the mono-ideism and auto-suggestion of the mathematician, the tactician, and the constructive statesman. (von Hugel, 1961, Vol.II:41)

The mystical element of religion is in fact a study of the mystic, Catherine of Genoa, and with respect to Catherine's pre-mystical environment, von Hugel notes that "she had in her room a Pietà, a representation of the Dead Christ in His Mother's arms, and we are told how deeply it affected her every time she entered this room" (1908, Vol. I:99). Catherine's older sister joined an Augustinian convent and she wanted to do likewise, but was forced into a marriage, which turned out to be miserable for her (1908, Vol.I:100-102). Thus in his selection of salient events in the life of Catherine of Genoa, von Hugel has indicated two predispositional environmental factors: (1) the formative effect of her sister's religious modelling and of religious images; and (2) disappointment and frustration at finding herself caught in a situation in which there was neither happiness nor meaning.

In 1925 James Leuba's *The psychology of religious mysticism* was published, with a more detailed account of factors predispositional of a mystical vocation than had hitherto been available. In the chapter entitled, "The motivation of Christian mysticism," Leuba identifies a temperamental disposition that is expressed in the needs for self-affirmation, self-esteem, cherishing, affection, moral support and peace (or freedom from inner conflict). A comparison of these needs with the detailed description of emotional overexcitability provided by Michael Piechowski (1979) will readily lead to the conclusion that what Leuba has in mind is a trait that is like the peculiar temperament identified by so many other students of mysticism. Leuba also speaks of a susceptibility to hypnotic influence, suggesting that Madame Guyon's relationship with God was essentially one of nonrational hypnotic rapport. There is evidence to suggest that hypnotic susceptibility is related to the capacity for imaginative absorption, or the possession of something similar to imaginational overexcitability.[72]

With respect to the environment, he recognizes the influence of an early childhood religious formation, referring, among others, to the example of Henry Suso who, guided by his pious mother, entered the Dominican Order at the age of thirteen. Once a Dominican, Leuba points out, Suso eventually came under the influence of Meister Eckhardt. In other words accompanying access to religious institutional support can be access to a spiritual mentor relationship which reinforces the early childhood religious training and channels it more specifically in the direction of the mystical life.

However perhaps the two most original contributions made by Leuba were his moral imperative factor and his unconscious auto-eroticism factor. Leuba argues that when someone fails to respond to what their reason tells them is their moral duty, then the still small voice of conscience will issue a moral command. However few are so disciplined as to be able to respond to the command by a sheer act of the will. Other attractions counter the command, and hence a state of inner conflict occurs. Mystics are those persons, who because of their piety, attribute the command to an external agent; and therefore find themselves more highly motivated, due to their desire not to disappoint the external agent, to conform to the moral command that issues from their consciences. Leuba does not discuss the sources of the mystics' piety, but there are at least two possibilities: childhood caretakers and mystical institutions.

Leuba's argument that mysticism satisfies, albeit often unconsciously, frustrated erotic needs is both developed and compelling. First he argues, based on the work of Havelock Ellis and Freud, among others, that the sex-impulse "is originally a function of the whole body" and remains so to some degree. Second he states that sexual arousal can occur as much through representations as through physical stimuli, and in fact the former may replace the latter and even arouse some persons to the point of orgasm. At which point he cites an amusing case, from Ellis, of a 57-year old, "somewhat eccentric preacher:"

"My whole nature," writes this man, "goes out so to some persons, and they thrill and stir me so that I have had an emission while sitting by them with no thought of sex, only the gladness of soul found its way out thus, and a glow of health suffused the whole body..." (Leuba, 1972:140)

Leuba then cites Ellis' comment to the effect that,

"This man's condition may certainly be considered somewhat morbid...but a similar state of things exists often in normal women [sic], probably because of sexual repression, and in individuals who are in a general state of normal health." (Leuba, 1972:140)

At this point it is only two short steps to a comprehensive explanation of mysticism in terms of frustrated longings. The first is to make the point that persons experiencing sexual gratification may

be, unlike the eccentric preacher, totally unaware of "the participation of their sex-organs and may, therefore, regard their delight as `spiritual.'" This may seem a little strained at first, but Leuba cites some interesting cases, again from Ellis, in which this is exactly the situation. The second step is to advance the proposition that, "auto-erotic phenomena are obviously more likely to occur in persons deprived of normal sexual satisfaction..." and as Leuba notes, "Not one of the prominent representatives of mysticism lived a normal married life."

This theory is a developed and a compelling one, at least as an account of the origin of mystical experience. Leuba, however is content to leave his analysis there because he is committed to a single hermeneutical stance - the one referred to by Paul Ricoeur as a "hermeneutic of suspicion." If however, one adopts in addition a "hermeneutic of recovery," then questions of function and especially of teleology become germane. Because he is so preoccupied with exposing mysticism as a species of false consciousness, Leuba gives no consideration to the possibility of mystical experience leading to a positive *telos*. Leuba's theory also has another, perhaps not insurmountable, problem - it is too comprehensive. By that I mean that it will also explain why persons who are religious and who have difficulty entering into satisfactory sexual relations, whether married or single, undertake, and enjoy, nonmystical activities of a religious sort. Another way to put it is: why are some able to satisfy, and do satisfy, their sexual needs in mystical experiences, while others cannot, or will not?

In his introductory text to the psychology of religion, Walter H. Clark (1958:278-284) describes a set of predispositional factors, which he calls roots, to account for the mystical life. These are based on his general impressions of primary and secondary sources, including Leuba. Clark's factors are as follows: (1) a temperamental trait of "sensitivity to all stimuli;" (2) religious tradition and the "temper of the times;" (3) "self-hypnosis and psychosomatic suggestion;"[73] (4) sexual frustration; and (5) an escapist desire for security.

The first factor is a temperamental one. Clark notes, clearly drawing on James and explicitly recognizing Underhill, that mystics are more likely to belong to the category of the sick soul and that suffering played a significant role in their lives, especially during "the Mystic Way of Purgation" and the "Dark Night of the Soul." This says Clark must be at least in part, because of "the mystic's... general sensitivity to all stimuli." In the context of his discussion of the factor of "sensitivity to all stimuli" he makes note of what I feel should be considered a separate, environmental, factor:

Yet there is no doubt but that external circumstance has often played a part. For example, with the exception of St. Catherine of Siena, all of the women mentioned above [i.e., Antoinette Bourignan, Madame Guyon and Catherine of Genoa] suffered from unhappy home situations. These difficult situations acted on sensitive personalities. (Clark, 1958:279)

The reason why Clark treats emotional sensitivity, or "sensitivity to all stimuli," together with environmental stress is undoubtedly because he perceives these two as reinforcing each other.

Clark's third factor is "self-hypnosis and psychosomatic suggestion." As indicated above, hypnotizability (or suggestiveness) is related to imaginational overexcitability. Thus the predisposing temperament for mystics, according to Clark, is one of emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement.

Clark has two environmental factors, in addition to the already mentioned difficult home situation. One of these is religious tradition (or training); he points out that Teresa of Avila, as one might expect of a Christian, has a vision of the trinity. The second environmental factor is sexual frustration, although Clark offers the following cautionary note (in which he clearly has Leuba in mind):

...One must recognize that this does not necessarily vitiate the value of a mystic's life and insights. It is easy to manufacture a picture bordering on the sensational by snatching ejaculations out of context and reading into them what must be largely conjecture....Nevertheless, no matter how much he may deplore the necessity, every mystic is irrevocably tied to a body. It would be strange if bodily conditions did not in some way affect its possessor's experience, and one of these conditions is most certainly sex. (Clark, 1958:282-283)

Here Clark has made an important point - i.e, an analysis of the origins of a phenomenon is not an evaluation of its results or effects. James made the same point when he said that mystical experiences were to be judged, not by their origins, but by their fruit.

Clark's final factor is "the childish desire for security and escape," for which he is indebted to a psychoanalytic study by Ostow and Scharfstein (1954). He cites some of the examples provided by these authors: e.g., Plotinus' love of returning to the breast of his nurse and the Buddhist goal of nirvana as an "oceanic reunion." Clark concludes by contrasting the psychoanalytic approach with that of Underhill:

...Evelyn Underhill's [interpretation]...looks on mysticism as a life of intense positive activity. Nevertheless we must accept dependency and escape as one of the many roots of the mystic life. It is not surprising if in some cases it becomes the chief one. (Clark, 1958:284)

I believe that Clark's point here is that not everything that gives the impression of being mystical is, from a psychological perspective, developmentally progressive.[74] Nevertheless as he himself indicates in the passage previously cited, evaluation should not be confused with origins.

What is important is not that the motivation for some mystics is, at least in part, dependency needs or escapism, but rather the extent to which the mystic remains dependent or escapist. My argument is that while some of the factors that foster a vocation to the mystical life are also those that appear to be predispositional of mental illness, not all of them are, and that in many of those persons considered

mystics, their initial disturbances are not only overcome but are part of a process of growth which bears a marked resemblance to the kind of personality development described by psychologists such as Kazimierz Dabrowski.

Spangler's study of mystics and schizophrenics

John Spangler (1961) undertook a comparison of 25 mystics with 25 schizophrenics in order, he hoped, to discover causal factors in the lives of mystics. Because his study is systematic and empirical, I have chosen to use it as a basis for a model of significant factors that predispose one to a creative, mystical or dysfunctional mode of living. Initially Spangler designed a pilot project in which he examined 10 mystics, for whom he had access to either autobiographical data (in the case of six of the mystics) or a minimum of two biographical sources (in the case of the remaining four). The period prior to the first mystical experiences was analyzed by two investigators, who divided the source material into units and classified these according to the categories of the need-press theory of Henry Murray.

"The *press* of an object [situation, relationship, etc]," according to Murray (1938:121), "is what it can *do to the subject* or *for the subject* - the power that it has to affect the well-being of the subject in one way or another." Examples of the effects an object might have on a subject are indicated by Murray (1938:117-118) in the following questions: "does the object physically harm the subject, nourish him, excite him, quiet him, exalt him, depreciate him, restrain, guide or inform him?" Thus environmental factors such as modelling, information-giving, reinforcement, etc constitute press. Needs, on the other hand, are products of the combination of innate predispositions and press (Murray, 1938:123ff).

Those press and needs that Spangler found to be present in the lives of the ten mystics, prior to their first mystical experiences, formed the basis of a revised set of categories used in an examination of 25 other mystics and 25 schizophrenics.[75] Spangler chose most of his 25 mystics from among the 112 mystics cited by Underhill in *Mysticism*. The others were mystics from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Underhill's study was of mystics who lived up to, and including, the eighteenth century only). His selection was determined by the availability of autobiographical and biographical material. The 25 schizophrenics were chosen from the population of the Boston State Hospital. The selection contained the same sex-ratio as the mystics (18 males and seven females) and in order to control for intelligence, on the assumption that the mystics would have possessed superior intellects, his sample of schizophrenics contained those with the highest intelligence quotients available (an average of 110 on the Wechsler-Bellvue Scale).

Spangler's results are summarized by him in these words:

Data collected show that both mystics and schizophrenics came from insecure environments, but where mystics received some appreciation and recognition by others the schizophrenics did not.

Partially because of this, the mystics, having a higher self-image, tempered their needs for withdrawal with needs for outward orientation. It seems that [the press of] Religious Training led them to a relationship with him who they felt would never fail them, God; this relationship, in turn, became an avenue through which to relate to the world. (Spangler, 1961:84)

From this passage, and others in Spangler's dissertation, I infer three basic predispositional factors: early environmental stress, presence or absence of early support from others and presence or absence of religious training. It is the first factor, according to Spangler, that both mystics and schizophrenics have in common:

...both mystics and schizophrenics are products of environments that do not provide security. For one reason or another in nearly every case there was some element of insecurity in family life. In addition, both groups have experienced those press that engender a lack of trust in society and material things. The groups both felt the influence of rejection, and many of each group had long or recurring illnesses. Many experienced the lack or loss of possessions or companionship [including the death of close relatives]. All of these things together have fostered feelings of dependence in both groups.

Another result of the unstable environment in both groups is the development of strong superegos...

Both mystics and schizophrenics have a need to isolate themselves from society...Again, the possible genesis of this need is to be found in the unstable and insecure environment common to both. (Spangler, 1961:80)

In this factor of an insecure or unstable environment Spangler finds an explanation for at least two aspects of the inner turmoil experienced by many mystics - the devaluation of the "material world" (or the usual social world) and the need for isolation or withdrawal from it. A point not noted by Spangler is that the need for dependence which is fostered by such an insecure environment would also predispose many future mystics toward the security of a religious total institution (e.g., a monastery or convent). Spangler also found some important differences between his two groups:

The only subdivision under [the press of] Family Insupport which is directed at the individual is [press of] Capricious Discipline, and very few mystics had any evidence of it. All the other subdivisions of [the press of] Family Insupport are of the nature of impersonal happenings or circumstances....Press that would indicate a harsh, punitive environment... are missing from the set of factors associated with the mystics.

Elements of nurturance seemed to play a much larger role in the environments of the mystics... Parental goals and aims for the mystic-to-be, represented by [the press of] Dominance-Nurturance and [the press of] Dominance, Coercion, Prohibition ([in the press of] Religious Training), are part of

the mystics' backgrounds but are missing from the environments of the schizophrenics. Thus the mystics have much more opportunity to receive indications of the concern and the ideals of others than do the schizophrenics.

An element of appreciation by others is part of the mystics' early environments, but there is none in the schizophrenics' backgrounds. (Spangler, 1961:81-82)

Thus the insecure background factor is often qualified in the case of the mystics by the presence of emotional support in childhood, whereas for the schizophrenics this is not usually the case. There is also a *qualitative* difference in the type of insecurity experienced by the two groups:

Although typically both the schizophrenic and the mystic have had insecure childhoods, the insecurities stem from seemingly different sources and are of seemingly significantly different types. The natural part of the mystic's environment, that part beyond human control, is undependable, i.e., there are accidents, illnesses, dangers, misfortunes; likewise, the human part is unpredictable, i.e., there are elements of harshness and rejection as well as elements of appreciation and nurturance. The natural part of the schizophrenic's environment is undependable also; but, in contrast, the human part lacks positive factors. None of the...positive factors...appeared in the background of the typical schizophrenic; they all appeared in the background of the mystic. (Spangler, 1961:136-137)

The two groups can also be distinguished by the religious training factor. Mystics generally received religious training, reinforcement and modelling, and were expected to demonstrate religious attitudes and beliefs, as well as engage in religious behaviour. Not only did fewer schizophrenics receive such training, when they did it was qualitatively different: "In the main, religion appears to have been a family-wide concern in the mystic's background and something imposed upon the schizophrenic" (Spangler, 1961:136).

I use Spangler's findings on the role of the environment in the lives of mystics and schizophrenics as a base for the elaboration of my model of predisposing factors in mystics, creatives and the mentally ill. Two other factors will be added to the model, however, since they seem to be highly relevant: (1) the presence (or absence) and nature of institutional support; and (2) temperament. Spangler makes no mention of religious institutions, since his concern is with family environment, but almost all the mystics in his sample either joined monasteries or convents or were members of mystical groups. They also had access to services from religious specialists (notably spiritual directors or mentors) who were themselves supported by religious institutions, specifically religious orders.

And although Spangler does not comment upon the initial origin of needs in neonate temperament, the high number of emotional needs found in his group of mystics[76] is in accord with the impression of other investigators of mysticism - i.e., it is suggestive of emotional overexcitability. On the other hand, the one need that could be considered to correspond to imaginational overexcitability, the need

for imaginality, was found to be normally distributed among mystics. In other words Spangler's study did not find mystics to be in possession of an above average need for imaginality. However this result must be interpreted in the context of the contrary impression of most other students of mysticism. Certainly, in James and Underhill for example, something akin to imaginational overexcitability is less significant than emotional overexcitability, nevertheless its presence, as well as its function, has been noted.

CHAPTER VIII

TEMPERAMENTAL AND EARLY ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Major factors in the lives of mystics, creatives and the mentally ill

In the next three chapters I will provide various forms of evidence suggestive of a set of five predisposing factors in the lives of mystics, creatives and the mentally ill. The five factors are: (1) the temperamental traits of emotional and imaginational overexcitability; (2) some form of acute or prolonged loss or situational insecurity, instability or frustration; (4) the type (if any) of emotional support in childhood; (3) the type (if any) of formation in life goals; (5) the type (if any) of specialized institutional support in adolescence and adulthood. It is not suggested that these are the only factors operative, even in a general way, much less in the life of any one mystic. But I believe that they provide a means for better understanding the process of how one becomes a mystic, and thus can be used as an tool for examining personal documents of mystics, and could also with further refinement serve as a basis for generating predictive hypotheses.

It must be understood, however, that in any given life these factors are interrelated. A prolonged or acute situation of insecurity, instability or frustration can, and does, occur in the lives of persons who do not become mystical, creative or mentally ill. People are more likely to become one of the three if their temperaments are characterized by emotional and imaginational overexcitability. Which of the three one is likely eventually to become will in turn be a function of the presence or absence of emotional support in childhood, the type (if any) of life-orientation received and the type (if any) of institutional support accessible. For example, someone with strong psychic overexcitability, who has received a great deal of affection in childhood, and who has been formed in a particular religious tradition, when confronted by a situational reverse, e.g., the death of a close relative or friend, will tend to react strongly (in Dabrowskian terms, will overreact), but probably will not lose hope completely (given her or his background of emotional support), but instead will likely interpret the event as requiring a response consistent with her or his religious training, and if there is an institution

accessible which encourages the mystical life, and to which she or he has been sensitized (through religious training), then she or he may be inclined to join that institution, either in anticipation of, or subsequent to, a mystical awakening, and there possibly embrace engage in mystical struggle.[77] But I suggest that where there is a social climate favorable to the mystical life, persons with above average sensitivity, who have received adequate emotional support and a religious orientation in childhood, and who have also encountered a major loss will be at least tempted to get involved, providing other options (e.g., of a creative nature) are not more appealing.

Not only are the factors interrelated, but they can be present in different degrees. For example, a capacity for imaginative absorption is not just present or absent. Like most psychological traits, it is probably normally distributed in the population,[78] and so will be found to be slightly, moderately or strongly present. Similarly the *results* of the factors also range along a continuum. There are outstanding creative geniuses and those who are recognized as having a creative flair. There are chronic schizophrenics and persons of schizoid tendency, sometimes referred to as sizothymia (Cattell, 1965:66-67). Likewise there are classic mystics and those with mystical proclivities. In any given large urban centre of population, the latter number perhaps in the thousands. These are persons who study mystical texts, meditate, and associate with others of a like inclination. They usually do not, however, engage in any form of intense asceticism.

Finally it must be said that the results of the five factors are not pure types. Few are the mystics who lack some measure of creative ability. Most of the known ones are so because they have written about their experiences, in prose or poetry. Those interpreters of mysticism who have desired to reduce it to mental illness have had no trouble finding evidence to support their claims. One may regret their insensitivity to other aspects of mysticism, as did James when he decried "medical materialism," but that is another matter. Even the apologists for the mystical life generally agree that mystics have something in common with the mentally ill. And the overlap between creatives and the mentally ill has been the subject of many studies. However in order to adequately describe each of the factors, and to demonstrate their relevance, they will be considered separately.

The temperament factor

Scholars of mysticism, notably James and Underhill, as we have seen above, have remarked on the fact that mystics seem to possess two characteristic temperamental traits: emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative absorption. Dabrowski's terms, for traits similar to these, are emotional and imaginational overexcitability, respectively. Both have also noted a third trait which has some connection with the intellect, but as it is not considered to be invariably present, it will not be included in the factor model.[79]

Emotional overexcitability has been called "insane temperament," "exalted emotional sensibility," the

"psychopathic temperament" and the "neurotic temperament," by William James; "great emotional power," "the abnormal and highly sensitized state of mind," "thresholds of exceptional mobility," "extreme sensitiveness," "that mobile or `unstable' type" and "extreme nervous instability" by Evelyn Underhill;" "affective souls" and "nervous temperament" by Augustin Poulain; and "potential psycho-physical sensitiveness" by Friedrich von Hügel. Passages indicative of emotional overexcitability can be found in many autobiographies and biographies of mystics, as for example in the life of Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897). The following is an excerpt from one of her mothers letters to her mother's sister, cited in Thérèse's autobiography:

She [Thérèse] becomes emotional very easily. As soon as she does anything wrong, everybody must know it. Yesterday, not meaning to do so, she tore off a small piece of wall paper. She wanted to tell her father immediately, and you would have pitied her to see her anxiety. (Martin, 1976:18)

This incident is an example of the need for Blameavoidance and Superego that Spangler found was present in the early lives of 23 out of the 25 mystics he investigated.[80] As mentioned above Spangler also found several other needs, reminiscent of emotional overexcitability in his selection of mystics: need for Harmavoidance (in 9 cases); need for Succorance (in 21 cases); need for Abasement (in 21 cases); need for Deference (in 19 cases); need for Seclusion (in 19 cases); need for Rejection (in 22 cases); and need for Positive Cathexis (in 20 cases).

Under the subheading of "Spiritual growth and emotional sensitivity," Mary Jo Meadow and Richard Kahoe (1984) in a psychology of religion textbook, which is one of the most comprehensive and thorough works of its kind thus far, review and summarize a number of opinions on the subject:

Many religious "geniuses" appear to have suffered psychological disturbances. Does this mean that one must go through neurosis to develop spiritually? Fromm argues that the "vast majority of people in our culture are well adjusted because they have given up the battle for independence sooner and more radically than the neurotic person" (Fromm, 1950, p.80). By adjusting themselves to the expectations of society and others, they avoided the pain necessary to develop full humanness....

Some theorists see the capacity for neurosis as a valuable human asset. "Perhaps the most significant sign of a healthy religion is precisely the result of this neurotic capacity, which constitutes [human] superiority over the brutes" (Miller, 1965, p.296). (Meadow & Kahoe, 1984:380-381)

A bit overstated perhaps, and the moralistic tone of the citation from Fromm detracts somewhat from the point, but the fact that these quotations and others of a similar kind (from James and Mowrer) appear in what is intended to be a standard psychology of religion text indicates that emotional sensitivity is reasonably well accepted as having a role to play in the production of "religious geniuses." Lest anyone infer that emotional sensitivity is identical to neurosis the authors end their

review with the following statement:

These theorists do not mean that one must be a diagnosed neurotic to be religious, but that a sufficient sensitivity to values and inner discord makes one capable of both deep religiousness and neurotic suffering. (Meadow & Kahoe, 1984:381)

The second temperamental trait observed in mystics is that of imaginational overexcitability. Both James (1929:8) and Underhill (1960:272) make reference to it. An example of imaginational overexcitability is recorded in the life of Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952).[81] As a small boy he was taught to sit and meditate in front of a picture of the family guru:

His picture had a surprising influence over my life. As I grew, the thought of the master grew with me. In meditation I would often see his photographic image emerge from its small frame and, taking a living form sit before me. When I attempted to touch the feet of the luminous body, it would change and again become the picture. (Yogananda, 1973:9)

There is some research data indicative of a relationship between imaginational overexcitability and mysticism. Hood (1973) found that those who entered into a greater depth of hypnotic trance scored higher on his mystical experience scale; and Spanos, Rivers and Gottlieb (1978) found that depth of meditation experience correlated with two measures of imaginative capacity.[82] An association between hypnotizability and imaginative involvement has been found by Hilgard (1979).

Mystics themselves have sometimes been conscious of the peculiar temperament found in those with a vocation to the mystical life. In words reminiscent of James' discussion of the healthy-minded and the sick-souled, Swami Vivekananda explains that,

There are two sorts of persons in the world - the one strong-nerved, quiet, yielding to nature, not given to much imagination, yet good, kind, sweet, etc. For such is this world - they alone are born to be happy. There are others, again, with *high-strung nerves, tremendously imaginative*, with *intense feelings* - always going high, and coming down the next moment. For them there is no happiness. The second will have to run between ecstasy and misery. But of these alone geniuses are made. There is some truth in a recent theory that genius is a sort of madness.

