

I - Definition of mysticism

1-JEAN GERSON: “Mystical theology is **knowledge of God by experience**, arrived at through the embrace of **unifying love.**” (*New Catholic Encyclopaedia*)

“Theologia mystica est experimentalis cognitio habita de Deo per amoris unitivi complexum”

2-ELLIOTT R WOLFSON, “mysticism relates to the capacity of the human mind **to imagine what cannot be imagined** and to think what cannot be thought. [...] This definition satisfies both the essentialist claim that there is something we can identify as the unchanging essence of the mystical and the constructivist claim that mystical elements need to be studied and evaluated within specific cultural contexts.” (*Teaching Mysticism*, Oxford UP, 2011)

3-R. ZAEHNER: Mysticism “means **union with some principle or other.** It is, therefore, a unitive experience with someone or something other than oneself.” *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Oxford UP, 1961)

4-MAX HUOT DE LONGCHAMP: “The word « mystical » has lost all precise meaning since Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Romantics have applied it to the irrational aspect which often qualifies anything religious. We will restrict the word to its most classic Christian meaning, that of an **experience of the perception of God**, as it were; a veritable feast for the soul on the occasion of Christ’s intimate presence.

« Le mot « mystique » a perdu toute précision depuis que JJ Rousseau et les romantiques l’ont appliqué à l’irrationnel souvent prêté à la chose religieuse. Nous le restreindrons ici à son sens chrétien le plus classique, celui d’une perception de Dieu pour ainsi dire expérimentale, d’une véritable fête de l’âme lors de l’avènement intérieur du Christ. » (Dictionnaire Critique de Théologie, 779)

II - More’s wish for the mystical experience

5-CATHERINE OF SIENA (on accompanying a young man to the scaffold) “Then was seen God-and-Man, as might the clearness of the sun be seen. And He stood wounded, and received the blood.” (Letter to Brother Raimondo of Capua of the Order of the Preachers)

6-TERESA OF AVILA: “Everything that takes place now in this state brings the very greatest consolation; [...] The tears, which God now sends, flow with joy; though we feel them, they are not the result of any efforts of our own. [...] for the soul is already ascending out of its wretched state, and some little knowledge of the blissfulness of glory.”

« Pues todo esto que pasa aquí es con grandísimo consuelo, [...] las lágrimas que Dios aquí da ya van con gozo; aunque se sienten, no se procuran. [...] porque se va ya este alma subiendo de su miseria y dásele ya un poco de noticia de los gustos de la gloria. » (*Vida*, ch. 14, 104)

7-THOMAS MORE : “For since the very substance essential of all the celestial joy standeth in blessed beholding of the glorious Godhead face to face, **there may no man presume or look to attain it in this life.** For God hath so said himself: “*Non videbit me homo et vivet*”—“There shall no man here living behold me (Ex 33:20. 25)”. (*Dialogue of Comfort*, III-26)

8-TERESA OF AVILA: “When I formed those pictures within myself of throwing myself at the feet of Christ, as I said before, and sometimes even when I was reading, a feeling of the presence of God would come over me unexpectedly, so that I could in no wise doubt either that **He was within me**, or that **I was wholly absorbed in Him.** It was not by way of vision; I believe it was what is called mystical theology.”

« Acaecíame en esta representación que hacía de ponerme cabe Cristo, que he dicho, y aun algunas veces leyendo, venirme a deshora un sentimiento de la presencia de Dios, que en ninguna manera podía dudar que estaba dentro de mí, o yo toda engolfada en El. Esto no era manera de visión; creo lo llaman mística Teología. » (*Vida*, ch. 10, 86)

9-THOMAS MORE: “Wherefore in the meantime, **for lack of such experimental taste as God giveth here sometimes to some of his special servants**, to the intent we may draw toward spiritual exercise too—for which spiritual exercise... God with that gift, **as with an earnest penny of their whole reward after in heaven**, comforteth them here in earth—let us not so much with looking to have described what *manner* of joys they shall be, as with hearing what our Lord telleth us in Holy Scripture...” (*Dialogue of Comfort*, III-26)

10-RICHARD SCHOECK’S definition of mysticism: “Mysticism is a direct, intuitional experience of God through unifying love; but **it does not require an ecstatic experience**, that is, that kind of experience which transcends personality and characteristically produces preternatural phenomena. The mystical experience can be taken as I here take it to be, simply the highest mode or expression of the spiritual life.” (*Thought*, Vol. 52, No 206)

III - Mystical aspects in More – A form of *contemptus mundi*

11-THOMAS MORE: “I shortly (after the inward affection of my mind) answered for a very truth, that **I would never meddle in the world again**, to have the world given me. And to the remnant of the matter, I answered in effect as before shewing that I had fully determined with myself, neither to study nor meddle with any matter of this world, but that **my whole study should be upon the passion of Christ and mine own passage out of this world.**” (*Last Letters*, 113-4, “To Margaret”, 2 or 3 May 1535)

12-TERESA OF AVILA: “to me it seems to be **nothing else but a death**, as it were, **to all the things of this world**, and a fruition of God.”

« *No me parece que es otra cosa, sino un morir casi del todo a todas las cosas del mundo y estar gozando de Dios.* » (*Vida*, Ch. 16)

13-BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX: “So it behoves us, if we would have Christ for a frequent guest, to fill our hearts with faithful meditations on the mercy He showed in dying for us.” (*On Loving God*, ch.3, 5.

14-TERESA OF AVILA: “Coming back, then, to what I spoke of before, the **meditation on Christ bound to the pillar**, it is well we should make reflections for a time, and consider the sufferings He there endured, for whom He endured them, who He is who endured them, and the love with which He bore them. But a person should not always fatigue himself in making these reflections, but rather let him remain there with Christ, **in the silence of the understanding.**”

« *Pues tornando a lo que decía, de pensar a Cristo a la columna, es bueno discurrir un rato y pensar las penas que allí tuvo, y por qué las tuvo, y quién es el que las tuvo, y el amor con que las pasó. Mas que no se canse siempre en andar a buscar esto, sino que se esté allí con El, callado el entendimiento.*» (*Vida*, 103)

IV - More’s idea of heaven

15-THOMAS MORE: “And therefore let us all that cannot now conceive such delight in the consideration of them as we should, have often in our eyes by reading... often in our ears by hearing... often in our mouths by rehearsing... often in our hearts by meditation and thinking... those joyful words of *Holy Scripture* by which we learn how wonderful, huge, and great those spiritual, heavenly joys are... of which our carnal hearts have so feeble and so faint a feeling... **and our dull, worldly wits so little able to conceive so much as a shadow of the right imagination. A shadow, I say**; for as for the thing as it is—that can not only no fleshly, carnal fantasy conceive... but, over that, no spiritual, ghostly person, peradventure, neither, that here is here living still, in this world.” (*Dialogue of Comfort*, III-26)