Now persons of this class, if they want to be great, must fight to be so - clear the decks for battle. No encumbrance - no marriage - no children, no undue attachment to anything except the one idea, and live and die for that. I am a person of this sort. (Vivekananda,1953:165)

Vivekananda sees no happiness for those who are emotionally sensitive and highly imaginative, but they can achieve some form of greatness or eminence if they are willing to strive toward that end with single-mindedness and discipline. His statement that the same temperament underlies genius in general and madness is one shared by a number of scholars and researchers.

Emotional overexcitability seems to be an important factor in the personality of creative persons, according to Kawczak (1970:18-20), who reviews evidence establishing a connection between creativity and emotional overexcitability (as expressed in nervousness, infantile traits, neurosis, etc) and concludes that,

In summary, on the basis of clinical experience, testing, observation as well as longitudinal evaluation, on the basis of the biographies of eminent personalities, we find a fairly high positive correlation between mental disintegration, nervousness and psychoneurosis on the one hand, and accelerated development and creative abilities on the other. (Kawczak, 1970:19-20)

A number of studies have shown correlations between creativity and personality traits that are expressive of emotional overexcitability. In a study of 12 women Rollo May (1977:351) ranked his subjects in order according to the degree of originality they showed in response to the Rorschach and found those (except one) in the high or moderately high original response category were also high to moderately high in trait anxiety. Barron (1980) conducted an investigation of 56 productive professional writers. They measured high on tests of aspiration level, range of interests and ego strength - all of which is to be expected. But they also had scores significantly above average on the MMPI Schizophrenia and Hysteria scales. Similar results are reported for a study of 144 eminent researchers in physics, biology and psychology. Cattell and Butcher summarize these as follows:

At the 1 per cent significance level, researchers are more sizothyme [tendency toward schizophrenia], less emotionally stable, more self-sufficient, more bohemian, and more radical than are successful administrators and teachers. Compared next with the general college population from which they come... researchers are again more sizothyme and more intelligent, more self-sufficient, more withdrawn, more paranoid and anxious and more inhibited...

When we consider second order factors [fundamental personality traits], the most striking fact is that the researcher is uniformly lower on all primary personality factors involved in the second-order *extraversion* factor. (Cattell & Butcher, 1982:319)

The greater introversion of eminent researchers is consistent with the fact that those who possess emotional overexcitability, i.e., are relatively more sensitive to stimuli, have a need to reduce the amount of stimulation they receive.

There are also a number of studies that failed to find a correlation between higher rates of anxiety, instability or nervous tension and creativity (Drevdahl, 1956). Cattell and Butcher (1982:315) state that while "High anxiety and excitability are common...full-blown neurosis [is] quite rare." And in this remark lies a clue to a possible explanation for the apparent inconsistency in findings. Many, if not most, measures that are taken as indicators of emotional sensitivity contain items that reflect dysfunctional thinking or behaviour. In the context of a review of studies of young creatives, Dellas and Gaier (1972:352) comment that, "Consistent with the evidence gathered from adults, emotional instability also appears controlled in the young creatives." Creatives from an early age are characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity, but they are not dysfunctional - they are able to channel their nervous energy into projects of various kinds.

Although the presence of emotional overexcitability in creatives can be inferred from the studies cited above, they were not specifically intended to measure this trait. Similarly there are few direct measures of imaginational overexcitability in creatives even though Arieti (1976:30) recognizes the presence of a "very active intense imagination" in creative persons, hinting at a genetic origin for the trait, and Sinnott (1982:108) maintains that imagination is what makes creativity possible. However one study of intellectually and artistically gifted subjects that did directly measure psychic overexcitability (including both emotional and imaginational) is that of Piechowski, Silverman, Cunningham and Falk (1982).[83] These researchers describe their subjects as,

...adults identified as gifted by membership in Mensa, high GRE scores (in the upper third of national norms), or known outstanding academic accomplishment, and artists who practised various forms of art professionally or as a seriously followed avocation (they include a writer, a dancer, a rock singer, a classical singer, a poet, a film producer, a weaver, etc.). The N of the intellectually gifted was 31, the N of the artists was 13. (Piechowski, et al., 1982:2)

The subjects, along with a control group of 42 graduate students, were administered the Overexcitabilities Questionnaire, a 21-item free-response instrument, and the results were that,

The intellectually gifted are significantly higher than graduate students on intellectual [overexcitability] (p=.0001) and emotional [overexcitability] (p=.01). They tend also to be higher in terms of sensual and imaginational [overexcitabilities]....

The artists are much higher (p=.005) than graduate students on imaginational and emotional [overexcitabilities]; they are also higher in terms of sensual [p=.012] and intellectual [p=.032] [overexcitabilities]....The difference [in sensual overexcitability] may be interpreted as the artists' greater awareness of sensuous qualities and greater aliveness of sensual experiencing. But their significantly higher score on intellectual [overexcitability] underlines what they have in common with

the intellectually gifted - a questioning mind. (Piechowski, et al., 1982:3-4)

Efforts to determine the etiology of neurosis and schizophrenia have led to a description of an underlying predisposition that is very similar to the emotional sensitivity that characterizes mystics and creative persons. After a review of the research to date Florence Schumer concludes that anxiety patients,

...do indeed differ from normal subjects in their tendency to experience higher levels of autonomic arousal and in maintaining these levels over more prolonged periods before returning, if at all, to basal levels. Prolonged experiences of these heightened levels may produce a chronic anxiety condition, and some evidence exists that there may be constitutional elements in this predisposition to remain at high levels. (Schumer, 1983:224)

A similar disposition is also found in schizophrenics, in spite of the fact that they sometimes display a flattening of affect:

Of all the stimuli from the environment impinging on our sense organs, we normally perceive and attend to only a few,...mechanisms...suppress our conscious attention to peripheral sensations....In schizophrenia ...there is a defect in this sensory filtering system, and the patient fails in the effort to select and control attention. This finding concurs with the accounts given by patients who report over-flooding by too many stimuli....Levels of arousal are high in anxious, worrying and tense people, but less predictably, they are also usually high in schizophrenics, who frequently do not seem to be anxious in the same way. Moreover, the levels of arousal are particularly high in the withdrawn, chronic patients who at first sight appear to be apathetic and sluggish....it could be that the patients' state represents an attempt to protect themselves from the high arousal or extreme anxiety brought about by an overwhelming barrage of stimuli from the outside... (Smith, 1982:103-104)

Mednick (1958), a pioneer in high-risk longitudinal schizophrenia research, came to the conclusion that preschizophrenics, or those at risk for schizophrenia, have a low threshold for anxiety arousal, a slow recovery rate and a high generalization reactiveness. Typical schizophrenic behaviour, such as withdrawal, thought-stopping and bizarre associations, are means undertaken in the hope of controlling the high levels of anxiety experienced.

An investigation of children, separated from their schizophrenic mothers, and who did not themselves become schizophrenic, lends support to the hypothesis that a common temperament may underlie both schizophrenia and creativity. Karlsson (1966) found that the children, who grew up in adopted homes, were spontaneous, worked at highly creative jobs and followed the most imaginative hobbies. Heston (1966) also did a study of 47 adopted children of schizophrenic mothers. Thirty-one of these children suffered from mental illness, but only five became schizophrenic. The other 26 were mentally

handicapped, neurotic or had various personality disorders. The results of the Heston study suggest that the temperamental disposition is for a range of disorders and not just for one specific condition. Even more interesting is the fact that the remaining sixteen children, who did not become ill, were found to possess musical talent or to demonstrate some other creative ability, or else were found to be deeply religious. Lehman (1966) has suggested that a "schizoid" condition may be the basis of either creativity or schizophrenia. Smith summarizes his position as follows:

...schizoid people are highly sensitive to sensory stimuli, and are bombarded by them more richly than individuals of different make-up (whether the differences are genetic or environmental in origin, or, almost certainly both). Then, if they are able to sort out, think about and act upon this richness of experience while protecting themselves from being submerged, they will be at an advantage in producing original creative work; however, those of a different mental capacity might become overwhelmed, and succumb to disintegration associated with abnormal distractibility, inability to distinguish between inner and outer experiences, and idiosyncratic styles of thinking. They might in fact become schizophrenic. (Smith, 1982:105)

Of course, from the perspective of Dabrowski's theory of personality and on the basis of the testimony of numerous mystics, there may be a third option: schizoid persons might become overwhelmed and disintegrate, but instead of becoming schizophrenic, they might undertake an active role in the reorganization of their personalities.

With respect to imaginational overexcitability, Smith (1982:29-35) points out that auditory and visual hallucinations are common in schizophrenics and in other forms of mental illness, and even notes the similarity in form to the visions and auditions of mystics. The difference between the two groups, says Smith, is that the content of schizophrenic hallucinations is rather banal. Another, perhaps not unrelated, difference is that the hallucinations of schizophrenics contribute to their malfunctioning:

...hallucinations...in the case of the schizophrenic are most easily understood psychologically, as deriving from a mental state of intense withdrawal and self-absorption. This self-absorption makes mental events, that is thoughts, more vivid and less closely checked with perceptions from the outside world. Confusion arises between inner fantasy and outer reality. The patient fails to distinguish thoughts from perceptions: he has hallucinations, hearing what he calls real voices, but they are in his inner ear alone, inaudible to others. (Smith, 1982:99)

Absorption (in the case of the schizophrenics, with the self) "makes mental events...more vivid." Capacity for absorption, as we have seen, is correlated with imaginational overexcitability, and so from this passage can be inferred a relationship between the various overexcitabilities. A thought, whether based on an experience or whether retrieved from the memory, in those possessed of imaginational overexcitability becomes more vivid. In itself, this would occasion perhaps no more than fascination.

But for those who also possess emotional overexcitability, there may be a strong reaction. The nature of the reaction will likely depend on the type of thought, and that in turn is probably a function of the quantity and quality of emotional support in childhood[84] and the nature of the life-models received. Schizophrenics' hallucinations may be banal because they are centred on themselves (a result of not receiving the amount of affirmation required in childhood) and because they lack an interesting life-model with which to interpret their experience.[85] Hence temperamental traits cannot be meaningfully considered in isolation from environmental factors.

Insecurity due to loss

An environmental factor that many mystics, creatives and the mentally ill seem to share is a sense of insecurity resulting from losses that are quantitatively and qualitatively more formidable than usual. Wallace lists, and provides references for, a number of external events that induce object loss stress:

...hospitalization in infants, depression or anxiety attending geographical movement and changes in job and social status (and generally changes in role), the disaster syndrome, disillusion, and situations of cultural change. (Wallace, 1956:768)

Raphael (1983:175) gives examples of losses that might occur within the family. These are parental divorce, rejection by a parent or departure of a parent and death of a pet. She also suggests (1983:169) that an adolescent leaving home, e.g., to attend university, will experience a sense of loss.

Schneider (1984) has identified various types of change as the principle underlying events that are likely to induce a sense of loss:

Every time people take on a new role or let go of an old one, make gains in knowledge and abilities, or create new ideas, they also lose something...A child who can now walk loses opportunities to be picked up and held; a child who can read no longer has an adult to read to him or her. Being competent and successful frequently raises others' expectations, perhaps depriving people of freedoms that were experienced when there were lesser expectations. (Schneider, 1984:5)

Change, even positive change, induces a sense of loss which in turn results in stress, and if this is not relieved, the individual enters into the grieving process.

For Schneider loss is induced not only by a variety of external crises but is an inevitable consequence of human growth. Some of these losses are associated with recognized external events but others are not:

Many key developmental losses do have external events associated with them, such as the times of weaning, walking, talking, starting school, graduating, marriage, birth of a child, significant illnesses and retirement. Frequently these events are marked by societal rites of passage, which acknowledge that some change has taken place. More frequently, however, the loss is not recognized as such, and opportunities for grieving are not provided. Examples of these kinds of natural losses include the loss of opportunities to be held and rocked; the expectation of taking more responsibility for self (such as going to the toilet, feeding oneself, or asking for what is needed); the loss of a familiar body as growth spurts take place; the loss of freedom that takes place with the recognition of competency; and the losses that occur when choices of career, life-style, partners, are made. These types of losses are often only recognized retrospectively and...[with some exceptions] are rarely acknowledged by others as significant. This means that many developmentally related, natural losses are difficult to resolve. (Schneider, 1984:51)

A number of studies have been done on adolescence as an experience of mourning (A. Freud, 1958; Jacobson, 1961 & 1964; Suger, 1968; and Wolfenstein, 1969). Wolfenstein explains, in psychoanalytic terms, in what way adolescence can be considered to be equivalent to mourning:

...adolescence is a kind of trial mourning. The adolescent, subject to the necessity of seeking a nonincestuous sexual object, is for the first time forced to undergo a radical decathexis of his first loves, the parents. The process in many ways resembles mourning...There are depressed moods and nostalgic feelings for a lost past. But there is also the gain of being able to invest freed libidinal energies into new love objects and new interests. (Wolfenstein, 1969:457)

Thus it appears that the experience of loss is not limited to those relatively rare and unanticipated external events, or major crises, but is part and parcel of the normal process of development.

To what extent, and to what degree, these experiences of loss result in insecurity depends on the sensitivity of the individual in question and the quantity and quality of emotional support received within the family. As indicated above, the three groups here under investigation are characterized by emotional overexcitability and thus are more likely to react to occasions of loss with anxiety. Below it will be suggested that the extent to which anxiety is allayed by support within the family varies from one group to another. In general the families of the mentally ill provided very little emotional support and little by way of substitute interests, whereas affection or encouragement are typical of the families of mystics and creatives. In addition these last-mentioned groups had opportunities to pursue interests outside of themselves and in so doing to resolve the losses they sustained.

Spangler hypothesized that both his sample of twenty-five mystics and his comparison group of twenty-five schizophrenics would show signs of insecurity as a result of experiences of loss in childhood:

Both mystics and schizophrenics will exhibit reasons in childhood for regarding the world as unpredictable and undependable, from which circumstance we may infer insecurity in the early years. Both groups will show a distrust of the world in that they withdraw from it to find psychological satisfactions elsewhere, the mystics in what to them is the only dependable element of their environments, God, and the schizophrenics in what to them is the only dependable element, fantasy. (Spangler, 1961:58-59)

Support for the hypothesis comes from the following results of his content analyses. A press of Family Insupport was found to be present in the childhood situations of twenty-one of the twenty-five mystics and in all twenty-five of the schizophrenics.

A descriptive definition of the press of Family Insupport, as well as definitions for all the press and need categories employed by Spangler, is found in Murray (1938) and has been reproduced by Spangler in an appendix of his dissertation. The definition is as follows:

A basic necessity for physical existence is the continued presence of solid support...Loss of support is a press that always arouses fear in an infant...First it is the mother who gives the child...support...Later, father and siblings contribute to the pattern of the child's universe. Family support is exemplified by a consistent, stable, regular, dependable routine of devoted parental behaviour....We have found it convenient to distinguish [the press of] Rejection (a cold, unloving, neglectful parental attitude) from [the press of] Insupport...[since] one may find orderly stable households in which expressions of love are lacking as well as the opposite... (Spangler, 1961:144-145)

Murray supplies a number of examples of events that typify a press of Insupport:

...under Insupport we have included the chief occurrences which disrupt for the child the sameness, regularity consistency, or dependability of family life. The family's disorganization can often be attributed to disturbing social influences: financial panics, political upheavals, confusion and war...but ...The more immediate factors are: periods of separation from one or both parents...illness of a parent...death of one or both parents, discord and quarrels between the members of the family, separation or divorce of the parents, lack of congeniality with the father or mother and family poverty sufficient to arouse feelings of insecurity. (Spangler, 1961:144-145)

Murray's examples of the press of Family Insupport appear to be the same kinds of events that Wallace and Raphael have suggested induce an experience of loss.

However Murray's understanding of this press is not restricted to crises and problematic family

relations. He also includes the developmentally related natural losses that are discussed by Schneider:

The first press of Insupport is the expulsion from the womb, the second is weaning and the third comes when the child is expected to walk unaided. Later, he is pressed to wash, dress and feed himself without assistance, and subsequently it becomes necessary for him to go greater distances alone:...to pass a house where a dog will terrifyingly bark at him, to risk an encounter with a gang of toughs, to meet strangers... Thus, `growing-up' involves a graded series of removals of support, and if a firm resilient structuration of personality is to result these removals should not be too alarming or too abruptly imposed. (Spangler, 1961:145-146)

The "graded series of removals of support" seems to be rather like Schneider's developmentally related losses. If these are not too abrupt the child is usually better able to adapt to the loss, especially if it is encountered within the context of family love and understanding (Schneider, 1984:44).

As noted in a previous section of this, Spangler found that lack of such love and understanding is what characterized the schizophrenics, but not the mystics, and therefore one would expect developmentally related losses to be more likely for the former. However both groups sustained losses of the external crisis type: sixteen of the mystics and sixteen of the schizophrenics experienced the press of Illness alone (Spangler, 1961:70), which Murray defines as follows:

Frequent or prolonged illnesses may readily increase the [need for] Succorance in a child, since to be cared for in bed (spoiled by adults) re-establishes to a varying degree the infantile state of dependence... Narcisensitivity is apt to be high in children that have been sick. Lying in bed, however, may promote mental activity... (Spangler, 1961:151)

Although this was far from the only external loss found by Spangler, the loss of health would account for some of the unique features of both mystics and schizophrenics. According to Murray's theory a press of Illness should engender a need for Succorance, and in fact Spangler (1961:70) found such a need in twenty-one of the mystics. A need for Succorance, in persons whose training had predisposed them, would provide the requisite motivation for seeking consolation from a supernatural source. In those who lacked emotional support within the family and who were not provided with encouragement to pursue a creative, religious or any other ideal (as was the case for Spangler's schizophrenics) a need for Succorance would only add further to their sense of frustration. Nevertheless Spangler found that this need was present in seventeen of the schizophrenics.

Further support for Spangler's hypothesis that both groups "will exhibit reasons in childhood for regarding the world as unpredictable and undependable" comes from his finding that twenty-three mystics and twenty-one schizophrenics experienced a press of Rejection, Unconcern, Scorn.

Regarding this need Murray says,

Here we subsume all instances of lack or loss of parental love: the mother or father who does not cherish the child but instead disregards, neglects, scorns, repulses or abandons it...The original trauma may have been birth (expulsion from the womb) or weaning...In some degree [this press] is universally experienced, for if the child is to become self-reliant the parents must gradually curb the expressions of their solicitous concern. Other events, such as the birth of another child, also conspire to bring about, even in the most loving parents, a diminution of displayed devotion. (Spangler, 1961:149)

The press of Rejection, then, can be either personal (i.e., perceived to be under parental control) or impersonal (i.e., generally perceived to be not under parental control).

In a passage already cited from Spangler, he reports that in the case of the mystics rejection is of the impersonal kind. Spangler also found very little evidence for the press of Capricious Discipline or any "press that would indicate a harsh, punitive environment" among mystics (1961:81). [86] On the other hand he did find that the press of Dominance, Coercion, Prohibition was present in all twenty-five of the mystics (1961:70). This press according to Murray,

...covers all barriers to free motion and all persuasions and coercions to action as well as other modes of strong influence...Here are classed the parents who impose a definite system of social conduct: responsibilities and prohibitions. The system is mostly made up of laws that limit Autonomy, but they may be enforced without punishment, by kindly instruction and example. (Spangler, 1961:149)

That the discipline imposed upon the mystics tended to be of the "kindly instruction and example" variety is indicated by Spangler's remark in his concluding chapter regarding the nature of the religious training received by mystics:

In the main, religion appears to have been a family-wide concern in the mystic's background and something imposed upon the schizophrenic. Religion in the family of the former was a force, of the latter a form. (Spangler, 1961:136)

Spangler's conclusions regarding the experience of loss in childhood for mystics and schizophrenics is that the latter knew a form of loss that the former did not:

Although typically both the schizophrenic and the mystic have had insecure childhoods, the

insecurities stem from seemingly significantly different sources and are of significantly different types. The natural part of the mystic's environment, that part beyond human control, is undependable, i.e., there are accidents, illnesses, dangers, misfortunes; likewise, the human part is unpredictable, i.e., there are elements of harshness and rejection as well as elements of appreciation and nurturance. The natural part of the schizophrenic's environment is undependable also; but, in contrast, the human part lacks positive factors. (Spangler, 1961:136-137)

The positive factors referred to include the press of Nurturance, Indulgence and the press of Deference, Praise, Recognition. These will be considered below when the factor of emotional support and encouragement is discussed.

Of all the external losses beyond human control, the most extreme is the loss, through death, of a parent or primary caregiver. Although the press of Insupport includes such a loss Spangler did not record the number of mystics who had specifically experienced parental death, and to my knowledge, there is no available statistical data from any other source. But Weinstein and Bell, who studied the lives of 864 saints from 1000 to 1700, have the impression that the loss of a parent was frequently reported as the occasion of a conversion to the spiritual life:

One of the most prominent occasions of youthful crisis and conversion, for boys and girls, was, not surprisingly, the death of a parent. The theme is common in saints' vitae from all centuries. What modern psychologists might variously interpret as a denial reaction or survivor guilt or a feeling of abandonment, the hagiographers describe as a sudden perception of the fleetingness of life and the vanity of worldly desires. (Weinstein & Bell, 1982:53)

The authors cite several examples of the phenomenon, one of which is the case of Angela Merici:

Angela Merici [d.1540], founder of the Ursulines, was the daughter of poor parents who lived on the shores of Lake Garda. She was only ten when they died, and she soon became strongly attached to her elder sister. Three years later the sister also died. Angela was despondent, especially since her sister had died without the sacrament. Grief mingled with fear, both for herself and for her sister, until she received a vision reassuring her that her sister was among the saved. Overflowing with gratitude, Angela consecrated herself more completely to God, joining the Franciscan Tertiaries and living a life of austerity, mystical experiences, and charity. (Weinstein and Bell, 1982:55)

Of course saint is not synonymous with mystic. There are mystics who were never accepted as saints, e.g., Meister Eckhardt, and saints who are not mystics, e.g., Vincent de Paul. But most of the saints studied by Weinstein and Bell were mystics. And in spite of the fact that they were venerated by the masses for their miracle-working power, the saints cultivated an inner life of contemplation the object of which was to arrive at mystical union with God:

Whereas the saints devotees demanded public performance, the initial inspiration to the holy life was usually a longing for private penance and contemplative prayer. The crown of the contemplative life was mystical communion. Union with the Godhead was reported by relatively few contemplatives and so was a powerful indication of saintliness. (Weinstein & Bell, 1982:150)

Goodich in his study of thirteenth-century Christian saints, most of whom were striving for self-perfection and most of whom had experienced ecstasies, makes the following generalizations at the beginning of his chapter on the childhood years of the thirteenth-century saints:

Of the over five hundred saints who became the objects of local or universal cults from 1215 to 1334, perhaps no more than ten percent possess reliable data concerning their early years; and an even smaller number left autobiographical material of one kind or another...Nevertheless, some broad emotional patterns common to strongly motivated religious figures in all ages also appear among these Catholic saints: childhood neglect or deprivation, resentment against an absent or allegedly cruel father, and a period of emotional stress in late adolescence which is resolved through religious commitment.

...a significant number experienced emotionally deprived childhoods, with either one or both parents on Crusade or other professional duties, maintaining separate households, or sending their children away to nurses, relatives or monasteries for rearing. Furthermore, families were large, often exceeding ten children. The result was that the sensitive child could be easily lost or neglected; while the insecurities of frequent wars or pestilence of the time carried away one or both parents, leaving many an orphan with only the church as a substitute parent. (Goodich, 1982:82-83)

Thus according to Spangler's analysis, using Murray's need-press theory, virtually all of the sample of twenty-five mystics suffered from a significant loss in their earlier years. Goodich notes the same trend for thirteenth-century saints. According to the impression formed by Weinstein and Bell, after studying the lives of 864 saints from the medieval and early modern periods, the loss of a *parent* in the years of childhood or adolescence seems to have been a particularly common occurrence.

Spangler also found that the schizophrenics he studied sustained serious losses as young persons. Again he provides no statistical data on the extent of parental loss. However in the case of schizophrenics, and persons suffering from other forms of mental illness, there is a considerable body of research on parental death during childhood or adolescence.

In an article describing "short-term psychotherapy for established pathological mourners," Volkan explains that,

Uncomplicated grief may be seen as nature's exercise in loss and restitution. It involves pain, but it is worked through and ultimately resolved, offering no drastic obstruction to the conduct of daily life after an average time of six months. In some persons, however, a death may precipitate recognizably connected mental disturbances the form of which may range from neurosis to psychosis. (Volkan, 1975:334)

Volkan is not speaking specifically of those who lose a primary caregiver at a young age, but his remarks certainly include that group. Loss is always painful, even devastatingly so, but in most cases bereaved persons recover and carry on with life as usual. For others the outcome is not as fortunate. There are numerous studies in which mental illness has been found to be significantly associated with the early loss of a parent. Some of these (e.g., Archibald, Bell, Miller & Tuddenham, 1962) found that a variety of mental disturbances were associated with parental bereavement; most however focused on a specific category of malfunctioning.

Watt and Nicholi (1979) concluded, on the basis of data gathered from three separate studies, that premature death of a parent was significantly associated with schizophrenia. They also found that the death of a father was more frequent than that of a mother. On the other hand Hilgard and Newman (1963) found that it was more common for schizophrenics to have lost a mother in their early years. Whatever may be the case regarding the sex of the deceased parent most likely to correlate with later occurrence of schizophrenia, both studies agree that early parental death is associated with the disease.

Birtchnell (1970) found a relationship between depression and the death of a parent. He divided patients hospitalized for depression into two groups according to the severity of their symptoms, and found that the group that suffered from severe depression was significantly more likely to have lost a parent, especially a mother, in their younger years. Similarly Munro and Griffiths (1969), in a study of inpatient and outpatient depressives, found that the former, but not the latter, were more likely to have had a parent die before their fifteenth birthday than were members of a control population.

Related to the subject of depression is that of suicide. One study (Hill, 1969) specifically focused on a group of depressives who had attempted suicide. Hill's results were that depressive patients who had lost a parent during childhood or adolescence (particularly before age 14) were more likely to commit suicide. Successful and unsuccessful suicide attempts were studied by Dorpat, Jackson and Rispley (1965). These authors found that half of those whose attempts were unsuccessful and 64 per cent of those whose attempts were successful came from "broken homes." In the case of those whose attempt was unsuccessful, the cause of the "broken home" was divorce; whereas in the case of the successful suicides, the cause was parental death.

Several other categories of mental disturbance or psychic malfunction have been found to be associated with early parent loss. Women who sustained the loss of a parent before the age of five (and especially before the age of two) were found to be overrepresented in the sample of neurotics

examined by Barry and Lindemann (1960). According to Felner, Stolberg and Cowen (1975) bereaved children are more likely to be anxious and withdrawn in later life. The results of a study conducted by Bernstein, Steiner and Glaister (1981) on patients with gender-identity problems were that the disturbance was particularly correlated with the loss of a parent between the ages of 10 and 19. Life-long problems with self-esteem have been attributed to early parent loss by Rochlin (1965).

The above represent only a small number of the reports on the relationship between mental illness and early loss of a parent. Berlinsky and Biller (1982) undertook a review of 47 of these studies and placed each one into one of five categories according to their methodological adequacy. Those that belonged to the first two categories made use of matched comparison groups, the type of loss is specified, the data is analyzed using the appropriate statistical tests, and valid and reliable methods of psychiatric assessment were employed. The authors summary of the literature they evaluated is:

...almost a third of these studies qualified for [competency] ratings of levels I and II. Most of the research yielded positive outcomes, and this was particularly true of the higher-rated studies. Subjects who had lost a parent were found to be overrepresented among those with symptoms of suicidal, and to a lesser extent, psychotic behaviour, and among those judged as maladjusted on a more general basis. (Berlinsky & Biller, 1982:66)

Some of the explanations offered for the association between parental loss and psychological disturbance are worth considering at this point. Watt and Nicholi suggest that schizophrenia may be a result of both a genetic predisposition and the stress of the precarious social situation that can follow as a result of a lost parent:

How might we understand the causal connection between bereavement in childhood and schizophrenic breakdown in adulthood? The simplest explanation is that the death of the parent is stressful to the family and child because of its objective consequences: economic, hardship, disruption of living conditions, enforced mobility, and the like. This stress, like any severe stress, might then contribute to schizophrenic illness in a genetically vulnerable child. (Watt & Nicholi, 1979:471)

Here Watt and Nicholi allude to a genetic factor without, however, specifying it as low threshold for anxiety arousal or emotional sensitivity in general. And the lost parent is seen to induce the necessary stress for psychotic breakdown via the difficult social circumstances.

They also provide a more distinctly psychological explanation of the immediate effect of parental death on childhood development:

Especially important for social development is stability in interpersonal relations, with the allied quality

of intimacy or personal involvement. A child learns chiefly from parents to differentiate among the roles adopted by himself or complementary others. Plainly, a bereaved child may be handicapped in some of these elements of social apprenticeship and character development. (Watt & Nicholi, 1979:472)

From the phrase, "may be handicapped," we may infer the need for yet another causal factor. In other words not all bereaved children will have their social development impaired, even if they possess a "genetic predisposition." Hilgard, Newman and Fisk, in their study, comparing mental patients who experienced early paternal death with a nonpatient group who experienced the same loss, indicate just what that factor may be:

We observe marked dependency needs in both groups. In the [comparison] sample, these needs frequently continue to be fulfilled by the mother...the hospital patients [by contrast] have known a checkered career of unreliable fulfilment from the earliest years. (Hilgard, Newman & Fisk, 1960:795)

Hence it seems that a context of unreliable need-fulfilment plus a genetic predisposition are required if early parent death (or some other serious loss or losses) is to result in mental disturbance. In fact, unreliable need-fulfilment can be considered as another form of parental loss, and therefore those who are seriously dysfunctional can be said, in addition to having a genetic predisposition,[87] to have had a quantitatively more deprived childhood environment (which may or may not have included parental loss).

That the critical factor, at least in some cases, is not just one loss, even a major one, but the extent to which loss is pervasive in the childhood environment is suggested by Wolfenstein, who illustrates her point with a case study of a patient suffering from depression and derealization:

The loss of a parent while the individual is still immature inflicts a massive trauma from which it is very difficult to recover. The difficulty is the greater to the extent to which there have been failures or disturbances in development prior to the loss. I shall indicate briefly what some of these factors were in Mary's case. She had two brief hospitalizations before the age of four, which seem to have shaken her trust in her mother's caring for her. Moreover the mother had depressive tendencies, and would punish the child by long silences. The mother herself had a very deprived childhood...The early separations, the mother's depressive withdrawals, the sombre atmosphere of destitution of the mother's past contributed to anxious doubts about the reliability of needed supplies and a clinging to the need-gratification phase of object relations. Her father's death then aggravated the already strong apprehension about not being provided for. A sense of helplessness and longing to be taken care of persisted into the time when she was able to earn a living. (Wolfenstein, 1969:444)

Mary's lack of required need-gratification was a result of parental absence or emotional withdrawal. In

other cases the parent may be present but needs are not met due to disturbed patterns of communication within the family.

R.D. Laing reports that in a large number of studies, as well as in his own research, in every single case investigated, those diagnosed as schizophrenic came from a family with disturbed and disturbing communication patterns:

The studies of the families of schizophrenics conducted at Palo Alto, California, Yale University, the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, and at the National Institute of Mental Health, among other places, have all shown that the person who gets diagnosed [as schizophrenic] is part of a wider network of extremely disturbed and disturbing patterns of communication. In all these places, to the best of my knowledge, *no* schizophrenic has been studied whose disturbed pattern of communication has not been shown to be a reflection of, and a reaction to, the disturbed and disturbing pattern characterizing his or her family of origin. This is matched in our own researches. (Laing, 1970:94-95)

The situation is well summarized by Hilgard and Newman:

It is known that normal functioning of adults is favoured by their having experienced in childhood intact relationships to both parental figures and normal gratification of infantile and childhood needs by parents who represented appropriate identification figures. This functioning can be disturbed by parents who do not function adequately, or by loss of a parent through death. (Hilgard & Newman, 1963:23-24)

Thus an insecure family environment is created as a result of parental death, absence, emotional distance or (and this appears to be especially true for schizophrenics) patterns of communication that are disturbed.

This conclusion is consistent with Spangler's contention regarding the twenty-five schizophrenics he used as a comparison group in his study of mystics. Many mentally ill persons are unable to cope with a major loss (among which is frequently found the death of a parent) because their childhood environment was an insecure or disturbing one. While many mystics have also experienced serious losses (and again frequently the death of a parent), it appears that their childhood environment has also contained some support and encouragement. The family situation of creatives seems to fall in between that of mystics and the mentally ill.

There are several studies that establish a relationship between loss in childhood or adolescence and creativity, genius and eminence. Some of these focus upon, or make reference to, parental death; others consider the quality of the relationship between creatives and their parents. Anne Roe (1982) examined the lives of 64 eminent scientists (20 biologists, 22 physicists and 22 social scientists) and

concluded that the average eminent scientist is likely to have been sickly or to have lost a parent at an early age. However a careful look at her statistics suggests that her conclusions are not entirely warranted. For example, she reports that a quarter of the biologists had lost a parent through death or divorce at an early age but this figure is not compared to the incidence of parental loss in a control group.

Regarding data on early parental loss in the general population, Hilgard, Newman and Fisk inform us that,

...contradictory figures in the literature have varied from less than 12 per cent based on census material... to 25 per cent based on special groups used as controls...We found in our metropolitan group a total of 240 individuals who had lost one or both parents prior to the age of 19. This represents 21 per cent of the total group of 1,136... (Hilgard, Newman & Fisk, 1960:789)

The figure provided by Hilgard, Newman and Fisk does not vary greatly in magnitude from that found by Roe for her eminent biologists and that figure does not include divorces as does Roe's. One would therefore have to conclude that early parental loss is not more frequent among eminent biologists (and if they are representative, among eminent scientists in general) than it is among the general population. However, not only is Roe's sample small (and therefore inferences from it are of dubious validity), but there are other studies that have found an association between early parental death and creativity or eminence.

Eisenstadt (1978) compared two groups of fathers of eminent persons: those fathers who were themselves eminent and those who were noneminent fathers. The criterion for an eminent father was whether or not they were given space in the 1968 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The average age of the *eminent* fathers (of eminent persons) when a parent first died was 19.79 years as opposed to 26.93 for the *noneminent* fathers (of eminent persons). The difference is statistically significant, thus establishing an association between genius or eminence and orphanhood. In fact Eisenstadt's findings show that 50 per cent of the eminent fathers sustained a parental death during childhood or adolescence. Berlinsky and Biller (1982:64) were particularly impressed with Eisenstadt's methodological rigor. Following the presentation of his data and an explanation for the connection between parental loss and creativity Eisenstadt describes a number of similarities between creatives and psychotics and then concludes with the following statement:

In my opinion, the findings of the present study lead to the conclusion that parental loss by death neatly explains these similarities between genius and the psychotic. (Eisenstadt, 1978:221)

Since not all psychotics and creatives, but only a significantly higher proportion of them, lose a parent in childhood or adolescence, parental loss by death is not by itself a sufficient explanation. It can be said however that, along with emotional sensitivity, both the mentally ill in general (not just psychotics) and creative persons come from family environments in which they have experienced acute or

prolonged loss.

Employing a broader understanding of loss, Martindale (1972) conducted a study of 21 English male poets born between 1670 and 1809 and 21 French male poets born between 1770 and 1909. He found that the father was emotionally distant (50%) or physically absent (30%) in 80% of the English poets and emotionally distant (59%) or physically absent (30%) in 89% of the French poets. Father absence was defined as dead at or before age eight, or else otherwise permanently absent from the home at least one year before eight years of age. According to Martindale the absence of, or the lack of affect from, the father makes the normal resolution of the oedipal conflict difficult and therefore results in a high degree of femininity of interests. Difficulty in resolving the oedipal conflict would also indicate problems in establishing an identity and therefore in feeling at home in the world. Although Martindale did not take into account environmental losses (resulting, e.g., from war, or famine), the loss of health due to illness or losses related to the mother, by accepting a broader definition of loss than that of paternal <u>death</u>, he was able to show that 80% to 89% of his sample of poets sustained a serious loss in their lives.

If poets tend to experience father-absence, creative scientists appear to have mothers who are emotionally distant. Stein (1956) administered Murray's Thematic Apperception Test to creative chemists and to a control group of noncreative chemists. McClelland summarizes the reactions of the two groups to the "mother-son" picture:

...90% of the eminent scientists see the mother and son as going their separate ways, versus 20%, or at most 30%, of the uncreative chemists. The difference is significant at the 5% level, although the frequencies are very small. (McClelland, 1964:156)

McClelland (1964:155) interprets these findings as an indication that creative scientists see their mothers as rejecting them. In the same article, McClelland cites, as confirmation, another study (Terman, 1954) which found that scientists generally have a low admiration for their mothers.

Domino (1973) administered the California Psychological Inventory to 38 mothers of male high school students, whose exceptional creativity was indicated by teachers' assessments and creativity tests. The same inventory was administered to a control group of mothers of 38 noncreative high school students who were matched for sex, educational level, grade point average and geographical residence. The mothers of the creative students scored significantly higher on the Dominance, Capacity for Status and Achievement via Independence scales. They also scored significantly lower on the Sociability, Responsibility, Self-Control, Good Impression and Femininity scales. Low "sociability" combined with high "dominance" and low "femininity" seems to indicate a mother-child relationship of limited affection; while lack of "self-control and" and "responsibility" suggests the possibility of a somewhat inconsistent pattern of discipline and affection.

This impression is only partially supported by the research of MacKinnon (1966) on 40 creative

architects. Five professors of architecture and eleven editors of major American architectural journals were asked to list the 40 most creative American architects. The total number listed was 86. The 64 most highly rated of these were invited to participate in the project, of whom 40 accepted.[88] MacKinnon (1966:196) reports that in the families of the architects discipline was consistent and standards of right and wrong behaviour and ideas were clearly presented. On the other hand there was an absence of emotional warmth between the future creative architects and one or both parents:

...there was often a lack of intense closeness with one or both parents. Most often this appeared in relation to the father...but often it characterized the relationship with both parents. There were not strong emotional ties of either a positive or a negative sort between parent and child, but neither was there the type of relationship that fosters overdependency nor the type that results in severe rejection. (MacKinnon, 1966:195)

Another type of loss found in the backgrounds of the creative architects was that their families tended to move frequently and to possess values (e.g., cultural, artistic and intellectual interests) that were different from those of the other families in the community (MacKinnon, 1966:196-197).

McClelland (1964:172) provides some insight into the family situation of creative scientists by contrasting it with the family situation of entrepreneurs:

...scientists report that they were distant from both parents and therefore in all likelihood did not receive the parental warmth and support that future entrepreneurs get...So that while the future scientist and the future entrepreneur may both have been exposed to high standards, the former, being treated indifferently by his parents, tends to retreat from people, while the latter, being encouraged by his parents, moves out more confidently into the world of adult human relationships. (McClelland, 1964:172)

To say that creative scientists, not to mention creative persons in general, have been treated indifferently by their parents is perhaps to overstate the case as will be indicated below. It does seem however that there is some measure of emotional distance between one or both parents and future creatives.

Baron, according to Arieti, also recognizes that creatives have experienced relationship difficulties in early life and in fact sees a connection between these difficulties and the typical behaviour of creatives:

Barron...suggests that the creative individual who prefers irregularities and apparent disorder and

trusts himself in searching for a new order has learned these attitudes from the difficult interpersonal relations he had in early life. (Arieti, 1976:349)

Eisenstadt (1978:221) points out that while both creatives and psychotics "can be easily stimulated as a result of their vulnerability" (in other words their emotional overexcitability) and both "often have disturbed relationships with their parents, siblings, and other relatives," the creative person who succeeds is rewarded with societal approbation, whereas the psychotic is not. While both Barron and Eisenstadt, as well as the other researchers cited, concur on the problematic nature of the family relations of creatives, Eisenstadt notes that, unlike psychotics, the creatives receive some recognition from others. That this recognition and encouragement must have begun in childhood is suggested by Barron's remark that the creative person "trusts himself in searching for a new order."

In conclusion it may be tentatively proposed that what mystics, creatives and the mentally ill share is a common temperament (i.e., something like emotional and imaginational overexcitability) and a family environment that can be characterized in a general sense as one of loss or one in which the gratification of basic needs is frustrated. This frustration may be due to disturbed patterns of communication, parental absence, emotional distance of a parent, or a number of other causes. Parental death alone was found to be high in all three groups.

However, there are some differences in the families of the three groups. In the families of mystics, Spangler has noted, the loss is more likely to be of an impersonal kind; one or both parents of creatives tend to be emotionally distant; and while it is not easy to generalize about the families of the mentally ill, it appears that the loss sustained is more severe. For example, schizophrenics, if we accept Laing's analysis, come from homes characterized by disturbed and disturbing patterns of communication. Differences between the backgrounds of mystics, creatives and the mentally ill become more evident as consideration is given to the factors of emotional support, childhood training and access to institutional support.

Emotional support and encouragement

The environmental factor of emotional support appears to be critical in terms of influencing the development of the emotionally sensitive person. Spangler found that elements of personal nurturance play a large part in the early environments of mystics - if one or both parents were unable to provide affection, the lack tended to be compensated for by a sibling, uncle, aunt or some other caretaker. Goodich in his study of thirteenth-century Christian saints, found that while wet-nursing, emotionally distant or absent fathers and even neglect are fairly common in the *vitae* of saints at that time. the "kindly nurse...now becomes a frequent figure in hagiographical literature." Sometimes the surrogate parent mentioned is a relative. Among others, Goodich cites the example of Salimbene de Adam:

While Salimbene's father is always depicted in the most negative light, Salimbene's paternal

grandmother, Ermengard, who lived a hundred years, played a decisive role in Salimbene's childhood, and in his eyes laid the foundations of his later religious vocation. (Goodich, 1982:106-107)

However frequently in the lives of mystics it is one or another or both of the parents who provide emotional support. Paramahansa Yogananda's memory of his parents', especially his mother's, is referred to in *Autobiography of a yogi* in the following words:

Father...was kind, grave, at times stern. Loving him dearly, we children yet observed a certain reverential distance....But mother was a queen of hearts, and taught us only through love. After her death, Father displayed more of his inner tenderness. I noticed then that his gaze seemed metamorphosed into my mother's gaze. (Yogananda, 1973:4)

When she was alive his mother, as he remembers it, was deeply affectionate;[89] his father not particularly so, although he clearly inspired a great deal of respect. Upon his mother's death, when Yogananda was 11 years old, the father appeared to him to take on the countenance of his mother.

Although this perception was probably in part a projection of Yogananda,[90] it was probably also based on his father's attempt to meet his son's pressing need for affection.

In his study, Spangler (1961:81-82) notes that mystics were shown signs of appreciation from either parents or surrogates and were given encouragement, praise and recognition by parents and obedient respect by younger siblings or contemporaries. Several incidents in the life of Thérèse of Lisieux illustrate this treatment. Although she was extremely sensitive, her memory is that, "God was pleased all through my life to surround me with *love*, and the first memories I have are stamped with smiles and the most tender caresses" (Martin, 1972:17). Her relationship with her father was particularly close, both before and after the death of her mother (when Thérèse was four years old). Her father recognised her achievements:

Each evening I was back [from school] at home...and then my heart expanded. I would jump up on Papa's lap, telling him about the marks they were giving me, and his kiss made me forget my troubles. How happy I was to announce the results of my *first composition*, one in sacred history, where I missed getting the maximum grade by <u>one</u> point only, and this because I didn't know the name of Moses' father. I was then the first and was wearing a beautiful silver badge. Papa rewarded me by giving me a *pretty little coin* worth four sous. (Martin, 1972:53-54)

She suffered terribly from scruples, and the memory that she "missed getting the maximum grade by *one* point," indicates that she was a perfectionist in other things as well. But what is relevant here is that intense sensitivity was met by encouragement and appreciation by her father. She also remembers that her father took her ideas seriously (1972:48). Of particular significance, in terms of

her later decision to enter the local Carmelite convent, is the affection she received from her older sisters, who joined that same convent and from the nuns who were her teachers (1972:53).

In contrast to the personal warmth and affection most of the mystics apparently received, most of the 25 schizophrenics in Spangler's sample were said to be deprived, and even felt unqualified rejection. While 23 of the mystics experienced the press of Deference, Praise, Recognition, this was true for only six of the schizophrenics. Similarly six schizophrenics were exposed to the press of Nurturance, Indulgence (i.e., parental affection, leniency, sympathy, generous gifts and encouragement), as opposed to 21 mystics. Laing's description of the families of schizophrenics as characterized by disturbed and disturbing patterns of communication has been noted above.

The importance of emotional support is underscored by Silvano Arieti's comments on the critical role of an affectionate parent substitute in the lives of potential schizophrenics:

At times fortunate external circumstances have compensatory or remedial effects valuable enough to prevent the disorder. The presence of a beneficial person may be enough to change the pathogenic potential of the environment. A grandmother, a teacher, a maid, an older sibling or an aunt may have given the patient enough affection and created enough self-esteem to compensate for the deficiencies of the parents. (Arieti, 1974:198)

In spite of their emotional sensitivity and deprived family background, those at risk for schizophrenia may not necessarily succumb to the disease if there is some source of emotional support. Erikson holds a complementary view:

In psychopathology the absence of basic trust can best be studied in infantile schizophrenia, while lifelong underlying weakness of such trust is apparent in adult personalities in whom withdrawal into schizoid and depressive states is habitual. The re-establishment of a state of trust has been found to be the basic requirement for therapy in these cases. (Erikson, 1963:248)

For Erikson (1963:78-80) it is not so much the case that what he calls basic mistrust can be avoided - it cannot. In fact basic mistrust is essential for healthy functioning; it is foundational for a realistic or critical view of the world (Erikson, 1980:63-64). What the individual requires,

is a certain *ratio* between the positive and the negative which, if the balance is toward the positive, will help him to meet later crises with a better chance for unimpaired total development. (Erikson, 1980:181, fn.4)

In the case of schizophrenics the balance is tipped in the direction of the negative pole. That the balance (along the basic trust versus basic mistrust continuum) may be tipped in the same direction for potential mystics is indicated by the fact that 21 mystics showed evidence of a need for

Succorance and 20 a need for Positive Cathexis (Spangler, 1961:70). [91] Unlike those destined to become schizophrenic, however, it is Spangler's view that future mystics receive emotional support, in one form or another, and frequently in several forms.

In terms of family support creative persons appear to be somewhere in between the mystics and the mentally ill. Reference was made above to MacKinnon's study of 40 creative American architects. According to this researcher the creative architects came from families that were not characterized by emotional warmth, but they were stable:

...if there was a certain distance in the relationship between child and parent, it had a liberating effect so far as the child was concerned. If he lacked something of the emotional closeness which some children experienced with their parents, he was also spared that type of psychological exploitation that is so frequently seen in the life histories of clinical patients. (MacKinnon, 1966:195)

As opposed to disturbed and disturbing communications that Laing says are found in every schizophrenic family, in the families of creative architects, "Discipline was almost always consistent and predictable," and "there existed clear standards of conduct and ideas as to what was right and wrong" (MacKinnon, 1966:196). At the same time there does not seem to have been that pressure to conform to parental expectations that Spangler found amongst mystics.

Spangler, as mentioned in the above section on loss, found evidence for the press of Dominance, Coercion, Prohibition in the family backgrounds of all 25 mystics. Murray's description of this press has already been given, but it bears repeating here for the sake of convenience:

This [press] covers all barriers to free motion and all persuasions and coercions to action as well as other modes of strong influence...Here are classed the parents who impose a definite system of social conduct: responsibilities and prohibitions. The system is mostly made up of laws that limit Autonomy, but they may be enforced without punishment, by kindly instruction and example. (Spangler, 1961:149)

An illustrative case is that of Teresa of Avila who wrote a romantic novel, but kept it secret from her father since he disapproved even of the reading of such literature (see Kavanaugh, 1976:2 & Teresa of Avila, 1976:35). Subsequently Teresa came to share the view of her father.

The type of support and freedom experienced by MacKinnon's creative architects is summarized in

the following passage:

What appears most often to have characterized the parents of these future creative architects was an extraordinary respect for the child and confidence in his ability to do what was appropriate. Thus they did not hesitate to grant him rather unusual freedom in exploring his universe and in making decisions for himself - and this early as well as late. The expectation of the parent that the child would act independently but reasonably and responsibly appears to have contributed immensely to the latter's sense of personal autonomy which was to develop to such a marked degree. (MacKinnon, 1966:195)

Personal autonomy seems to have been allowed to develop gracefully in the creative architects.

This is in sharp contrast to many of the mystics who, presumably in response to the press of Dominance, Coercion, Prohibition,[92] show evidence (in 20 cases out of 25) of a need for Autonomy. *Need* for Autonomy is not synonymous with the *possession* of autonomy as Murray's description makes clear:

[The need for Autonomy] describes acts of resistance and defiance. Prompted by the general need for Activity and the tendency for Change there is first of all (a) breaking through barriers to free motility. Then in the service of other needs (particularly the need for sex) there is (b) defiance of prohibitions. The need for Passivity, as well as other needs, may provoke (c) resistance to coercion and persuasion. (Spangler, 1961:160)

What comes into existence in a relatively natural way in the case of MacKinnon's creative architects, apparently has to be acquired by defiance and resistance, in short by a struggle, on the part of mystics. On the one hand most potential mystics (i.e., 20 out of 25 of them) have a strong urge to acquire autonomy, but on the other, most (i.e., 21 out of 25) have also a strong need for Abasement. This internal tension is not yet a multilevel mystical struggle - rather it is like the type of unilevel divided self found in the passage James' cited from Annie Besant.

In conclusion, it can said that while mystics and creatives tend to receive support and encouragement, as opposed to the mentally ill, the quality, and the effect of that support is different. Mystics typically receive, from one source or another, emotional affection, resulting in dependency (Murray's need for Succorance, noted by Spangler in 21 out of 25 mystics), whereas the family backgrounds of creative persons seem to be marked by less affection. However it is suggested that creatives generally receive encouragement and are permitted freedom denied to the mystics, with the result that they attain relatively easily an autonomy for which the mystics must strive.[93]

Family training and modelling

Spangler felt that most of the mystics whose lives he studied, because of the warm personal relationships they enjoyed with older relatives and friends, had greater access to the ideals of others than did the schizophrenics. In the case of all 25 mystics these ideals were religious. By contrast only six schizophrenics experienced the press of Religious Training (Spangler, 1961:77). There was also a qualitative difference. Typically mystics received more intense religious training as children, and religion in their families was of the intrinsic variety. On the other hand, where religious training occurred at all in the lives of schizophrenics, it was more of an external form:

Every mystic showed the element of religious training in his psychological background. In addition...the religious training given the young mystics-to-be was not of the "pour-in-the-contents-from-the-outside" type. In almost all cases the training was primarily that of example and only secondarily of precept, and in almost all cases the mystics came from homes where religion played a vital role, not only a formal role. (Spangler, 1961:133-134)

Religious education, of the type Spangler found in the families of mystics can be seen as a means of communicating what Erikson refers to as basic trust.[94] In the course of describing this notion, Erikson explains that,

Parents must not only have certain ways of guiding by prohibition and permission; they must also be able to represent to the child a deep, an almost somatic conviction that there is meaning in what they are doing. Ultimately, children become neurotic not from frustrations, but from the lack or loss of societal meaning in these frustrations. (Erikson, 1963:249-250)

Negative consequences to frustration, or loss, is not inevitable. If children have been provided with a meaning system, or even better, a meaning orientation, at a gut level, then they can cope with frustrations and losses. One might add that the coping may involve a struggle, especially in the case of severe losses, but at least the possessor of a meaning orientation will be equal to it.

A number of examples of the kind of religious training described by Spangler can be found in the *Autobiography of a yogi*. For example, the stories of the Hindu epics were taught to Yogananda by his mother:

In Mother's presence we children made an early bittersweet acquaintance with the scriptures. Mother would resourcefully summon from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* suitable tales to meet the exigencies of discipline; on these occasions chastisement and instruction went hand in hand. (Yogananda, 1973:5)

Mention has been made above of the family altar in Yogananda's childhood home. It was there, through the example, and presumably the precept, of his mother, that he was introduced to the life of religious devotion:

Lahiri Mahasaya [the family guru] left this world shortly after I had entered it. His picture, in an ornate frame, always graced our family altar...Many a morning and evening found Mother and me meditating before an improvised shrine, offering flowers dipped in fragrant sandalwood paste. With frankincense and myrr as well as our united devotions, we honoured the divinity that had found full expression in Lahiri Mahasaya. (Yogananda, 1973:9)

In the autobiography of Thérèse of Lisieux can be found numerous references to religious training. Since Thérèse died at 24 years of age her autobiography consists almost entirely of an account of her childhood and adolescent years. As a result this document provides the investigator with a rich variety of material on the family life of a developing mystic. The type of intense religious training referred to by Spangler is clearly indicated in the following passage:

In the morning you [her older sister] used to come to me and ask if I had raised my heart to God... While dressing me you spoke about Him and afterwards we knelt down and said our prayers together. The reading lesson came later...I enjoyed no great facility in learning, but I did have a good memory. Catechism and sacred history were my favourite subjects and these I studied with joy....Each afternoon I took a walk with Papa. We made our visit to the Blessed Sacrament together, going to a different church each day, and it was in this way that we entered the Carmelite chapel for the first time. Papa showed me the choir grille and told me there were nuns behind it. I was far from thinking at that time that nine years later I would be in their midst. (Martin, 1976:36)

In describing the years from 10 to 13, Thérèse recalls that she received guidance from her family in the choice of reading matter:

...I did love reading very much and would have spent my life at it. I had human *angels*, fortunately for me, to guide me in the choice of the books which, while entertaining, nourished both my heart and mind. (Martin, 1976:71)

Her reading matter may have been entertaining, but it was restricted. For example, her father did not allow his daughters to read newspapers.[95] In her teenage years she was introduced to *The imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, a work that would certainly have oriented a sensitive reader in the direction of the contemplative life. The impact that the book made on her impressionable adolescent mind was profound:

I knew almost all the chapters of my beloved Imitation by heart. This little book never parted company with me, for in summer I carried it in my pocket, in winter, in my muff. At Aunt's they used to amuse themselves by opening the book at random and telling me to recite the chapter before them. (Martin, 1976:102)

Clearly Thérèse, an emotionally sensitive child, who suffered serious losses in her early life and as a result tended toward extreme social isolation, was susceptible to the religious teaching that she received from her strict but affectionate mentors. And just as clearly, as she matured, the teaching she received through books was of a kind to orient her toward the contemplative life.

Religion provides the future mystic with a means of making sense of experiences that might otherwise be disturbing. On the occasion of one of her father's business trips, Thérèse of Lisieux hallucinated the form of a man that so closely resembled her father that she called out to him. The figure's face was covered by "a sort of apron" and "he was *much more stooped*" than her father. She found the hallucination disturbing and in spite of the fact that one of her sisters comforted her and told her not to think any more about it, the memory of it kept returning:

It was not within my power to think no more about it. Very often my imagination presented again the mysterious scene I had witnessed. Very often, too, I tried to lift the veil which was hiding its meaning from me *because I kept in the bottom of my heart the conviction that this vision had a meaning which was one day to be revealed to me*. [my emphasis] (Martin, 1972:46)

Although Thérèse could not understand her disturbing experience at the time, she was, thanks to the sense of basic trust communicated to her by her family, certain that ultimately it had to have a meaning. And this certainty made her hallucination far less threatening. Those who are at risk for mental illness are not so fortunate.

Erikson maintains that children who do not possess a meaning orientation are at risk for neurosis. McGlashan and Carpenter (1981) have shown that the possession of a meaning orientation, is a good predictor of successful outcome of psychosis. Patients who value insight, and who have a positive integrating attitude toward their illness and toward the future, seem to be the ones who have the best chance of recovery. The attitude of the patients, in its turn, appears to be to some large extent a function of the attitude that was communicated to them when they were at risk. This point is made by Smith, albeit by exaggeration:

In the early stages [of schizophrenia], the reaction of people around makes a considerable difference to the outcome, as does the constitution of the person. An outstanding schizoid man in ancient

Palestine was shaped by social expectations into being a mystical prophet of his people. A lowly citizen of Britain in the 20th century who fasts, prays and pronounces messages revealed to him from God is confronted by alarm in everyone around him...His symptoms start being disabling and resembling those of schizophrenia. There is little divine madness, no one moves over to make room for a mystic. (Smith, 1982:91)

In addition to religion as a source of meaning, there are also a number of secular options, e.g., science, the arts and the humanities. Reference has already been made to Bourke and Back (1971) who found that the interpretation of altered states of consciousness as religious was associated with low socioeconomic status and rural background, whereas the interpretation of such states as aesthetic was associated with high socioeconomic status and an urban background. These findings suggest that interpretation may be associated with particular types of training or formation and that these in turn are associated with socioeconomic and demographic factors.

The meaningful interpretation of altered states of consciousness by creative persons is as much a function of the training they receive, as it is in the case of the mystics. The result is different, by definition, and so is the type of training. Creative experiences like mystical experiences, arise out of a context. Anne Roe (1982:44), who studied eminent scientists (20 biologists, 22 physicists and 22 social scientists) found that the average eminent scientist came from a middle-class family and tended to do a great deal of reading. We may assume that, for the most part, he was encouraged to do so, at least by example, since 53 per cent of her subjects were the sons of professionals and only two were the sons of unskilled labourers.

MacKinnon's (1966:195-197 & 1982:304) conclusions regarding his creative architects lend support to this assumption. The architects' parents were, "with almost no exception...of artistic temperament and of considerable skill," and they encouraged similar interests in their children, although they did not pressure their children, but rather allowed them to develop at their own speed. MacKinnon did not find that the father was the only influence in the lives of his subjects. He notes that the mothers were highly autonomous and led active lives, often with careers of their own. He also noted a tendency on the part of the architects not to identify with one parent exclusively. Either they identified with both parents or with neither. In the latter situation the future architect identified with other models of prominence and professional responsibility invariably available in his larger family (aunts, uncles, grandparents).

The differences between the findings of Roe and MacKinnon probably represent the difference in the time of their research (the Roe article first published in 1952; the McKinnon article in 1962) and the difference in their subjects. If McClelland (1964:155-166) is correct, scientists tend to have emotionally distant mothers and so one would expect them to be more influenced by their fathers. On the other hand Martindale's (1972) finding that poets tend to have physically absent or emotionally distant fathers would argue in favour of a stronger influence from the mother for poets and perhaps, by extension, for those involved in the arts in general. Since architects are both scientists and artists, as McKinnon (1966:185) points out, it is not surprising that he found that they were equally influenced, if

at all, by both parents.

Terman (1970) reports on a study of 600 men with an I.Q. of 140 or higher. The subjects were evaluated, by a number of criteria, for life success and placed accordingly in one of three categories. The family backgrounds of the most successful, termed the A group (consisting of one quarter of the total) were then contrasted with the backgrounds of the least successful, the C group (also containing one quarter of the total). One difference found was that emphasis on education was greater in the families of the A group than it was in the families of the C group. While life success is not identical to creativeness, some of the differences between the two groups imply that the more successful group consists of members who are in some way more creative. For example, three quarters of the As, but only one fifth of the Cs did one year or more of graduate studies; and 96 per cent of the As, but only 28 per cent of the Cs, were awarded scholarships, fellowships or assistantships.

If among mystics indulgence in secular knowledge and pursuits has been discouraged in order to give priority to religious training, it appears that among creatives the opposite is the case. At least this is what MacKinnon found in the families of the creative architects:

As for religious practices, the families...showed considerable diversity, but what was most widely emphasized was the development of personal ethical codes rather than formal religious practices...but in two-thirds of the families formal religion was either unimportant or practised only perfunctorily. (MacKinnon, 1966:196)

It is clear from MacKinnon's description that even for those families where religion was of any significance, it was for its value as a source for ethical reflection. For those who derive their sense of meaning from the study of the arts and from scientific theories, and who find their purpose in creative work, religious explanations may seem to be entirely gratuitous.

CHAPTER IX

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Institutional support

The work that is begun in the home is continued, in late adolescence or adulthood, in institutions. The future mystic enters a convent or monastery or joins a group of disciples gathered around a spiritual master; the future creative attends university, works on a research project and joins various professional societies or becomes an apprentice of a recognized master or frequents a salon or café

along with other poets, novelists and artists. In the case of the mentally ill, the situation is quite different. Even when supportive institutions of a mystical or creative kind are physically accessible, the mentally disturbed cannot take advantage of them. The reason is that they lack both the necessary predispositional training and a capacity for relating well with others.[96]

Institutional support is the fifth of the five factors. Without it future mystics and creatives would not receive the guidance needed to refine and develop the meaning orientations that were begun in their families. Nor would they receive objective criticism, both because family members usually lack the knowledge and skill and because they are too emotionally involved.

The type of institutional support received by creative persons has varied from one field to another. In some cases it is no more than a network of like-minded persons who provide information and encouragement, but most of all understanding. This need has been noted by Dabrowski:

Vulnerable individuals...Often...are quite creative... They are characterized by uncertainty, doubt, anxiety, and depression, and for this reason are often rejected in their milieu as unstable and unproductive. Because of...failure to recognize the depressive and unproductive period as a necessary part of their development, these creative and talented individuals are selected against. They are compared unfavourably to well-adjusted normals, and not infrequently, derided as abnormal and weak. Their depressive periods call for consideration and care, since it has to be recognized that these often precede a productive and creative season of work. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:42-43)

The needed consideration and care, referred to by Dabrowski, is what potentially creative persons have frequently found in groups of their fellows.

But in addition, most creative persons have had access to formal training and professional feedback. Roe (1982:44 & 51) states that as young adults future eminent scientists invariably had the good fortune to encounter mentors who were highly influential and supportive, and further, that what was critical in their career choice was a college project in which they had occasion to do independent research and to find things out for themselves. Mystics, no less than creatives, require further training and feedback if they are to engage in the mystical struggle, and this is provided by mystical institutions.

Because Spangler chose to focus exclusively on the *family backgrounds* of mystics, he has nothing to say about those influences that operate in later life, just as he has nothing to say about temperamental traits that predispose persons to become mystics.[97] However of the 35 mystics (including the 10 from his initial pilot project) whose lives he analyzed, almost all of them joined religious communities as young adults - religious orders more loosely structured communities in which they formed relationships that were supportive of spiritual growth and from which they received cognitive maps,

describing the mystical path, and thus enabling them to interpret their inner conflict, and altered states of consciousness, in a meaningful way. To help them in this, religious institutions provided potential mystics with mystical manuals and spiritual directors.[98]

Mystics had *access* to these institutions in two senses. On the one hand, the institutions were in existence, and often not very far away; on the other hand, the warm interpersonal relationships that the mystics experienced in their families made it possible for them to participate in community life and to persevere in this participation in spite of inevitable difficulties and misunderstandings. There have been periods in history when mystical institutions were few and far between, and as a consequence, emotionally sensitive persons who had experienced serious losses in combination with a strong measure of emotional support and religious training within their families, nevertheless did not become mystics, precisely for want of the supportive environment that a mystical institution provides.

The nature of the institution, in which mystics find support, varies from one religion to another, and within any given religion, from one period to another. In some cases, there is nothing more than a relatively unstructured relationship between a master of the mystical life and an aspiring novice, or at best a few disciples; in other cases the teaching, guidance and example of the master have been partially replaced by a monastic routine involving fixed periods of study and meditation. Although even in the case of monasteries some form of guidance from a director or teacher is usually found. Mystical institutions, whether of the formal or informal type, foster the mystical struggle within participants in at least two ways: they communicate the world view of the mystical struggle in official and unofficial teaching; and they require, and provide examples of, ascetical and meditational practices.

Many of the aphorisms, anecdotes and exegetical comments originating with Hasidic masters, and subsequently repeated by disciples, provide examples of teaching that communicate the ideal of the mystical struggle:

Said the Besht [the founder of eighteenth-century Hasidism]: "The man who anticipates the gain of a large profit finds little enjoyment in his food. Likewise one who appreciates spiritual riches will find no pleasure in worldliness." (Newman, 1963:514)

Said the Bershider: "There are two kinds of men. One possess a character of nobility. He is sensitive to every slight offense, and is pained at every unworthy thought [i.e., he possesses emotional overexcitability]. He discovers within himself much requiring self-criticism.

"Another type of man is coarse of character. He feels only offenses that are serious, after they are pointed out to him. For him a preacher is required to reprove him, since he does not indulge in self-study." (Newman, 1963:430)

A villager lamented to the Kobriner that his evil desires constantly overcame him and caused him to

fall into transgression.

"Do you ride a horse?" the Rabbi inquired.

"Yes," answered the villager.

"What do you do if you happen to fall off?"

"I mount again," said the villager.

"Well, imagine the Evil Impulse to be the horse," remarked the Rabbi. "If you fall, mount again. Eventually you will master it." (Newman, 1963:431)

Said the Tarnigrader Rabbi: "He who worships and allows his thoughts to stray from God is like him who prepares a banquet for the king and then leaves his home." (Newman, 1963:344)

In the above passages can be found all four of the conflicts typical of the mystical life - the themes of world versus the supernatural, sin versus virtue, subordination versus domination of impulses, and concentrated versus distracted consciousness, respectively.

One function of the spiritual master is to recommend practices, such as meditation, that will induce the mystical struggle. An anonymous disciple of the thirteenth-century Kabbalist, Abraham Abulafia, describes how he found a teacher of Kabbalah, and how this teacher encouraged him to undertake a form of meditation:

...from the beginning I felt a desire to study Torah and learned a little of it...But I found no one to guide me in the study of Talmud...At last, however... I went out and sought, and found, and for several years I stayed abroad studying Talmud...

I returned to my native land and God brought me together with a Jewish philosopher...But what this teacher communicated to me in the way of philosophy... did not suffice me...the Lord had me meet a godly man, a Kabbalist who taught me...Nevertheless...the way of Kabbalah seemed all but impossible to me...my teacher said to me: `My son, why do you deny something you have not tried? '...So I gave in and he taught me the method of the permutations and combinations of letters and the mysticism of numbers and the other `Paths of the book *Yetsirah*.' (Scholem, 1961:148-149)

Throughout his practice, the disciple consults his teacher regarding his experiences. That the meditation recommended by the Kabbalist was meant to induce, and successfully resolve, the mystical struggle can be inferred from the following remarks from the same testimonial:

The Kabbalistic way, or method [i.e., of permutations and combinations of letters, etc], consists, first of

all, in the cleansing of the body itself, for the bodily is symbolic of the spiritual. Next in order of ascent is the cleansing of your bodily disposition and your spiritual propensities, especially that of anger, or your concern with anything whatsoever except the Name itself...A further step...is the cleansing of one's soul from all other sciences which one has studied. The reason for this is that being naturalistic and limited, they contaminate the soul, and obstruct the passage through it of the divine forms. (Scholem, 1961:153-154)

The Kabbalistic method of meditation is a means used in the struggle to overcome passions, such as anger, and in the struggle to concentrate the mind, which requires emptying it of all "natural knowledge." In this way the mind is prepared for the reception of illuminations or intuitions concerning the ultimate nature of existence.

Annemarie Schimmel relates how essential the spiritual master was considered to be in Sufism:

...the mystics...saw in the constant supervision of the disciple's way by the mystical guide a *conditio sine qua non* for true progress...A later mystic has compared the master...to the prophet...: "All the prophets have come in order to open people's eyes to see their own faults and God's perfection...And the *sheikh* is also there for the purpose of opening the eyes of his disciples." (Schimmel, 1986:100-101)

Thus the sheikh provokes the mystical struggle in his disciples by pointing out their defects. Yet another function of the master was to determine the readiness of disciples for the practice of meditation, especially during long periods of seclusion, in which they encountered their undisciplined passions:

The isolation of the *murid* [disciple] for a period of forty days necessitates a deep change in consciousness, and some of the Sufi theoreticians were aware - as every good sheikh in fact was - that the seclusion might constitute, for weaker adepts, a source of danger rather than elevation. If he were to concentrate too much on himself instead of God, or if passions might overcome him and make him nervous or angry, it might be better to have him live in the company of other people for his spiritual training because of the mutual influence and good example. (Schimmel, 1986:104)

An important role of the Sufi master was to assist those in his charge in entering into the mystical struggle. He did this by criticism and then by determining the right time for a fuller engagement in the struggle through an extended period of meditation.

Hindu gurus likewise communicate to their students and followers a world view that inclines them toward a mystical struggle. Miller conducted several interviews with the head ascetic, Saccidananda, at the Shankarananda *matha* [monastery] of Bhubaneswar. In one of these Saccidananda

recommended the ascetical practice of fasting as a means for achieving success in the mystical struggle:

...he who seeks to realize the truth of Shankaracarya's philosophy [i.e., he who seeks to attain *moksa*, or spiritual liberation] should... adhere to certain...austerities...he should perform difficult vows like *chandrayana vrata* (fasting regulated by the course of the moon...)...by perfecting these vows, he will be able to subdue evil attitudes known as *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (apathy). These are the devils that stand as a barrier to the attainment of *atma darsana* [the realization of the soul or inner self]. By subduing *rajas* and *tamas* he will develop *sattva* (purity), which is characteristic of a sacred, serene, and truthful mind. The sattvic mentality enables man to realize God. (Miller & Wertz, 1976:27-28)

With these words Saccidananda is alluding to a sacred versus profane dichotomy as well as one of evil versus pure thoughts. In the usual setting for such a discourse, these dichotomies would serve to locate those auditors, who were aspirants to the mystical life, within a context of struggle.

A world view of mystical struggle was also presented to Paramahansa Yogananda in the teaching of his guru Sri Yukteswar:

Destroy wrong desires now; otherwise they will remain with you...Even when the flesh is weak, the mind should be constantly resistant. If temptation assails you with cruel force, overcome it by impersonal analysis and indomitable will. Every natural passion can be mastered....The forceful, activating impulse of wrong desire is the greatest enemy to happiness of man. Roam in the world as a lion of self-control; don't let the frogs of sense-weakness kick you around! (Yogananda, 1973:148-149)

In addition to descriptions of the beginning of the mystical life as a struggle, and exhortations to engage in that struggle, Sri Yukteswar used criticism as a means to provoke and augment the struggle (Yogananda, 1973:140-145). And as the above passage indicates, he recommended meditation ("impersonal analysis") as means to overcome temptation.

The eighteenth-century reviver of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, Hakuin, was also the recipient of criticism from a Zen master, the result of which led to a reengagement in the struggle to attain a one-pointed mind in meditation:

One evening the Master sat cooling himself on the veranda. Again I brought him a verse I had written. "Delusions and fancies," the master said. I shouted his words back at him in a loud voice, whereupon the Master seized me and rained twenty or thirty blows with his fists on me, and then pushed me off the veranda....

After this I devoted myself to an intensive study of [i.e., meditation upon] the koan on the death of Nan-ch'uan, not pausing to sleep or eat. (Hakuin, 1971:119)

Hakuin's efforts resulted in a "kind of awakening" which his master also rejected, and so he continued yet again in his struggle until he had illuminative experiences that met with the approval of the master. The point to be emphasized is that through criticism, and in Hakuin's case even physical abuse, the master redirected his disciple to the mystical struggle in order to deepen his mystical insight.

Daily ritual performance in a mystical institution can also be the occasion of reinforcing a world view of mystical struggle. Welch interviewed a number of Chinese Buddhist monks who had fled the mainland because of the communist victory there and from these interviews, as well as from some documentary sources, he pieced together a picture of monastic practice in the first half of the twentieth century. An important part of the daily routine was the recitation of selected *sutras* and Welch offers the following speculates on the effect that sutra recitation might have had on a monk:

Daily as he recited the *Heart Sutra*, he was reminded that the world he had renounced was empty of permanence and meaning. As he recited the *Amitabha Sutra* he affirmed the existence of a supernal world towards which his course now lay. (Welch, 1973:346)

Since the *Amitabha Sutra* contains a detailed description of the otherworldly paradise of the Buddha Amitabha, undoubtedly its recitation had the effect suggested by Welch. Although the burden of the *Heart Sutra* is to deny any real opposition between the world, or *samsara*, and spiritual liberation, or *nirvana*, it would also have had the effect of devaluing the world.[99] And certainly other liturgical texts, as well as sermons, would have produced the same result. Thus, through participation in the monastic routine, monks internalized the religious dimension of the mystical struggle.

Many of the monks spent up to ten hours a day in *hua t'ou* (i.e., *koan*) meditation and Welch's monk-informants told him that there were many benefits from this practice. The monk who pursued it with concentration and energy, they said,

...learned to control his mind - to watch the stream of consciousness and, as soon as bad thoughts arose (greed, anger or stupidity), to dissolve them in the silent recitation of the Buddha's name...Furthermore, his character was improved. Bad habits were weeded out. (Welch, 1973:87)

The Chinese monks reported increased self-control and successes in the moral struggle as a result of meditation. The immediate goal of the practice, however, is a focused or concentrated mind. The attempt to achieve this state is not without danger and so some of the instruction given to disciples is meant to help them avoid the pitfalls. Suzuki cites the advice of meditation master Pan-jo:

When your mind is steadily and intensely on the koan, you will begin to be unconscious of your bodily existence, while the koan occupies the centre of your consciousness. At this stage, however, you have to be careful not to give up yourself to unconsciousness, for you are sometimes apt to go astray as in a dream and induce a state of insanity. Do never let your hold go off the koan, let the latter be present all the time in your consciousness. The time will come when together with the koan everything vanishes out of your mind including the mind itself. (Suzuki, 1974:108)

In some cases the master, or spiritual director, judges that the aspirant is ready to enter into the mystical struggle or can engage it more completely and thus the master provokes, or intensifies the struggle through criticism or by recommending meditation or some form of asceticism. In other cases caution has to be urged, or else encouragement given when the budding mystic is preoccupied with failure. An example of the latter can be found in the autobiography of Thérèse of Lisieux:

At the time I was having great interior trials of all kinds, even to the point of asking myself whether heaven really existed...I...entered the confessional ...[the priest] told me that *my faults caused God no pain, and that holding as he did God's place*, he was telling me *in His name* that God was very much pleased with me.

Oh! how happy I was to hear those consoling words!...this assurance filled me with joy, helping me to bear patiently with life's exile. (Martin, 1976:173-174)

Through sermons, liturgy, and shared anecdotes those who have access to the support of mystical institutions learn to view their lives in terms of the mystical struggle. In most cases this life-stance is not new to them, but has already been inculcated in them by their families. The mystical institution provides reinforcement and, where necessary, encouragement to engage in the struggle. This is done through criticism, meditation and asceticism. In addition, mystical adepts provide advice on the dangers of the disintegration process and support in times of despair.

The practice of meditation

Meditation seems to play a critical role in the lives of most mystics. They learn how to do it either from a caretaker or else for the first time in a mystical institution. Winnicott (1969) has argued that the capacity to be alone is made possible by having spent time in silence in the presence of the mother - i.e., the capacity to meditate, which depends on the capacity to be alone, may be related to the factor of emotional support discussed above. If emotional sensitivity and loss predispose persons to experience inner conflict, then they may provide a motivation for practising meditation (in those that do), since the effect of meditation seems to be a cessation of the conflict. At least this is the opinion of Underhill:

Psychologically it [contemplation] is an induced state in which the field of consciousness is greatly contracted: the whole of the self, its conative powers, being sharply focused, concentrated upon one

thing...

The turning of our attention from that crisp and definite world of of *multiplicity*, that cinematograph-show, with which intelligence is accustomed and able to deal, has loosed *new powers of perception* which we never knew that we possessed...*Deeper levels of personality* are opened up...So complete is the self's absorption that it is for the time *unconscious of any acts of mind or will*; in technical language, *its* "*faculties are suspended.*"

"When contemplation appears," he [Delacroix] says: "(a) It produces a general condition of *indifference, liberty,* and *peace*, an *elevation above* the *world*, a sense of beatitude. The subject ceases to perceive himself in the *multiplicity* and *division* of his general consciousness. He is *raised above* himself. A deeper and purer soul substitutes itself for the normal self. (b) In this state in which the consciousness...of the world disappear, the mystic is conscious of...participating in Divinity. [My emphasis.] (Underhill, 1960:330)

Two of the major themes in this passage are access to "deeper levels of personality," and the acquisition of peace, unification of consciousness, removal from the world (and by implication its temptations) and intimacy with an ultimate reality. In other words the result of meditation seems to be the cessation of inner turmoil.

Underhill's general "psychological" description is echoed by some of the mystical sources themselves. In a twelfth-century Carthusian treatise, entitled *The ladder of monks*, can be found the following remarks under the headings "The function of prayer" and "The effects of contemplation:"

So the soul, seeing that it cannot attain by itself to that *sweetness* of knowing and seeking for which it longs...humbles itself and betakes itself to prayer, saying: Lord, you are not seen except by the pure in heart...Lord, for long have I meditated in my heart, seeking to see your face...the Lord...breaks in upon its [the soul's] prayer...and He restores the weary soul, He slakes its thirst, He feeds its hunger, He makes the soul *forget all earthly things*: by making it die to itself He gives it new life in a wonderful way... [My emphasis.] (Guigo II, 1978:86-87)

Guigo the Carthusian, or Guigo of St. Thierry as he was also known, presumably experienced, and expected his fellow Carthusians to experience positive affect and a relief from the multiplicity of demands of earthly things. Again it appears to suggest a role for meditation in bringing a mystical struggle to an end.

That meditative experience is a relief from various claims upon one's time and energy is made explicit in a brief passage from Luzzatto's *The path of the just*:

What assists one towards the acquisition of this trait [holiness] is much solitude [*hitbodeduth*][100] and separation [asceticism], which, by eliminating the claims upon a person, allows his soul to grow in strength and to unite itself with the Creator. (Luzzatto, 1980:335)

Both Guigo and Luzzatto remark upon the release of psychic energy available once the inner conflict is no longer present. But both these authors are referring to relatively advanced levels of meditation.

Welch reports that even average twentieth-century Chinese Buddhist meditators, who do not attain exalted states of consciousness, gain control over their minds (i.e., from the multiplicity of thoughts) and experience an improvement in their character:

In the present era only a small number of persons can, through their own efforts, become enlightened. The best that most people can do is to depend upon the Buddha of the West, Amitabha...Few monks expected that their efforts in meditation would take them very far along the bodhisattva path.

Why then were they willing to put up with the austerities of the meditation hall...I have frankly asked my informants...The *hua-t'ou* [koan] was effective, they said. A monk...learned to control his mind...and, as soon as bad thoughts arose (greed, anger or stupidity), to dissolve them...Furthermore, his character was improved. Bad habits were weeded out. Through meditation even the most active person gradually became peaceful and *indifferent to the abuse of others*. [My emphasis.] (Welch, 1973:86-87)

These monks too obtained relief from the concerns of everyday life, but they also report changes in their personalities. This is consistent with Underhill"s new levels of personality. And Dabrowski, as discussed above, considers that one of the effects of meditation is the fostering of dynamisms typical of the higher levels of personality. Thus there are at least two frequently cited benefits to meditation: relief from inner turmoil and the emergence of a new character or personality at a higher level. Storr in his study on creativity summarizes the two effects in these words:

Prayer and meditation facilitate integration by allowing time for previously related thoughts and feelings to interact. Being able to get in touch with one's deepest thoughts and feelings, and providing time for them to regroup themselves into new formations and combinations, are important aspects of the creative process, as well as a way of relieving tension and promoting mental health. (Storr, 1988:28)

Meditation, or practices of a similar kind, are not restricted to mystics or mystics-to-be, or even monastics.[101] Newick relates examples of such practices reported in the lives of well-known artists:

I believe that once an idea has found the artist - it may be just a fragment of color or a shape or a quality of light - and there is a persistent, obsessional need to give it form, the process of being alone with the idea has begun. Van Gogh wrote to his brother: "In the poorest huts, in the dirtiest corner, I

see drawings and pictures. And with irresistible force my mind is drawn towards those things. More and more other things lose their interest, and the more I get rid of them, the quicker my eyes grasp the picturesque things....Christian Gierloff write of his friend, the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch: "He does not paint every day, or even every week. In fact, many weeks and often months may elapse between spells of painting. He generally likes to go about for a long time considering a subject and meditating on it until one day he suddenly plunges feverishly into the work of painting it....

I believe all artists, students, and professionals, once they are captivated by an idea, cannot help but retreat from attention to social living in order to give full attention to the emerging contours of the idea. Once fired with the irresistible force of the idea, the artist caanot help but withdraw into a shell-like world of existence, there to experience a relationship of intimacy with the idea...There is a desire for holding the idea until it is filled with life. Cezanne writes:...I become one with my painting...I stand in front of my subject, I loose myself in it. I dream, hazily (Newick, 1982:71-72)

Newick cites three examples of artistic intense concentration that appears like the activity of religious meditators, She also suggests that one result of this practice is that the object of concentration, a creative project, becomes filled with life. This too is like the energy release reported by some meditators. Of course the descriptions of the artists emphasize creative production as the effect of the practice, rather than self-transformation.

Schizophrenics also have practices akin to meditation which they use to produce altered states of consciousness, according to Podvoll. He gives as an example an account of one of his patients:

A chronically schizophrenic man who was my patient could suddenly induce a form of contemplative state that was virtually impenetrable by outside interference. He could stand staring at the sky for hours, looking "lost in concentration"...I gradually came to understand that this state was the result of thirty years of work; he had become able to identify each of his emotions with different cloud formations and thereby bring about sensations of bliss and spacious freedom. (Podvoll, 1979-1980:575)

Like many aspiring mystics and the artists cited above, Podvoll's patient was able, by means of a technique of concentration, to enter into a state of bliss in which the claims of daily life were left behind. However Podvoll maintains that there is also an important difference, at least between the process as found in the mystic and most schizophrenics:

For the accomplished mystic the ecstatic state is only an intermediary stage to which attachment and compulsive repetition would mean a diversion from the major task of further perfecting a different relationship to reality. On the other hand, most schizophrenic subjects seem to have an attachment to altered states of consciousness that might be called a form of addiction.[102] (Podvoll, 1979-

1980:576)

Just as there seem to be similar as well as disimilar predispositional factors for many mystics, creatives and mentally ill persons, so there may be roughly equivalent practices of meditation with some common effects (relief from tension, ecstasy, absorption in the object of meditation) but also with some important differences.

Summary of predispositional factors

By comparing mystics with creatives and the mentally ill, it has been possible to gain some insight into some of the factors that seem to predispose someone toward the mystical path, and in particular, toward the mystical struggle - i.e., the factors of emotional and imaginational overexcitability, loss, emotional support, religious training and institutional support. Those who engage in the mystical struggle are persons who possess the temperamental traits of emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement. They are also likely to sustain major losses during childhood and adolescence. The combination of these two factors results in all likelihood, in a deeply rooted condition of insecurity. Because of their emotional sensitivity and overactive imaginations, future mystics could be more strongly affected by losses of various kinds than would ordinarily be the case.

Fortunately the insecurity feelings appear to be offset by experiences of affection and encouragement, the result of which would be a sense of self-confidence, hope in finding some source of security and a determination to make the effort to do so. Because future mystics feel self-confident, they are free to exercise their imaginations in search of solutions to their malaise. They can consider alternative possibilities, such as joining a mystical institution. They can also allow their feelings to express themselves. Without emotional support feelings of grief and disappointment remain inaccessible, and hence cannot be channeled or harnessed in the service of a project that will compensate for the sense of loss.

The religious modeling, teaching and encouragement that future mystics often receive as children would predispose them to interpret their suffering in terms of a religious, if not mystical, world view. They receive a set of symbols and a vocabulary that enables them to understand and communicate to others something of their grief, and of their yearnings for a resolution. Religious beliefs and practices allow future mystics to begin a process of self-discipline. In some families the religion communicated to the mystics-to-be is itself mystically oriented; in others the religious training is not explicitly mystical, but it is intrinsic, and in continuity with the mystical institution they will eventually join. In either case, as a result of their religious training, future mystics can continue their search for security by replacing the objects they have lost with a religious object.

The final factor that seems likely to predispose the individual toward a mystical struggle is a mystical institution, understood in a broad sense - i.e., as any committed relationship, or set of relationships, that serves to communicate mystical culture and sustain efforts in the direction of achieving mystical goals. Such institutions reinforce the beliefs and symbols of earlier religious training, as well as

modifying and qualifying them so that they will provide a cognitive map compatible with the mystical project. For many who participate in a mystical institution emotional support continues, but at the same time demands are also increased. Exhortation and personal criticism reinforce the already present tendencies toward shame, guilt and self-criticism, hence providing a motive for gaining control over their feelings, imaginings and thoughts. And the ascetical and meditational skills, required for the attainment of self-control, are taught and monitored in the mystical institution. Finally the mystical institution provides the fellowship and support of a number of like minded persons.

William James and Evelyn Underhill, correctly, in my view, identified emotional sensitivity and an overactive imagination as factors predisposional of a mystical path, of a creative life and of mental illness. This position is in fundamental accord with Dabrowski's understanding of the primary cause of personality development (as well as most forms of mental illness and creativity) and the impressions of a number of scholars of mysticism. Their position is supported to some extent by empirical research. However, as indicated above, the environment also appears to have an important role to play.

CHAPTER X

THE MYSTICAL QUEST AS A TRANSFORMATION OF DISORDERED GRIEVING

In the previous chapters I suggest that five factors, one temperamental and four environmental, are predispositional of the mystical life. Briefly those factors are as follows. Those who become mystics appear to be persons who possess a unique temperament characterized by emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement. One result of emotional sensitivity is a stronger than average need for affection and a corresponding vulnerability to loss. A heightened capacity for imaginative involvement, in most cases, both probably intensifies this vulnerability and plays a role in resolving the grieving process which results whenever a critical loss is sustained.

Potential mystics frequently experience some form of acute loss, or an ongoing situation of stress, in childhood (the second factor of the five factors discussed above) and this in turn should make them even more susceptible to further losses and stress at a later point in their lives. Subsequent losses, acute or cumulative, would then result in a condition of intense or disordered grieving and insecurity. However at the same time, future mystics usually have been given a large measure of emotional support from one or both parents or a parent surrogate (the third factor) the result of which should be a sense of basic trust and a corresponding confidence to engage in a quest for the lost object, or at least a substitute for it.

This emotional support received by future mystics may then be combined with religious and ethical teaching and modelling in their family environments (the fourth factor), the result of which could be a predisposition to look for lost objects in the realm of the supernatural. A purely religious quest may become a mystical one when, in late adolescence or adulthood, mystics-to-be have access to mystical institutions (e.g., *ashrams*, monasteries) and/or a mystical mentor-disciple relationship (the fifth factor), in which a religious interpretation of life, originally learned in childhood, is reinforced; the value of a concentrated, as opposed to a distracted, mind is emphasized; and the exercises and skills needed in the mystical life are taught.

Bereavement in the lives of mystics

In addition to a *general* pattern of loss, and of other forms of stress (in early life), *some* mystics sustain a *particular* loss of an acute kind (in childhood, adolescence or early adulthood) that appears to play a major role in their mystical lives. In fact their mystical quest can be partially understood as an attempt to resolve the internal conflict that resulted from this loss. [103] Before focusing on specific examples of loss in the lives of some particular mystics however, a word should be said about other responses to loss.

In normal grieving, bereaved persons may initially refuse to accept the reality, or implications, of the loss, but after a period of several months they learn to adjust to life without the lost object. In other cases the experience of mourning is excessive, prolonged or in some other way disordered. Parkes suggests that the causes of a higher than usual magnitude of grief are both genetic and environmental: "...major determinants of the magnitude of grief can be expected to be personality factors deriving from genetic givens and previous life experience of the individual" (Parkes, 1975:159). In support of the position that a high magnitude of grief is associated with illusions of the deceased, Parkes cites the research findings of Rees (1970):

Those who experience such illusions [of the deceased] or a sense of their spouse's presence reported significantly more loneliness than those who reported no illusions; and they also missed the dead person more, and thought and dreamt of him or her more often. (Parkes, 1975:79)

Illusions of reunion with, and a sense of the presence of, a dead spouse are not uncommon among the bereaved, although Parkes (1975:80) maintains that they are "more common in those...of a `hysteroid' personality type..." In other words, one finds in those given to excessive mourning, a temperament characterized by emotional sensitivity (or a `hysteroid' personality type) and, by implication, a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement (as indicated by susceptibility to illusions). And this is the temperament that is found in many mystics.

One of the environmental factors that appears to be predispositional of the mystical life is a childhood

situation of stress or acute loss. This same factor is cited by Bowlby as one associated with disordered mourning:

A recent study of the responses of analysands to the death of their analysts, by Lord, Ritvo and Solnit (1978), shows a strong association between a history of loss and deprivation during early childhood and disordered mourning...[the ten of the twenty-seven who] responded "with complicated and prolonged mourning...had been exposed to significant emotional deprivation, which included either actual or psychological abandonment or both." This contrasted with a much lower incidence of such experiences in those responding with normal mourning. (Bowlby, 1981:217, fn.3)

Thus it would seem that not only is the temperamental factor common to both a large number of mystics and many of those who are at risk for disordered mourning, but the early environmental stress factor is also probably common to the two groups.

In some, disordered bereavement may precipitate one degree or another of mental illness; and a corresponding attempt at recovery of the lost object. Podvoll cites the case of a schizophrenic patient whose cultivation of psychotic states enabled her to contact her deceased father:

The patient was a virtuoso in the use of techniques for altering her state of consciousness and consequently for achieving experiences of ecstatically destroying her sense of self. From the age of three she was noted to have the need and ability to dance wildly yet with a sense of freedom and abandonment... As she grew up, it was observed that she did this when she was lonely and frustrated; she enjoyed a mystical-religious state while dancing in solitude. During her psychosis this dancing reached a peak of perfection such that she could easily and gracefully achieve an alteration of her sensorium, which then became the vehicle through which she not only could attain blissful experiences, but she had the ability to *communicate with her dead father*. [My emphasis.] (Podvoll, 1979-1980:577)

In others the search for a lost attachment object may provide the motivation for a vocation, as Martha Wolfenstein suggests in her description of the reaction of an eleven-year old boy, named Edward, to the death of his mother:

Following her death...he...announced that he was just like Schliemann, the famous archaeologist. Did the therapist know, he asked, that Schliemann's mother had died when he was eleven? (The facts were slightly altered by the patient to achieve the identity he sought; in actuality Schliemann's mother had died when he was nine.) Continuing the analogy, Edward asserted that, just as Schliemann had discovered unknown things in the earth, so he would discover new things in the skies, in the exploration of space. We may suppose that both Schliemann and this boy were motivated to seek for their lost mothers, whether in the earth or

in heaven... (Wolfenstein, 1969:456)

In addition to scientific discovery, disordered grieving can find expression in the arts. Aberbach considers that this is the case with a number of creative writers, including William Wordsworth and C.N. Bialik:

The poetry of William Worsworth and C.N. Bialik offers further illustrations of how an attachment to objects might derive from a broken bond with a person. Both poets suffered the complete break-up of their families at about the age of 7, Wordsworth after the death of his mother, and Bialik, his father. Both were separated from the surviving parent, and their conditions for mourning were poor.

Among the many likely effects of their loss and separation was the heightening of the poets' response to the natural world, finding in it some of the attributes of parental love and care, and the paradisal emblem of the lost time before the break-up of their families. Nature is frequently depicted in their works as a mother or a nurse, a source of food from which they derive spiritual nourishment, consolation and peace. (Aberbach, 1987:518)

Disordered, or prolonged, mourning can provide the motivation for a creative career in science or the arts, and what is more, Aberbach suggests, religious mysticism may also be a response to prolonged loss - one that permits the bereaved to both accept the loss of the departed, while at the same time continuing to deny it:

In so far as mysticism may be a possible response to loss, it offers a mixture of acceptance and denial not unlike that in normal grief: acceptance, in that searching is not aimed, at least not directly, towards the restoration of the lost person; denial, as searching is not given up, but is directed on to a transcendent being. (Aberbach, 1987:511)

It seems to me that the mystical response to loss should be different from that found in what is normally considered to be "healthy" grieving since the former is marked by *excessive* mourning, and as such it is more akin to the response found in creative persons such as Schliemann, Wordsworth and Bialik. I would suggest that in the case of many mystics and creatives the grieving process is prolonged, and in both it may be transformed. In the latter grief is transformed into scientific discovery or art; in the former into the mystical quest.

That their quest provides some mystics with a means of both accepting and denying the loss of an attachment object, as has been suggested by Aberbach, I hope to demonstrate with citations from the autobiographical writings of four mystics. On the one hand, these mystics came to accept, as do persons who pass through a normal period of mourning, that the attachment object was no longer

available in the usual sense; on the other hand, they relocated the lost object in the realm of the supernatural or else they substituted an object from the spiritual world (e.g., a goddess or saint) for the object that they lost.

This response is not unlike that of many religious persons who are not mystics. However, given the intensity of the attachment, and the keenly felt need for affection, in many mystics, the mere knowledge that the lost object (or its substitute) continues to exist is insufficient. That object must be accessible even if the way to it is painful and arduous. If intimacy with the supernatural realm requires a period of purification or purgation, future mystics have the necessary motivation. At all costs the lost object, or its substitute, must be recovered.

In the autobiographies and biographies of mystics one frequently finds a reference to the death of an attachment object prior to entry into the mystical life. A few examples will serve to illustrate not only the devastating effect that such a loss can have on incipient mystics but also how loss can provide the motivation to follow a mystical vocation, and further, how the particular type of loss can influence the imagery used to describe the mystical journey.

Thérèse of Lisieux

An interesting example of transformed loss is the case of the nineteenth-century French Carmelite nun, Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897). Her short life of twenty-four years is marked with a succession of major losses. To begin with, at two weeks she suffered from an intestinal disorder that was almost fatal; and she suffered another serious illness at three months. Then she was sent to be nursed by a woman in the country (i.e., separated from her mother) for an entire year (Clarke, 1976:6). At four and a half years old, Thérèse's mother died and the profound impact this had upon her is recorded in her autobiography:

...my happy disposition completely changed after Mamma's death. I, once so full of life, became timid and retiring, sensitive to an excessive degree. One look was enough to reduce me to tears, and the only way I was content was to be alone completely. I could not bear the company of strangers and found my joy only within the intimacy of the family. (Martin, 1976:34-35)

The trauma of her mother's death at such a young age had the effect of turning Thérèse into someone who was extremely withdrawn.

Throughout her childhood and adolescence, subsequent to her mother's death, Thérèse was reluctant to associate with other children, except her older sisters. One of these, Pauline, became a surrogate mother to her, but then when Thérèse was nine years old, Pauline entered the local Carmelite convent, and so Thérèse suffered the loss of her "second mother:"

I didn't know what Carmel was, but I understood that Pauline was going to leave me to enter a convent. I understood too, she *would not wait for me* and I was about to loose my second *Mother*! Ah! how can I express the anguish of my heart! In one instant I understood what life was; until then, I had never seen it so sad; but it appeared to me in all its reality, and I saw it was nothing but a continual suffering and separation. I shed bitter tears because I did not yet understand the *joy* of sacrifice. (Martin, 1976:58)

Is it any wonder that she saw life as "nothing but a continual suffering and separation."

It is therefore perfectly understandable that Thérèse would long for another realm -- one in which she believed her mother to be present. Bowlby (1981:161 & 166-167) reports that when mourning is incomplete (as for example in the case of someone like Thérèse who suffers a series of acute losses) there is an increased likelihood of the phenomenon of mislocation. The lost object may be mislocated in another person, in the grave or within the bereaved person herself. At other times the deceased may be mislocated in the form of a presence.

It is therefore not surprising to read in Thérèse's autobiography that on the occasion of her first communion, she experienced the presence of her mother:

...on the day of my First Communion...Wasn't Heaven itself in my soul, and hadn't Mamma taken her place there a long time ago? Thus in receiving Jesus' visit [i.e., in the form of communion], I received also Mamma's. She blessed me and rejoiced at my happiness ...On that day, joy alone filled my heart and I united myself to her who gave herself so irrevocably to Him who gave Himself so lovingly to me! (Martin, 1976:78)

Through participation in the eucharist Thérèse was able to recover her dead mother, since as she herself reasons, her mother was in heaven and through communion heaven entered her (i.e., Thérèse's) soul.

Thus we may have at least a partial explanation for her commitment to the mystical life. On the one hand the grieving process initiated on the occasion of the mother's death resulted in social withdrawal (from all but family members) and on the other hand the refusal to accept the mother's death provided a basis for a continued search. Given her strong formation in religion, Thérèse's search for her lost mother took the form of a spiritual quest. In this way she could satisfy both the demands of her religious conscience as well as her desire to be comforted by her mother.

But unresolved grief and the search for the lost object can account for more than a commitment to religious devotion. When Thérèse was thirteen the sister (i.e., Marie) to whom she turned for nurturance after the departure of Pauline, also joined the local Carmelite convent. At this point Thérèse became so withdrawn that she was unable to continue attending school with other children; instead she took private lessons. When Thérèse herself finally entered the same Carmelite convent

(an institution that encouraged the practice of mystical exercises) at age fifteen, she was not leaving behind anything other than a world in which she felt uncomfortable. Thérèse was rejoining her family.

Paramahansa Yogananda

A twentieth century example of the trauma of parental death and its consequences in terms of predisposing the bereaved toward the mystical life is that of the Hindu yogi Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952). The devastation experienced by Mukunda (Yogananda's name at birth) in his eleventh year as a result of his mother's death is related in the following words:

The melancholy morning came with explicit words: "Mother dangerously ill; marriage postponed; come at once."

Father and I left distractedly....

When we reached our Calcutta home, it was only to confront the stunning mystery of death. I collapsed into an almost lifeless state. *Years passed before any reconciliation entered my heart*. Storming the very gates of heaven, my cries at last summoned the Divine Mother [i.e., the goddess Kali]. Her words brought final healing to my suppurating wounds:

"It is I who have watched over thee, life after life, in the tenderness of many mothers. See in My gaze the two black eyes, the lost beautiful eyes, thou *seekest*!" [My emphasis.] (Yogananda, 1973:17-18)

Here is set forth a very complete statement on religious devotion as a transformation of bereavement. Mukunda suffered a severe trauma ("collapsed into an almost lifeless state"), such that he was unable, by his own admission to resolve his grief for years. Refusing to accept the loss of his mother, he undertook a search for her, calling upon the supernatural realm for help in this quest.

In the end he partially resolved his loss either by "hallucinating" or else by imagining (the text is not clear) a message from the goddess Kali to the effect that his mother was but one of many manifestations of the nurturing female object over the course of many incarnations. On the one hand this notion allowed him to accept the death of his mother, since she was but one of many temporary manifestations; on the other hand the message also permitted him to continue to deny the loss, since the real caregiver, Kali, is immortal, and is therefore potentially, if not always immediately, accessible. In one sense then, his search had terminated. There was no longer any need to go on looking for his mother in the form in which he had known her. In another sense his search in the guise of the spiritual quest had just begun. What began as a search for a lost mother was transformed into a search for ultimate reality.

After he graduated from high school the future Yogananda determined to engage in the mystical path:

...I was now openly planning to leave home. Together with a young friend...I decided to join a Banaras hermitage, Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, and receive its spiritual discipline.

A desolation fell over me one day at the thought of separation from my family. Since Mother's death, my affection had grown especially tender for my two younger brothers...and for...my youngest sister. I rushed to my retreat, the little attic that had witnessed so many scenes in my turbulent *sadhana*. After a two-hour flood of tears I felt singularly transformed...All attachment disappeared; my resolution to seek God as the Friend of friends became adamantine. (Yogananda, 1973:101)

It would seem as though Mukunda determined, on graduating from high school, to resolve his loss in a more complete way by following a spiritual discipline (e.g., meditation and asceticism) within a mystical institution.

However this was not an easy decision to make. His own explanation for the difficulty is simply that he was attached to his brothers and sister. This is consistent with an observation made by Parkes (1975:72) to the effect that an experience of loss in childhood renders one more susceptible to bereavement on subsequent occasions. Thus Mukunda's abnormally intense grieving, at the prospect of leaving home, can be understood in terms of an increased susceptibility as a result of losing his mother in childhood.

An additional, but not mutually exclusive, explanation is also possible. One may suspect that as well as relocating his mother in the goddess Kali, Mukunda has partially relocated her in himself.[104] He has taken a maternal interest in his younger siblings, and therefore he was grieved at the thought of leaving them, not only because he had become more attached to them, but also because he was attached to the maternal role he played within the family. Giving up that role meant losing the mother that was relocated within himself. And yet to gain access to the heavenly mother substitute, he had to enter a mystical institution *away from home*.

Thus, without denying in any way the validity of Yogananda's conscious feelings, it is possible to recognize that at least part of the sorrow experienced, when he decided to leave home for Banaras, was grief over the anticipated loss of the mislocated mother within himself. Whether or not he was also grieving over the mislocated mother in his father as well is not indicated. What can be said however, is that the decision taken by Mukunda at this point in his life represents an acceptance that his mother, as an active force within the family context, is truly dead. What makes it possible for him to resolve this loss is an emotional investment in a transcendental force, at first identified with mother Kali.[105] This investment is due of course to the religious training that Mukunda received as a child. As a result of that same training, he was well aware of the fact that he had to engage in a mystical struggle, and so Mukunda found a mystical institution that would support him in that process.

Teresa of Avila

The sixteenth-century Carmelite nun, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), lost her mother when she was fourteen years old (in spite of the fact that in the passage cited below from her *Life* she says she was twelve). When Teresa realized the full implications of the loss, she sought a substitute for her mother in the Virgin Mary:

I remember that when my mother died I was twelve years old or a little less. When I began to understand what I had lost, I went afflicted, before an image of our Lady and besought her with many tears to be my mother. It seems to me although I did this in simplicity it helped me. For I have found favour with this sovereign Virgin in everything I have asked of her, and in the end she has drawn me to herself. (Teresa of Avila, 1976, Vol.I:34)

Teresa's replacement of the Virgin Mary for her lost mother is explicitly stated. In the case of her father, the matter is somewhat more complex. Even before her father's death, Teresa developed a devotion to two supernatural male figures, i.e., Jesus and St. Joseph. Both performed paternal functions in areas in which her natural father proved to lack competence. However here I will restrict my comments only to the paternal role played by St. Joseph.

Shortly after her profession as a nun, Teresa became seriously ill, and her father took her from the convent to a healer in another town. Unfortunately the healer turned out to be a quack and Teresa got worse. Eventually she was returned to her convent in this worsened condition. It is at this point that Teresa became a devotee of St. Joseph, to whom she attributes her recovery:

Since I saw myself so crippled and still so young and how helpless the doctors of earth were, I resolved to go for aid to the doctors of heaven that they might cure me....

I took for my advocate and lord the glorious St, Joseph and earnestly recommended myself to him. I saw clearly that as in this need so in other greater ones ...this *father* and lord of mine came to my rescue....[My emphasis.]

For he [St. Joseph] being who he is brought it about that I could rise and walk and not be crippled... (Teresa of Avila, 1976, Vol.I:53-54)

Teresa says that since the doctors of earth were helpless, she decided to go to the doctors of heaven, and although she does not say so explicitly, it is not difficult to see that, since her earthly father was unable to arrange a cure for her, Teresa obtained a heavenly substitute who could do so. Not only in the above citation, but in other passages in her *Life* as well, Teresa refers to St. Joseph as her father. In spite of her disillusionment with her father, Teresa remained emotionally close to him and his death, some years after her recovery, was a painful experience for her:

At this time my father was seized with an illness that lasted for some days and from which he died...

I suffered much hardship from his sickness. I believe I served him somewhat for the trials he suffered during mine. Although I was very sick, I forced myself. Since in losing him I was losing every good and joy, and he was everything to me, I had great determination not to show him my grief...When I saw him coming to the end of his life, it seemed my soul was being wrenched from me, for I loved him dearly. (Teresa of Avila, 1976, Vol.I:61)

For the next fourteen years Teresa was engaged in a mystical struggle, the stage which Underhill (1955) refers to as the purification of the self, at which point she experienced her first rapture (i.e., entered the stage Underhill calls the illumination of the self). During the illumination stage, Teresa had visions of her heavenly parents, the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, an example of which is the following:

On one of these...days...I was reflecting upon the many sins I had in the past confessed in that house [a Dominican monastery] and many things about my wretched life. A rapture came upon me so great that it almost took me out of myself...It seemed to me while in this state that I saw myself vested in a white robe of shining brightness, but at first I didn't see who was clothing me in it. Afterward I saw our Lady at my right side and my father St. Joseph at the left, for they were putting that robe on me. I was given to understand that I was now cleansed of my sins. After being clothed and while experiencing the most marvellous delight and glory, it seemed to me then that our Lady took me by the hands. She told me I made her very happy in serving the glorious St. Joseph... (Teresa of Avila, 1976, Vol.I:225-226)

The years of spiritual struggle, which followed upon the loss of the parents to whom she was so attached, were finally rewarded by an ecstatic encounter with the heavenly parental substitutes.[106] It appears that Teresa remained somewhat ambivalent regarding her decision to adopt St. Joseph as her father, but in this rapturous vision, she received assurance from the Virgin Mary that she had made the right choice.

Not two years after the vision cited above, Teresa recovered, again in a rapturous vision, her actual parents:

One night, being so ill that I wanted to excuse myself from mental prayer, I took my rosary [a devotion she had learned from her mother] in order to occupy myself in vocal prayer. I tried not to recollect my intellect, even though externally I was recollected in the oratory...I was doing this for only a short while when a spiritual rapture came upon me so forcefully that I had no power to resist it. It seemed to me that I was brought into heaven, and the persons I saw were my father and mother. (Teresa of Avila, 1976, Vol.I:257)

Thus not only did Teresa recover the substitute objects, the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, but the

original lost attachment objects themselves. Just as exceptional artists and scientists may transform their grief into some creative project, mystics, such as Teresa of Avila, transform their grief into a heroic attempt at self-mastery (i.e., the purification of the self), resulting in the stage of mystical illumination, in which the lost object, in one form or another, is recovered. It may be that what is "recovered" is the supernatural replacement object, but occasionally it is the original lost object itself, albeit relocated in a heavenly realm.

Satomi Myodo

While the relevant loss most frequently referred to by mystics is not surprisingly that of a parent, there are reports of other types of lost attachment objects as well. A twentieth-century Japanese Buddhist nun, Satomi Myodo (1896-1978), is a case in point. In her early twenties she went to Tokyo, with her youngest daughter, a nursing infant, to study at Tokyo University (her only other child remained with her parents in their mountain village in Hokkaido). She regularly left her daughter alone in her apartment while she was at the university, and so her husband, from whom she was separated, along with her husband's mother and aunt, came and removed the baby. Satomi was beside herself with grief:

...all day long I pulled the futon quilt over my head and cried. I felt desolate without the baby sleeping in my arms. The child whom I had once felt to be a burden had really been the motivating force behind all my activities. It was precisely because the baby was there that I had been able to conquer all obstacles and press forward like a hero. (Satomi Myodo, 1987:19)

It is understandable that a mother would be upset over the loss of her daughter, but in Satomi's case her daughter appears to have represented something more. It seems likely that her youngest daughter was a concrete expression of a personality ideal longing to be born from within her.

Satomi was especially vulnerable to the loss of her daughter as a result of feelings of alienation from her parents that had their origins in her early childhood (1987:70). These feelings were undoubtedly behind her sense of impurity and moral ugliness (1987:46) as well as her sense of having failed her father (1987:8, 18-19 & 68-69). Hence her spiritual journey can be interpreted, at least in part, as an attempt to regain the intimacy she once enjoyed with her parents before her experience of alienation. This would explain why the means that enabled Satomi to enter into contact with the spirit world (a symbol of the experience of the communion she once had with her mother) was the chant (*Namu Amaterasu Omikami*) used by her mother, when Satomi was a child (1987:47). It would also explain why one of the metaphors Satomi uses for her *satori* experience is that of returning home:

It is also clear to me that the return of this lost child to the original home for which she longed is a gift. I have returned home thanks to the compassion and skill of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. (Satomi Myodo, 1987:107)

Nevertheless any understanding of Satomi's mystical quest that fails to take into consideration the loss of her child remains incomplete.

Some form of searching behaviour, conscious or unconscious, is part of healthy grieving (Bowlby, 1981:87), but Satomi's mourning was clearly disordered as is indicated by the intense and irrational nature of her search for her lost child:

Unable to bear it, I would rise from bed like a sleep walker and wander around outside, letting my faltering feet lead me where they would. When I came to my senses, I was always standing in front of that aunt's house in Kanda, where my husband used to live. Wondering if the child was there, I would sneak around to the back and then to the front, like a thief. I would peek through a gap in the door and look around. Then, always disheartened, I would trudge back home. There was no reason to assume that either the baby or the others would be at this aunt's house. *Although I knew this, I couldn't let it be without repeating it over and over like a daily lesson.* [My emphasis.] (Satomi Myodo, 1987:19)

After several months of obsessive preoccupation with the loss of her child, Satomi had a complete nervous breakdown and had to be institutionalized.

Upon her release from the mental hospital, she joined a theatre company and entered into a relationship with a man several years her junior. One form extended mourning can take is that of mislocating the lost object in another person (Bowlby, 1981:161-162). From various remarks made by Satomi, it is not difficult to see that her lost child was mislocated in her young lover:

...he was a hard case who stood head and shoulders above the others in badness. Yet he had not lost his childish innocence, and his manner was bashful....

he spoke in broken phrases: "I...I don't have a mother." I was moved by his words and felt that I understood him. On that occasion I made a secret resolution in my heart.

I...began a life with Ryo-chan. I felt I had to watch over this wild youth until he attained maturity. (Satomi Myodo, 1987:28-29)

In spite of her resolution, Satomi eventually left Ryo-chan in order to become a *miko*, or Shinto medium. Shortly after her departure she engaged in the following reflection:

One day in the early afternoon as I was doing some sewing, I mused absent-mindedly about Ryo-chan, thinking that parting from a child leaves one feeling sad forever; it's a bad thing. Ryo-chan would always be a child to me. (Satomi Myodo, 1987:41)

Satomi's relationship with Ryo-chan was a transformation of her original attempt to recover her lost child. Instead of recovering the original child, Satomi acquired a substitute child. Ultimately the substitute failed to satisfy, hence her search continued, but with another transformation.

Whereas initially Satomi conducted the search in the external world, she now sought to recover the lost object in the internal world -- i.e., the world of Shinto spirit-possession. If the lost object itself, or a substitute, cannot be found, the pathologically bereaved may seek to return to a point in time prior to the loss. For Satomi this appears to have taken the form of a search for a substitute fetus -- i.e., for spirits within her body. However this too failed to satisfy her intense yearning:

I actually acquired a degree of self-confidence in these things and was highly valued as a *miko*. But the empty space in my heart was still not filled. Something unknown deep within my heart kept after me. (Satomi Myodo, 1987:65)

Satomi's attempt at recovering the lost object went through a third transformation. Instead of seeking an object as such, either externally or internally, she now engaged in the search for the Buddha nature, and when she succeeded, one of the metaphors she chose from the stock of available options was that of giving birth:

In that moment, strange things began to happen. First...what seemed like a life-soul made of gaseous substance spontaneously came into being and swelled up and up until it became, in the next moment, some kind of strange and unknown animal-like creature. Like a monkey climbing up a branch, it ascended quickly and agilely. In a moment it reached the top and bumped its head against the sky. Just then, I myself unmistakably became Amenominakanushino-Okami [the creator spirit]. This went a step beyond the spheres of kami possession...In the next moment, the room shrank and the universe was transformed into its essence and appeared at my feet...

The next moment, the whole world became a deep blue, glowing and rippling, magnificent whole. "Ah! I gave birth to Buddha and Christ!...The unborn, first parent...that's me! I gave birth to me! I was what I am before my parents were born!" (Satomi Myodo, 1987:75-76)

In this passage, all four phases of her search seem to be represented. Her original child is represented by the life-soul swelling up within her. This form becomes that of an animal-like creature, reminiscent of both the unruliness and innocence of her young lover. Next she describes her encounter with a *kami*, the kind she often had when she was a *miko*; and she says that her "original face," or the Buddha nature itself, emerged. If this interpretation seems somewhat tenuous, at least there is no questioning the fact that Satomi conceived of her *satori* experience in terms of a birth. It may also be more than a coincidence that in her state of ecstatic gratitude she picked up the

abandoned dog that she had been caring for and held him in her arms. Her internal emptiness, intensified by the loss of her child, now was filled through an act of giving birth to her spiritual self, and the baby that she once held in her arms has now been replaced by the sentient being that is at hand. Disordered grieving led her to the threshold of a new personality -- one in which a capacity for profound depression gave way to a capacity for profound appreciation.

Meditation as a means of transforming disordered mourning

The accounts cited above seem to indicate that in the lives of at least some mystics, meditation or mental prayer frequently provides the context for a transformation of disordered grief into a spiritual quest. Additional support for this position can be found in descriptions of meditation experiences reported by members of religious orders, who, while not famous mystics, nevertheless have mystical aspirations.

The following account, recorded by John Blofeld, is of a Ch'an Buddhist monk in a monastery in Kunming, Yunnan. The monk is describing the experience he frequently has following a session of meditation:

Afterwards, I am left in a state of marvellous happiness. A light shines within me and about me, and they are One...And when the meditation period is over, I feel as if everything that happens to me is good; as if all of it is directed by the Light; as if, without thinking much, I do just what is best for me to do; as if I am being carried by a great stream just where it is best for me to go. Then, sooner or later, from habit I do something which brings me against the current of the stream; the Light fades and I am as before, but for awhile I am lonely *as when I was first separated from my mother*. [My emphasis.] I think this is because I have a heavy load of *Karma* which drags me back and sets me against the stream again and again. What gives me hope is that, each time all this happens, the Light seems to stay with me a little longer. (Blofeld, 1972:172)

In this passage a state of "marvellous happiness" is set in opposition to the kind of despair that the monk experienced when he "first separated from his mother." On the one hand meditation seems to assist him in getting in touch with his unresolved grief; on the other, it produces in him a corresponding elation. This elation helps the monk to overcome a serious negative effect of his loss (i.e., discouragement resulting from depression), and in addition the elation he experiences reinforces his commitment to the mystical path.

Meditation may also play a role in transforming the sought-after lost object from a temporal to a celestial one. An example can be found in the following excerpt from the diary of a twentieth-century Japanese monk:

Each time I started out to do *zazen* I visualized the *honzon* of the Buddha and prayed, "Please let me attain enlightenment!" Then I worshipped Kannon, the sixteen Arhats, the Bodhisattva Jizo (Sanskrit: Ksitigarbha), and the two Patriarchs [i.e., Daruma and Dogen], and when I prayed for the intercession of my parents, who died when I was still a child, my feelings welled up in me. Thus I experienced for the first time in my life the meaning of trusting surrender to the Buddhas and patriarchs. (Izuka, 1956:190)

First the monk called on a number of celestial caregivers, including the maternal Kannon, and then he called on his lost parents. That his grief for the loss of his parents remained unresolved is indicated by the fact that his "feelings welled up." At the same time, the visualization served a function beyond that of liberating repressed grief. As a result of the visualization exercise, the Buddhist celestials came to replace his lost parents. The monk was thus able to regress to an earlier stage of psychosocial development where he could once again surrender to omnipotent caregivers and experience a sense of basic trust. Like ordinary parents, Buddhist celestial caregivers make demands upon their "children." Unlike most ordinary parents, however, the demands that Buddhist celestials make upon monks are those that pertain to the mystical path.

An even clearer example of the transfer of affect from a deceased parent to a supernatural substitute can be found in the experience of a Catholic nun during her stay at a retreat centre in rural Quebec. In her childhood, this woman had been under considerable stress -- her mother died when she was quite young, she was subsequently mistreated by her stepmother and then when she was fifteen her father killed himself; she interpreted his suicide as rejection. Twenty-five years later, on a retreat, she was able to resolve the grieving that resulted from her father's death. The following account was written by a fellow retreatant who both witnessed the event described and had access to the nun's retreat journal:

> As she worked in the kitchen, carefully cutting the potatoes and onions into neat, tiny, pieces, she prayed over and over the new breath prayer [the retreat centre was eclectic in terms of meditation and prayer techniques] she and Peter [one of the retreat directors] had chosen the night before: "Loving Father, be my love," and suddenly her heart thawed, moving in her with joy. She felt flowers open in her chest like roses in sunlight, sending shocks of life through her, until she leaned dizzily over the sink. It hurts to be this much alive she thought; it hurts to be this much loved. The Father [i.e., the first person of the Christian Trinity] was her Father. Her earthly father, sad and weak, had been only a shadow of the real one, not a source of love, but a poor man, to be pitied and forgiven. (Rogers, 1983:132)

The concentration achieved by the recitation of the short prayer, "Loving Father, be my love," produced an exalted state of consciousness in which the bereaved nun was able to replace her deceased father with a supernatural one. Her need for protection and affection from a father-figure remained, but because she was able to look to a supernatural being to fulfil this function she could

take a more detached attitude toward her natural father. In this way she could accept her father's death, and even the fact of his having chosen to die, while at the same time denying that she was bereft of fatherly support. In fact now for the first time she was able to interpret the notion of God in terms that implied psychospiritual liberation.

Summary

From the examples given above, it can be seen that the loss of a significant attachment object can play an important role in the lives of at least some mystics. As a result of a temperament characterized by emotional sensitivity and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement, combined with a childhood environment of loss, alienation or some other form of stress, the four mystics examined above appear to have been particularly at risk for disordered or pathological mourning. However because of the affection, and religious training and modelling, they received, these mystics were able to transform their intense grief into a religious quest. Access to mystical institutions, to which the mystics were predisposed, served to encourage a further transformation of a simple religious quest into a mystical one. Hence it would seem that certain temperamental and environmental factors contributed to the mystics' experience of disordered grieving while other factors facilitated its resolution.

This is not to argue that the mystical path, as described for example by Evelyn Underhill (1955), is no more than a resolution of a condition of intense grieving. It is rather to suggest that grief can precipitate, to one degree or another, a process of searching. In some instances, the search is successfully resolved, in others the search takes on a bizarre or dysfunctional form, in others the search results in a creative product of value to many members of the society at large, and in still others the search is expressed in a process of psychospiritual transformation.

Of additional interest to students of mysticism is the way in which the type of lost attachment object appears to influence the metaphors used by many mystics, and would-be mystics, to describe the spiritual life and its conclusion. The loss of a mother frequently gives rise to a search for a supernatural mother in the form of a goddess or saint. When it is a father who has died, then a fatherly supernatural image is invoked. In one case examined, the salient loss was that of a child, and so the imagery used for the quest was that of inner emptiness, and the metaphor for the mystical goal that of giving birth. Of course the images available for mystics to use in describing the mystical life are chosen from the stock of images within the general culture. However within that larger set of images individual mystics make choices and one influence on these is the type of loss sustained.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

In this study I focus upon experiences of internal conflict found in a number of mystics. Through an analysis of descriptions of such experiences found in the works of scholars, manuals of mysticism and the personal documents of mystics themselves, I have articulate a descriptive definition. As a means of better understanding the experience of internal conflict, which I refer to as a mystical struggle, I have interpreted it in terms of a theory of personality development (a teleological "explanation"). A mystical struggle was found to similar to an advanced stage of personality (multilevel disintegration) as described in Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of personality development.

I also propose five factors (temperamental and environmental) that appear to play a role in fostering a mystical vocation. Empirical data, albeit varying in quantity and quality, is cited in support of the five factors. The data cited in support of a temperamental factor tends to confirm the explanation offered by both William James and Evelyn Underhill for the inner turmoil found in numerous mystics, as well as creative and mentally ill persons. The four environmental factors identified, and supported by empirical data, provide a means of explaining why some become mystics instead of creatives or mentally disturbed. Hence I have shown it is credible to recognize the significance of the social environment in the fostering of a mystical vocation.

Where it is found, the mystical struggle is an early stage in the mystical life. The struggle itself can be divided into a number of substages. It may begin with a vague apprehension that somehow things could be better or that there is something missing in one's life. The second substage is the experience referred to by Underhill as the awakening. At this point a highly salient religious purpose or goal is established within the psyche: beginning mystics are determined to overcome ignorance, to become enlightened, to realize intimacy with a deity, etc. The result of the awakening is the third substage, in which emotional turmoil is experienced. Teresa of Avila speaks of vexation, frustration, remorse (or repentance with tears); Isaac Eizik of "smallness of soul," melancholy and aridity; Kao P'an-lung of agitation, lack of peace, unhappiness and apathy; and Satomi Myodo of frustration with herself, self-hate, and guilt. While the negative emotions experienced vary to some extent, from one mystic to another, what is common to them all is a set of common themes.

Three of these have to do with the contents of consciousness. Those undergoing the mystical struggle can be seen as possessing an ideal of competence, virtuous living and an ultimate, or religious, ideal (e.g., enlightenment, liberation, intimacy or union with a deity, harmony with a principle underlying the cosmos). The competence dimension is indicated when Augustine speaks of a freed will; when al-Ghazzali refers to detachment; and Satomi Myodo of control over feelings. The ethical dimension is alluded to by Satomi Myodo when she speaks of purity and Isaac Eizik of practising the *mizvoth*. Expressions of the ultimate ideal, or spiritual, dimension are: al-Ghazzali's devotion to God; Augustine's spirit; and Kao P'an-lung's principle. At the same time mystics, at the beginning of their journey, find they are unable to realize these ideals. Instead of self-control, they find themselves controlled by their impulses and passions. Instead of living virtuously, they note, to their shame, that

they are all too willing to do that which they regard as vice. And instead of enjoying what they have identified as the religious goal, they are discouraged to discover how far they are from it.

A fourth dimension of the mystical struggle is what I have referred to as the formal dimension. Here the focus is not on the contents of consciousness - not on an object of reflection - but rather on the form of consciousness. The mind can be focused or distracted. It may be focused on virtue, enlightenment, control of impulses, on an evening sunset, or on some event of the day - i.e., the content may be any topic whatsoever - but the mind is concentrated or attentive to the subject under consideration. This is the form of consciousness desired by aspiring mystics. But to their dismay, they find that they are unable to concentrate or fix their attention. Instead their mind jumps from one subject to another - in a word, they possess a distracted or disunified mind.

The substage just described is what James refers to as the divided self and Underhill as the oscillating self. The fourth substage consists in making a commitment is made to undertake mystical training. The training itself constitutes the fifth and last substage (called by Underhill, the purification of the self). Most mystics, usually through the support and direction obtained in a mystical institution, engage in the regular practice of meditation and asceticism. One function of the latter appears to be the weakening of the power of the less desirable poles of what I have called the content dimensions of the mystical struggle. A function of meditation seems to be as an aid in achieving the desired goals of competence, virtue and realization of the ultimate. Meditation also results in the ability to focus the mind, since that is the goal of the exercise.

James places very little emphasis on this substage. From the perspective of Dabrowski's model of personality development, this is unfortunate, because it is the deliberate practice of asceticism and meditation that distinguishes organized multilevel disintegration from spontaneous multilevel disintegration. In the former persons have control over their development, whereas in the latter, personality disintegration is perceived as something whose cause is external to the self. What Dabrowski calls global (as opposed to partial) reintegration of the personality, can occur only subsequent to *organized* multilevel disintegration. Any reintegration of personality that occurs subsequent to *spontaneous* multilevel disintegration is partial, and therefore unstable, not to mention less profound.

Both James and Underhill consider that a peculiar temperament of emotional sensitivity (a trait closely resembling Dabrowski's emotional overexcitability) and a heightened capacity for imaginative involvement (similar to Dabrowski's imaginational overexcitability) is the origin of the mystical struggle. However they also state that the same temperament may give rise to creativity or mental illness. They do not mention that experiences of loss are frequently found in the early environments of all three groups. Nor do they indicate what predispositional factors distinguish the three groups from each other.

The five-factor model that I have proposed in Chapters Seven to Ten is more complete in two senses. It sees the disturbed condition, common to the early years of many members of all three groups, as

arising in part from a temperamental factor in conjunction with a stressful environment, not just a temperamental factor by itself. Further, the model suggests that there are at least three environmental factors (i.e., emotional support in childhood, training and modelling in childhood and institutional support in late adolescence or adulthood) that are salient in predisposing persons toward a creative life, the mystical path or mentally illness.

In the case of potential mystics, it is suggested that emotional and imaginational overexcitability render them more susceptible to loss. Hence they tend to overreact to the losses that occur in their lives. It also seems that they sustain greater and more intense losses than average. The combined result of these two factors is a tendency to devalue the "world" in which the losses occurred and a tendency to withdraw from contacts with others. These two factors also give rise to feelings of worthlessness and meaninglessness.

However due to the emotional support received, future mystics are able to hope in the possibility of discovering meaning and arriving at a state or condition of worthiness. As a result of religious training and modelling, meaning and self-worth are understood within the context of a religious paradigm. The religious world view thus predisposes them to participation in a mystical institution, which in turn confirms the religious paradigm, in most cases intensifies the feelings of unworthiness, interprets these feelings in terms of a stage in the mystical growth process and teaches aspirants the skills necessary to persevere and achieve the mystical goal.

By employing a model of personality development to interpret the mystical life, it is possible to see that from a psychological perspective the *telos* or goal is akin to the reintegration of personality at a more flexible, adaptive and effective level of functioning. The mystical struggle can then be considered as performing the function of a transitional period in personality development - i.e., the transition between a primitive level of personality integration to a more advanced one. This is not to argue that there is no more to the claims of mystics than references to the development of personality expressed in the culturally conditioned language of the contemporary religious milieu. But it is simply to say, that whatever else may be true, the mystical struggle appears to have a psychological function in the lives of a number of mystics.

What I have done in the pages above is to describe, in a systematic way, the beginning of the mystical life, i.e., the mystical struggle, in concepts, and even terms, found within the mystical traditions themselves. I have also provided a model of factors that foster mystical struggle, and I have interpreted that struggle in terms of a theory of personality development, in order to indicate that from a psychological point of view the *telos* of the mystical struggle is the realization of a personality reintegrated at a more effective level of functioning.

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[1] Both Kakar (1981:25-28) and Shafii (1985:12 &207) are of the opinion that psychoanalytic models are inappropriate for analyzing the advanced stages of yogic and Sufi development respectively. This is not to say that psychoanalytic models have no place in the analysis of at least the early stages of the mystical life. But in addition to examining the inner conflict of the mystic my concern is to suggest that there is probably a psychological relationship between that conflict and the *telos* of the mystical life. Psychoanalysis relates conflict to childhood origins; the theory of positive disintegration relates it to a final level of personality. On the other hand the predispositional factors discussed in Chapters Seven to Ten could very profitably be related to psychoanalytic theory, although to do so is beyond the objectives of this study.

[2] It is interesting to note that while there are psychoanalytic studies of mystics, e.g., Kakar's study of

Vivekananda (1982:160-181) and Romano's of Teresa of Avila (1981:261-295), there are to my knowledge no Jungian analyses of personal documents of mystics. This is surprising given the popularity of Jung among scholars of religion.

[3] For some scholars of mysticism, a mystic is defined only in terms of such an experience. Hence, Elmer O'Brien, in the context of distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic mystics provides the following definition: "Authentic mystics will be solely those who have had, once or often, briefly or habitually, an experiential awareness of God" (O'Brien, 1965:16). O'Brien's definition is so inclusive that it makes anyone a mystic who, for example, has undergone a typical evangelical Christian conversion experience or who has "felt the presence of God" at a prayer meeting. Furthermore because of the theological assumption contained within it, the definition excludes non-theistic mystical experiences. From a psychological point of view there is no reason to include even an implicit reference to a particular interpretation of what is conceived to be ultimate reality for those designated by the term mystic.

[4] For example see Ibn Arabi, *Journey to the Lord of Power* (1981); Gampopa, *The jewel ornament of liberation* (1971); and Adolphe Tanquerey, *The spiritual life: A treatise on ascetical and mystical theology* (1930). Other examples will be cited in Chapter Two.

[5] Published, not to mention translated, personal documents of mystics, even when broadly defined, are already few and far between. A restrictive definition of a mystic means that even fewer sources would be available to the scholar of comparative mysticism.

[6] Robert Ellwood's concise, but sensitive, definition is:

> Mystical experience is experience in a religious context that is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experiencer as an encounter with ultimate reality in a direct nonrational way that engenders a deep sense of unity and of living during the experience on a level of being other than the ordinary. (Ellwood, 1980:29)

[7] Another set of characteristics of mystical experience, which to my knowledge has not been employed as a basis for a questionnaire used in experimental or field research can be found in Scharfstein (1974:141-175).

[8] Someone who has argued for a philosophical equivalency of concepts from two distinct mystical traditions however is Izutsu. Katz (1978:54) argues that the Sufi notion of *baqa* (subsistence in God following the loss of personal identity) has no equivalent in Buddhism, since "in Buddhist doctrine...there is no God or God-like being..." Logically he would have to say the same thing of philosophical Taoism, and yet Izutsu (1983:476) argues, not just for a psychological equivalency, but for a philosophical one, between the concept of *baqa* and the latter half of Chuang-tsu's third stage in the mystical process.

[9] Two attempts to do so are Wilber (1979 & 1980) and Washburn (1988). The models presented in both works belong to the school of transpersonal psychology, or as Washburn prefers, transpersonal theory. Wilber's set of stages is derived from Hindu, Buddhist and contemporary psychological sources. References to Sufism, Christian mysticism and Kabalah are few and curiously there seems to be no place for the mystical struggle. Although Wilber's 27-stage model has been available for over a decade, I am unaware of any applications of it to the personal documents of mystics. The model provided by Washburn - a synthesis primarily of Freud, Jung, Arieti and Wilber - does include a detailed analysis of the mystical struggle. It is too soon to say whether or not Washburn's theory will find a place in the psychological study of mysticism. Both models are theoretical and their primary purpose is not to provide a tool for the analysis of the lives of mystics but to describe the process of human growth in terms that relate to the insights of both contemporary psychology as well as the traditional schools of mysticism. No attempt is made by either Wilber or Washburn to apply their theories to individual mystical lives.

[10] To this extent credit has to be given to Underhill for making the effort to be inclusive, in spite of the fact that mystical manuals and personal documents of mystics, now accessible to scholars, were unavailable to her.

[11] This point is discussed more fully in the introduction to Chapter Four.

[12] Underhill's stages are described in greater detail in Chapter Four.

[13] In some cases Mahadevan quotes the older work verbatim, although he fails to credit his source.

[14] A more detailed discussion of James' notion of the divided self and of Underhill's purification of the self is undertaken in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

[15] In fact there are many different types of Christian meditation. Probably Enomiya-Lasalle is here referring to the Jesuit Spiritual Exercises, in which the meditator visualizes scenes, e.g., from the life of Christ. On the other hand, the method advocated by the 14th century anonymous author of *The cloud of unknowing*, has as its goal the emptying of the mind. At the same time in Zen practice one finds repentance and resolutions to live a better moral life (and even devotion to a personal supernatural being) as the following citation from a personal account of a disciple of Zen master Ryoko Yasutani shows:

My eyes well up, tears flow, the letters of the sutra become blurred. "The inexhaustible defilements - I vow to cut through them." That pertains to me. The sutra admonishes me. If I were to die tonight, it would not be an early death. Sixty years have already passed. But can I die thus, so full of errors and defilements?...Tears flow, tears of repentance, tears of sympathy. O Kannon, Bodhisattva of great kindness and great mercy, take away my passions and defilements! (Yasutani, 1959:178ff)

These sentiments of remorse and the resolve to change (as well as the petition to Kuan-yin) were occasioned by the reflective chanting of a Buddhist scripture - an exercise not so very different from the Christian practice of discursive meditation on a Biblical passage.

[16] A similar model of three types, or stages, of soul, can be found in the Zohar, according to Gershom Sholem (1954:240-241 & 1977:156-157). *Nefesh*, or the natural soul, is the one "capable of sin;" *neshamah*, the spark of divinity within a person, "can be realized only by the perfect devotee;" and in between these two is *ruah*, a "stage that involves the ethical power to distinguish between good and evil." Another brief description of the same model can be found in Aaron Roth's 1934 essay, "Agitation of the soul:"

> Now it is well known from the books of wisdom (the kabbalistic works) that just as man has three categories of soul - *nefesh*, *ru'ah* and *neshamah* - so, too, our holy Torah has three categories. When a man studies the Torah or carries out the precepts in a plain manner, his own *nefesh* adheres to the *nefesh* of the holy Torah....When a man studies the Torah or worships the Lord in a spirit of greater inwardness, there rests upon him that degree of holiness which derives from the category of *ru'ah*, of greater inwardness. If he worships the Lord with fear and with refined thoughts, there then rests upon him that degree of holiness of the *neshamah* with the result that he achieves holiness of thought. (Cited in Jacobs, 1978:246-247)

[17] The phrase "average man" is as Louis Jacobs (Dobh Baer, 1963:149, fn.8) explains it, a technical term in Habad teaching: "The `average man' (*benoni*) is he who commits no sin but has a constant struggle with his evil inclination." Once he has successfully conquered his evil inclination, through fasting and mortification, he is known as a *tzaddik*, or righteous man.

[18] Scholarly opinion is divided on the merit of Coster's study. Borelli (1985) says it is "One of the first good comparative works and still useful..." On the other hand, Frits Staal is less enthusiastic:

[Coster's book] must unfortunately be pronounced unsuccessful. The reason is the incredibly slipshod interpretations of the Yoga, and in particular Patanjali's *Yogasutra*...These interpretations affect not only points of detail, but fundamental issues. (Staal, 1975:114)

However the only example Staal provides of a misinterpretation of a fundamental concept is Coster's interpretation of the goal of yoga, i.e., *kaivalya*. Coster says *kaivalya* is a state of unification, by which she meant psychological unification. Staal mistakenly assumes she is referring to a unification of a metaphysical kind, and then provides a critique of this position. It is interesting to note that Coster's, but not Staal's, complete interpretation is consistent with that of Taimni 1961:373 & 445).

[19] Datte's remarks regarding spiritual reading are equally applicable to spiritual audition - i.e., listening to sermons or commentaries on mystical texts.

[20]

___ In spite of Paul's report of his mystical experience (II Cor.12:2), his emphasis on salvation in a future world and on faith may seem distinctly non-mystical, if not incompatible with mysticism. However Schweitzer (1953:24-25) argues that in Paul can be found a mystical doctrine as well as eschatological and juridical notions of redemption; and that "mystical knowledge does not depreciate faith but completes it." Schweitzer's conclusion is that,

> Paul is therefore a mystic. And yet he has not the usual mentality of a mystic. The exoteric and the esoteric go hand in hand. This too goes back ultimately to the fundamental fact that in him mysticism is combined with a non-mystical conception of the world. (Schweitzer, 1953:25)

[21] ___ Not everyone accepts Augustine as a mystic. A review of Augustine's detractors and defenders in this regard can be found in Clark (1984). Within the tradition of Catholic mystical studies, it has been argued that the quality of "passivity" [divine initiative alone] is missing from the religious experiences described in the *Confessions*, and that Augustine is too philosophical or Platonic; and others deny that he experienced the goal of the spiritual marriage. Theological disputes as to whether any given experience conforms to an orthodox understanding of what is mystical are outside of the scope of this study. Further while Augustine's experiences definitely had a strong intellectual or philosophical dimension, the affective side was not missing. Finally, according to the definition of mystic I am employing, it is not necessary for Augustine to have attained the goal of the "spiritual marriage." The fact that Augustine was not exclusively a mystic may also give some the impression that he was no mystic at all. On the other hand, Happold's judgement is that,

> While he never reached the heights of mystical vision of a Ruysbroeck or a St. John of the Cross, nor wrote any treatise of the highest order on the Contemplative Life, the experiences he describes in the *Confessions* are undeniably mystical in character. His importance lies in his balance...He was able to combine in himself the practical administrator, the brilliant philosophical and theological thinker, and the mystic. (Happold, 1970:229)

[22] ___ The question as to whether autobiographical writing reveals anything about a person behind the text or simply describes a (fictional) person within the text is an important one for historians, psychohistorians and in fact all those researchers (anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists) who rely upon data obtained from interviews and personal documents. The issues involved are far too complex, and the relevant literature far too vast, for the question to be seriously considered, much less resolved, in the current study.

Although my personal feeling is that autobiographical writing does reveal something about a person behind the text, I am also convinced that as the debate, initiated by literary critics (for two discussions on this topic see Gordon, 1988 & Jay, 1987), continues and is engaged by social scientists, it will no longer be possible to assume with the same degree of confidence as has been the case up until now that the person revealed within the text corresponds exactly to a person behind the text.

[23] It is the opinion of Sally King, the translator of Satomi Myodo's autobiography, that Satomi achieved some measure of enlightenment:

Following her *kensho* experience, Satomi-san continued for years in her study of Zen with Yasutani Roshi. She successfully passed each koan in the entire koan series, thus completing her formal Zen training. Even with the koans behind her, she continued the practice of Zen for the rest of her life; enlightenment, it is said, can be deepened infinitely. (King, 1987:110)

Satomi's intense struggle to realize the goal of Zen Buddhism and her succession of *kensho* experiences qualifies her as a mystic in terms of the definition provided in Chapter I.

[24] It might be noted in passing that all of the above quotations from the personal documents of mystics contain references (some of which are quite emphatic) to the effect that the less honourable pole of the divided self is not the real self. In other words it is clear that when mystics reflect back upon their experience, they are, to one degree or another, at pains to distance themselves from that which is morally reprehensible or religiously less worthy. This is especially true for Paul ("...it is no longer I that do it" and "I delight in the law of God, in my *inmost self*, but I see in my *members* another law...") and Augustine ("The enemy had control of my will...," "...it was not so much myself, since in large part I suffered it against my will..."). Both Al-Ghazzali and Teresa of Avila speak of being bound; Rabbi Isaac attributes his temptations to demonic forces (as does also Augustine); and Satomi Myodo excuses herself by saying that she was "Carried away with emotion..." Finally Kao P'an-lung is able to maintain a distance from what would otherwise be experienced as unmitigated personal failure by describing his situation in terms of impersonal abstractions ("...principle and desire waged battle upon battle..."). Although this distancing is not part of the phenomenon of the divided self as such, it is so common to retrospective reports that one may well suspect that it plays a role in the process of the reunification of the self. Another device used to accomplish the same end is that found in the autobiographies of Heinrich Suso and Ignatius of Loyola. Both refer to themselves in the third person.

[25] While the Ahmadiyya Movement is critical of what it calls mysticism, this term is understood as referring to what I would call folk or popular mysticism - e.g., making prayers and offerings to deceased saints. An article in a publication of that branch of the movement based in Rabwah, Pakistan clearly distinguishes between classical Sufism, which is admired, and folk or popular mystical practices (Ali, 1990).

[26] *Kensho* is a mystical experience. Although strictly speaking the Rinzai sect considers it to be enlightenment, it is held that there are degrees of *kensho* (Wood, 1984). Given its location at the beginning of the ox-herding pictures and prior to the mystical struggle it seems to me best to consider this first experience of officially recognized *kensho* as roughly equivalent to what Underhill calls the awakening. Sekida (1975:232) points out that very strict Zen masters have refused to recognize any *kensho* short of complete enlightenment. In this case, the official mystical model would not include a

kensho experience before the mystical struggle.

[27] "Habituation of the mind" has obviously been used instead of "meditation" as the English translation of *bhavanam* in order not to confuse focused reflection, on a subject or theme, with one-pointed concentration. In translations of *The yoga sutras* invariably the word "meditation" is reserved for the latter practice. However *bhavanam* does carry with it the idea of meditation and is so used in early Buddhist literature, as in the meditation on the stages of the decomposition of a corpse (see Dayal, 1975:93).

[28] In addition to the these apparently common dimensions of the mystical struggle, there are also features that are culture-specific. For example practices of flagellation and mutilation, found in Christianity and Hinduism, are repulsive to the Chinese and Jewish traditions. Again some mystical teachings, notably those influenced by the disciplines of philosophy and theology, place a strong emphasis on the cultivation of rational thought - although something more than an empirically-based logical analysis is intended.

[29] Perhaps Egan was put off by James' quip in his third lecture on saintliness:

> Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic who flourished - or rather who existed, for there was little that suggested flourishing about him - in the sixteenth century... (James, 1929:299)

[30] Possibly this can be explained by the fact that, as suggested by Strout (1968:1062), James, in reaction to Spencer and the late nineteenth century penchant for historical determinism, was predisposed to explain eminence solely in terms of genetic endowment. It is certainly the case that throughout the *Varieties* very little mention is made, much less detailed analysis given, of environmental factors.

[31] As will be seen in the next chapter, Dabrowski also has a three-fold model of causality. Although, for Dabrowski, the "second factor," i.e., the environment, appears to play an even less important role than it does for James.

[32] The occultist Arthur Waite was an influence in her life at this time and she was associated with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

[33] Friedrich von Hugel came under suspicion as a modernist, although there was nothing in his writing to justify this accusation. As Underhill's spiritual director, von Hugel encouraged her to participate in the sacramental life of the Anglican church.

[34] Armstrong (1975:109) contends that two approaches have been taken to Underhill's *Mysticism*. One has been to use the book as a source of second-hand citations from mystics. The other approach has been to accept her theoretical treatment uncritically.

[35] Politella's study is interesting because it is one of the few serious attempts to find examples from various religious traditions for the stages of mystical growth. It is, however, somewhat overambitious: in approximately seventy pages he attempts to show similarities in the ideas of both mystical and meditative development found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Frequently examples are given for only two traditions (e.g., examples of mortification are provided from Christian and Muslim sources only). And for the most part there is little independent descriptive analysis (some descriptive analysis is cited from secondary sources, but not critically) and there is no attempt made at interpretation or explanation.

[36] The reason this fact was not better known prior to Armstrong's research is that the selective editing done by Charles William's on Underhill's correspondence served to obscure the debt Underhill owed to Robinson (Armstrong, 1975:102).

[37] The debate between the contextualists and the universalists has continually dogged the study of mysticism from the time of Underhill and James to W.T. Stace (1960), R.C. Zaehner (1961), and Ninian Smart (1965). This issue is taken up in articles in two volumes edited by Steven Katz (1978 & 1983) and continues in a debate between Steven Katz, arguing against the idea of a common core to mystical experience, and Huston Smith and Sallie King, who defend the common core position, in several issues of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (1987, 55:553-566; 1988, 56:257-279; & 1988, 56:751-761).

[38] Bucke describes an evolutionary-developmental scheme in which individuals, and [higher] races, move through simple consciousness to self consciousness [sic] and finally to cosmic consciousness. Bucke (1969:65-66) holds that cosmic consciousness is extremely rare, although he anticipates that it will become more and more common in his own race. However not even the immediate precursor to cosmic consciousness, i.e., self consciousness, is commonly found in members of "low races:"

It is not universal in our race, being absent in all true idiots; that is, it is permanently absent in about one in each thousand human beings in Europe and America.

> There must, however, be many members of low races, such as the Bushmen of South Africa and native Australians, who never attain this faculty. In our ancestry self consciousness dates back to the first true man. (Bucke, 1969:46-47)

[39] This is, of course, the "extroverted" mystical experience described by Walter Stace (1960:62-81).

[40] Underhill's psychological approach is very similar to that of the humanistic and transpersonal schools (cf various issues of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*).

[41] Ogburn-Coangelo, in a passage summarizing an unpublished paper of Piechowski (1973), describes the relationship between emotional overexcitability (i.e., emotional sensitivity) and attachment in these words:

> The most important aspect of *emotional overexcitability* is its relationship context. Individuals with an emotional overexcitability will exhibit a strong need for emotional relationships with others to which they can give enormous investment. They will be upset if they hurt or disappoint people. They will experience difficulty in breaking off an established relationship and in starting a new one. They will look for the meaning of life through a loved one and will experience anxiety on this loved one's behalf. In children, this is often expressed in strong attachment to pets. (Ogburn-Coangelo, 1979:168)

[42] This section, and the three following sections, are revisions of a description of Dabrowski's theory contained in my M.A. thesis (Nixon, 1983); the primary source for which is Michael Piechowski's account in Dabrowski and Piechowski, 1977 (Vol.I:18-56).

[43] Georges Vaillant (1971) synthesized references, by a number of psychoanalytic authors, to forty defense mechanisms into a hierarchical model of four stages of defense mechanisms. Those mentioned by Dabrowski as characteristic of unilevel disintegration are found in the first two stages of Vaillant's hierarchy.

[44] In their various writings Dabrowski and his colleagues provide at least twelve case studies of persons who have realized the fourth level of personality (Dabrowski, 1967:204-245; Dabrowski 1972; Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:157-222; and Piechowski & Tyska, 1982).

[45] There is empirical evidence to suggest that heredity plays some role in both emotional and imaginational overexcitability. Slater and Shields (1969) studied twins in which one of the pair had a predisposition to respond to stress with high levels of anxiety. They found that in 41 percent of monozygotic twins (as opposed to only four percent of dizygotic twins) the other twin demonstrated the same predisposition. Capacity for imaginative absorption has been found to correlate with hypnotizability (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974 and Hilgard, 1979:289) and Morgan (1973) found a correlation of r=.52 (N=58 pairs) for hypnotic susceptibility among monozygotic twins, as opposed to a nonsignificant correlation of r=.17 for dizygotic twins. However these studies also show that much of the variance remains unaccounted for by the genetic factor. There is further reason to question whether Dabrowski's overexcitabilities are purely genetic in origin, since by the time they are observed, even in the infant stage, the subject has already been exposed to intrauterine and neonatal environments. Bowlby's position on instincts is relevant here:

Instinctive behaviour is not inherited: what is inherited is a potential to develop certain sorts of system...both the nature and the forms of which differ in some measure according to the particular

environment in which development takes place. (Bowlby, 1971:70-71)

Since the "potential to develop certain sorts of system" is not easily observed it is probably best to use a functional definition and this is the approach taken by Strelau:

...temperament...refers to more or less stable individual differences in characteristics of behaviour which are present from early childhood and which differ from those personality traits that are strongly determined by the social environment. (Strelau, 1987:516)

In the same article Strelau reviews definitions of temperament found in the writings of researchers from Allport and Eysenck to the work of Buss and Plomin and comes to the conclusion that emotionality is central to the concept of temperament. Regarding the identification of other dimensions of temperament, there is less unanimity among researchers. Many have identified temperamental traits similar to the other four forms of overexcitability but correspondences are not always exact and all five forms are not found together. Hence Dabrowski's categories, while supported to some extent by contemporary research, are best seen as useful heuristic devices, which is how Dabrowski uses all his various models in works written solely by himself.

[46] One of Dabrowski's methods of gathering data for clinical evaluation was to request that his clients write an eight to ten page account of their "personal history from childhood till the present" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.II:17-18).

[47] Dabrowski (1972:303 & 299) defines psychasthenia as "characterized by feelings of inadequacy, obsessions, anxieties (especially existential), [and] depressions," and neurasthenia as a "Lower level of psychasthenia, frequently associated with obsessions and phobias."

[48] Psychoneurosis, as Dabrowski uses the term, refers to a wide range of disorders, ranked hierarchically:

Lower psychoneuroses are predominantly psychosomatic in nature, higher psychoneuroses are highly conscious internal struggles whose tensions and frustrations are not any more translated into somatic disorders. (Dabrowski,1972:303)

Higher level psychoneuroses are also characterized by existential concerns and a tendency to contemplation (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Sochanska, 1973: 149). Dabrowski uses the term neurosis to indicate a "lower level" psychoneurosis.

[49] There is some support for this position from studies of bereavement. Parkes is of the opinion that "major determinants of grief can be expected to be personality factors deriving from genetic givens and previous life-experience" (1975:159). He also reports that illusions about the presence of the

deceased (e.g., momentarily expecting the deceased to walk in the door as a result of hearing familiar footsteps) are more likely to happen to hysteroid personality types (1975:80).

[50] In the Epilogue [addressed to the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Seville] of the *Interior castle*, written when Teresa was 64 years old, she says,

> Through the strong desire I have to play some part in helping you serve my God and Lord, I ask that each time you read this work you, in my name, praise His Majesty [God] fervently and ask for the increase of His Church and for light for the Lutherans. (Teresa of Avila, 1980:452)

[51] That the illumination of the self corresponds to upper level IV and lower level V in Dabrowski's model can be shown by a detailed comparison of characteristic patterns of thought, affect and behaviour. In support of this position is the following remark of Dabrowski's in his description of the I-Thou encounter experienced by religious persons at level V: "There may occur breaks and interruptions in such a dialogue leading to the `dark night of the soul'..." (Dabrowski, 1977, Vol.I:144). In other words the dark night of the soul, in Dabrowski's view, occurs within his final stage of personality.

[52] However the formal dimension of consciousness is implicit in many of Dabrowski's references to meditation, concentration and contemplation.

[53] Gage, Morse and Piechowski (1981) report that eight university students whose level they assessed were at level II or Level II-III. Lysy (1979:70) administered a test designed to determine developmental level and found that out of the 42 subjects, seven were at level I, five in level III and 29 at level II. Nixon (1983:70) tested 11 undergraduate psychology students and eight regular yoga meditators and found that the average scores for both groups fell clearly into the upper range of level II.

[54] As she herself puts it:

> I was very fond of everything about religious life [i.e., convent life], but I didn't like to suffer anything that seemed to be scorn. I enjoyed being esteemed. (Teresa of Avila, 1976:46)

[55] It would be a mistake to attempt to make too exact a correspondence between Underhill's stages of the mystical life and the levels of personality as described in the theory of positive disintegration. At the beginning of the purification of the self, most mystics are probably in the upper half of spontaneous multilevel disintegration. And the purification of the self probably is replaced by the illumination of the self before the organized multilevel disintegrative process is finished.

[56] The probability of its occurrence in any given case would be determined, according to the theory of

positive disintegration, by the amount of psychic overexcitability present.

[57] James (1929:193 & 206) refers to the process as a shift in personal energy centre.

[58] Although in other cases the reintegration could be at a lower level and at still others at a higher level of development.

[59] Of course, Dabrowski's personality ideal is not equivalent to the "God" of those mystics who belong to a theistic religious tradition. However, since for the mystic an openness toward some transcendent *telos* is characteristic of the final stage of mystical development, the spiritual dimension of the mystical struggle can be rephrased as a condition of susceptibility to the "world" (i.e., the usual social world) versus a condition of openness toward the transcendent, which allows the mystic autonomy vis a vis the usual social world.

[60] See Dabrowski (1967:213-225) for just such an analysis of the life of Augustine.

[61] Dabrowski's ideas on mental illness can be found scattered throughout his works, but the topic receives extensive treatment in *Psychoneurosis is not an illness*.

[62] In Nixon (1989) the life of Teresa of Avila is examined from the perspective of the theory of positive disintegration in order to demonstrate the growth-promoting nature of her "abnormal" experiences and to indicate specifically their functions in the developmental process.

[63] See, for example, Gallagher (1985), Hazell (1984), Lysy & Piechowski (1983), Piechowski & Cunningham (1985), Schiever (1985) and Silverman (1983).

[64] This section is a revision of parts of an article by Nixon (1989).

[65] The relevant passage is cited in a later section in this chapter.

[66] See Sally King's appendices ("Religion in the Prewar Era" and "Kami, Buddha, Bodhisattva") in Myodo (1987:141-151).

[67] Of course if a mystic is emotionally sensitive then it would probably not take a major trauma to induce a state of insecurity. Nevertheless the impression a number of researchers have is that there are more, or greater, loses of one kind or another in the backgrounds of mystics.

[68] As will be further explained below, the terms, "creative," "mystic" and "mentally ill," are to be understood as *ideal types*, and not as taxonomic categories. An individual may be classified as belonging to one category or another of mental illness and yet have mystical experiences or write a widely acclaimed literary works. Thus in any given person may be found the features characteristic of

two or more of the ideal types.

[69] Correspondingly, there are studies devoted to the comparison of mental illness and creativity (Kubie, 1958; Arieti, 1976:354-359 & 1978:121-129; Prentky, 1980; & Storr, 1983). In both the comparative studies and in the more focused research reports cited throughout Chapters Seven to Ten creativity is understood in either a general (even a somewhat vague) sense, or else in various ways, ranging from originality to eminence. While a more precise definition is desirable in the investigation of very specific types of creativity, for the purposes of presenting a preliminary and exploratory model, restricting the range of what is considered creative would be premature.

[70] Dabrowski does not say that psychoses never have a positive outcome; only that it is, in his experience, infrequent. Dabrowski further distinguishes between "lower" and "higher" neuroses. The former have a greater somatic component, the latter are what he calls psychoneuroses, and they are, in his view, expressions of positive disintegration.

[71] That emotional and imaginational overexcitability are causal factors in the lives of mystics is something that is not explicitly developed in Dabrowski. Nevertheless there are numerous references to meditation, contemplation and ecstasy at the highest levels of personality development, an example of which is the following:

Experiencing pleasure [at the level of secondary integration] comes from the realization of ideals, from a growing autonomy and authentism, from empathy...We observe here a clearly developed harmony between the need and the attempts of uniting oneself with others on the threshold of transcendence. Meditation and contemplation become powerful vital sources of the highest levels of bliss. (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, Vol.I:126)

Again Dabrowski does not explicitly identify the illuminative or unitive stages of the mystical life with secondary integration but, not only can such a correspondence be made (as demonstrated above), it is clear from his descriptions of the various dimensions (Dabrowski's term is functions) of the fifth level of personality that mystical features are inseparable from that stage. And since psychic overexcitability is considered by Dabrowski to be a causal factor in personality development, it follows that he would also consider it to be such in mystical development.

[72] One measure that predicts hypnotic susceptibility is the Tellegen Absorption Scale (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974), and many of its items are clearly expressions of imaginational overexcitability. Hilgard in her study on personality and hypnosis concludes that, "It is clear that imaginative involvement or absorption not only provides one of the bases of hypnotizability but defines a previously ignored personality attribute" (1979:289).

[73] Clark (1958:281-282) suggests that the "possession of some of the personality qualities of the typical hysteric is a contributing factor" here. In fact, as Hilgard points out, there is no association

between hypnotizability and hysteria-proneness:

There is still some residue from Charcot's theory that the hypnotizable person is ipso facto a hysterical personality. The impression persists that the neurotic is more hypnotizable than the normal, despite evidence to the contrary... (Hilgard, 1979:170)

Clark's assumption that there is an association was probably strengthened in his mind because so many mystics are prone to hysteria. This however is a trait associated more with his first factor ("sensitivity to all stimuli") than it is to hypnotizability.

[74] An example is the Bengali ecstatic, Prabhu Jagadbandhu (1871-1921), considered to be a saint and savior by his devotees. In her life history of Jagadbandhu, McDaniel (1989:69-75) describes the succession of caretakers he had before the age of eleven at which point he was understandably extremely withdrawn. He also did not allow anyone to touch him, refused to study and became preoccupied with religious devotions. By the age of sixteen he was able to enter into ecstatic trances lasting several days and was convinced that his mission was to rid the world of anxiety and to bring universal liberation. At 31 he took a vow of silence that lasted 17 years. Finally,

> ...he emerged from his seclusion, acting like a young child...At first he was mute, but began to lisp a few words. He would cry like a child, play with dolls and toys, and alternately abuse people nearby and then serenely smile at them. He passed stool and urine while lying in his bed, and his eyes never appeared to focus on anybody. Even at this stage he gained disciples, who considered him the embodiment of all deities and their most cherished god. (McDaniel1989:73)

[75] While the use of a comparison group adds a certain rigour to Spangler's study, the comparison between mystics from the 12th to the 18th centuries with 20th-century mystics can be no more than suggestive, especially when it comes to patterns of family religiosity. Clearly the best sort of comparison would be with non-mystics from the 12th to the 18th centuries, matched for socioeconomic background and century. To date no such studies have been published.

[76] Present in the sample of mystics is a high percentage of needs for: (1) Blameavoidance and Superego; (2) Succorance; (3) Abasement; (4) Deference; (5) Seclusion; (6) Positive Cathexis; and (7) Intensity. For definitions of these terms see Murray (1938) or the appendix in Spangler (1961).

[77] Of course, many religiously-committed people, who are by temperament emotionally labile and who possess active imaginations, do not seek involvement in meditational exercises directed to a goal of mystical transformation. Rather they handle their experience of loss through communal, family and personal rituals of a non-mystical nature.

[78] ___ This seems to be the case for emotional overexcitability. Lysy measured it in 41 graduate students using an instrument designed for the purpose. Her results indicate that emotional overexcitability is normally distributed (Lysy, 1979:70).

[79] ___ In fact, as already discussed in Chapter III, William James considered that some mystics did, and others did not, possess a "superior intellect." Margaret Mary Alacoque was an example of the latter. In James' view, Margaret Mary was an impractical (or socially useless) mystic, but a mystic nonetheless.

[80] ___ The extent to which emotional overexcitability, found e.g., in someone like Thérèse of Lisieux, is entirely genetically determined, as Dabrowski maintains, is a moot point. Thérèse's condition is also reminiscent of a type of anxious attachment referred to as ambivalent attachment. This form of anxious attachment is usually a result of separation from the mother. And given that Thérèse was separated from her mother for most of the first year of her life, it is probable that her condition is to some considerable extent one of ambivalent attachment.

[81] ___ In the story of his life Paramahansa Yogananda is clearly portrayed as a mystic since there are accounts of mystical experiences and an advanced spiritual state is claimed for him. There are also implicit references to a mystical struggle (1973:101 & 144-145), but no detailed description is given of this struggle. This is common in Hindu autobiographies and biographies of mystics. The reason I suspect is that the life of the mystic is intended not so much to serve as a model for disciples, as it is to establish the supernatural source of the movement's teachings.

[82] ___ Other relevant studies are reviewed in my M.A. thesis (Nixon, 1983:24-26).

[83] ___ It may also be possible to see in some of the measures used by Barron (1968:200-224), to assess originality in creatives, indicators of imaginational overexcitability.

[84] ___ It may be the case that some schizophrenics have not received significantly less affection than average persons in their childhood years. This however does not mean that emotional support was adequate. Those who possess a high degree of emotional overexcitability have a correspondingly greater need for affection. The parents of such children may not have been able, even if they understood the situation, to respond to the extent required.

[85] ___ The results of a study by Bourque and Back (1971) bear on this question. Based on a survey of 1,553 respondents, they found a correlation between those who reported religious experiences and rural, lower socio-economic background. Those of an urban and upper socio-economic background tended to have esthetic experiences. The researchers argue that socio-economic and geographical background determine what language codes are available for the interpretation of unusual experiences.

[86]

___ Either the situation for mystics in the thirteenth-century is very different from other centuries or else Spangler is painting an idealistic picture, at least according to the impression Goodich (1982) got from analyzing the *vitae* of thirteenth-century saints. He found evidence of neglect, abuse and abandonment.

[87] ___ And, of course, the genetic predisposition if it is something like emotional overexcitability, can make the child all the more susceptible to the effects of loss.

[88] ___ MacKinnon reports that there was no significant difference in rated creativeness between the 40 who accepted and the 24 who refused.

[89] ___ Yoganada's estimate of his mother may be due more to the fact that he was an Indian than that he was a mystic, if Kakar is correct:

...an Indian [male] child tends to experience his mother almost totally as the `good mother'. The proportion of Indian men who express *or experience* an active dislike, fear or contempt for their mothers at a conscious level is infinitesimally small. This is strikingly apparent in clinical work...patient after patient portrays his mother as highly supportive and extremely loving. (Kakar, 1982:83)

Kakar even cites the passage from Yogananda, cited above, as an illustration of his point.

[90] ___ This sense of the deceased person being located in some tangible way within either oneself, or within another, is one of the forms of mislocation that can occur during the grieving process. Frequently widows and widowers feel that their deceased spouses have been incorporated into themselves. Locating the bereaved in a particular location (e.g., the grave) is also a common response. Another possibility is to locate the dead person in another (living) human being (Bowlby, 98-100). A grieving child, especially a sensitive one, would be predisposed toward locating a lost parent in the surviving one.

[91] ___ Spangler's results provide evidence that all the childhood and adolescent life-cycle crises, described by Erikson, have not been resolved for mystics. Rather the balance is consistently toward the negative pole. With respect to the crisis of autonomy versus shame and doubt, Spangler found 20 mystics possessed of a need for Autonomy and 19 with a need to show Deference. That the initiative versus guilt crisis was not resolved is indicated by the fact that 23 mystics showed evidence of a need for Blamavoidance and Superego. Need for Achievement in 23 mystics and need for Abasement in 21 mystics suggests that the crisis of industry versus inferiority was not resolved; and need for Rejection (22 mystics) and need for Seclusion (19 mystics) would argue in favor of identity diffusion rather than identity. Given this consistent picture of unresolved developmental tasks one might legitimately infer that the sense of basic mistrust is strong.

[92] ___ And possibly in reaction to the press of Dominance-Nurtance found in 23 mystics

(Spangler,1961:70). In his definition of this press Murray states that,

> Sometimes a parent, perhaps as a counteraction to his (or her) own frustrations in life, attempts to impose his (or her) unrealized ideal. Sometimes a parent, starving perhaps for affection, attempts to cling to the child. Sometimes a parent is of a worrying sort and for his or her own peace limits the activity of the child. (Spangler, 1961:150)

[93] Once again it has to be kept in mind that the description is of ideal types. It is perfectly consistent with the hypotheses suggested here that, e.g., the background of a creative mystic would ressemble more the background of creatives than would be the case for mystics who were not notably creative. Similarly the background of a disturbed novelist will give evidence of at least some features in common with the backgrounds of the mentally ill.

[94] The connection between religion and basic trust (or in some cases basic mistrust) is explicitly referred to by Erikson (1963:250).

[95] Religious training through prohibition, whether by precept or example, is something that may be more frequent in the families of future mystics. Reference has already been made to the fact that Teresa of Avila's father disapproved of her reading romantic novels. In the *Autobiography of a yogi* we are told that Yogananda's father deliberately did not go to the theater but rather "sought his recreation in various spiritual practices and in reading the *Bhagavad-Gita*" (Yogananda, 1973:6). And Spangler (1961:117) mentions that Rufus Jones' aunt took away a copy of *Gulliver's travels* from him.

[96] The large institutions traditionally available to the mentally ill tend to confirm in them a view of themselves as dependent and untrustworthy - for example, patients are not free to leave as they choose and the staff regards them as socially deviant. This is not to deny the necessity of institutionalization - only to note one of the consequences.

[97] In spite of the fact that his data provide considerable evidence in support of, e.g., emotional overexcitability in mystics.

[98] Evidence for the association between mysticism and supportive institutions can be found in Weinstein and Bell (1982:123, 126 &135). Included in the statistical analyses that they make of saints, are data regarding membership in religious orders. Between three quarters to four fifths of the saints whose lives are analyzed were members of religious orders.

[99] In fact, in one popular commentary on the *Heart Sutra*, that of the eighth-century Nan-yang Hui-chung, while *emptiness* is understood to mean ultimate reality, as perceived by the enlightened mind (the usual interpretation) *emptiness* is also used to convey the idea that the world is unreal (McRae, 1988:96).

[100] Kaplan (1985:52) identifies *hitbodeduth* as one of the terms used in Jewish mystical writings for meditation.

[101] Not all monastics meditates as Welch points out:

> Out in the kitchen and service area were the menial officers who eschewed both the difficulties of meditation and the cares of the higher office [i.e., administration], preferring to cook rice and boil water, perhaps for a few semesters or perhaps until they died. (Welch, 1973:304)

[102] Interestingly, in Chinese Buddhist monasteries, Welch discovered there was a category of monk, which were known as old "papayas," who were addicted to trance-like states:

> Still other kinds of life were to be found in the great public monasteries like Chin Shan and the Kao-min Ssu. Sitting on the western side of the meditation hall were the *lao hsiu-hsing*, the old "papayas," who spent their days in the yogic pleasures to which they had become addicted. (Welch, 1973:304)

[103] In this chapter I am suggesting one way in which the factors discussed in Chapters Seven to Nine of this study might combine to orient someone toward the mystical life. Not only are other explanations possible, there are, it seems to me, particular lives to which this explanation does not apply - e.g., Al-Ghazzali and Kao P'an-lung. Storr (1988) has suggested that while some creative lives may be seen in terms of a search for a lost object, it is more appropriate to look at others as efforts to compensate for an absence of intimate relationships. The latter seek not so much to discover a lost personal object, but rather an impersonal pattern. I think Storr's typology could profitably be applied to lives of mystics.

[104] It is hardly possible in the present context to describe everything that is relevant to Mukunda's grieving process. However it is interesting to note that while he partially mislocated his lost mother in the goddess, and partially within himself, he also mislocated her in his father:

> After her death, Father displayed more of his inner tenderness. I noticed then that his gaze often seemed to be metamorphosed into my mother's gaze. (Yogananda, 1973:4)

[105] But not exclusively. An observation by Sudhir Kakar, unknown to me when I originally undertook this analysis of Yogananda, suggests that, in Yogananda's case, part of the appeal of the mystical institution was the mothering quality of its guru. Kakar after describing Yogananda's first meeting with the *guru* makes the following comment:

Together with the search for guidance of an ideal, ever-present father, the above encounter, socially accepted and culturally encouraged, also reveals the childhood antecedents of such a search. For the feeling-tone of this meeting between Yogananda and his guru is like that of the communion between *mother and infant* and of the later soothing of disappointments by the `guru-mother's' love. [My

emphasis.] (Kakar, 1982:139)

It would seem, not surprisingly, that the guru was a transitional object (to use a concept first described by Winnicott) for Yogananda - one that enabled him to bridge the gap between his home life and his search for ultimate reality.

[106] This is not to suggest that the illuminative life is no more than a resolution of an abnormally prolonged period of grieving. Whatever may be the truth of the religious claims made by Teresa, she achieved an advanced level of personality development (Nixon, 1989), and after she entered the illuminative stage she was extraordinarily active in founding and administering convents, advising her fellow nuns, writing letters and several classics of religious literature.