Dedication

In memory of

Greta Selkirk

Preface

This work represents the consummation of my Master of Arts studies at Concordia University's Department of Philosophy in Montreal, from 2002—2004. During that time, I had the great pleasure to learn and draw inspiration from Kai Nielsen, who supervised this project. The lectures of Matthias Fritsch and Sheila Mason were also influential on the direction of my research.

That two-year period saw a great amount of intellectual activity in Montreal. Appearances by visiting academic luminaries such as Martha Nussbaum, Sir Anthony Kenny, and Barry Stroud were quite common, contributing to the sense that it was the right place and right time to be a student of philosophy. Indeed, my fellow graduate students at Concordia were a comparatively active and passionate group, who varied in their philosophical orientations from Rawlsian to Rortyian to Lacanean. In their company, post-lecture discussions often turned into heated debates on topics in epistemology, politics, and metaphilosophy. Underlying our shared concerns, whether these were taken up within an analytic or continental framework, I saw the problem of mysticism repeatedly re-emerge in various forms. This work constituted, in part, my response to these ongoing arguments and contestations: it was my attempt to defend the role of metaphysics in philosophy, mystical experiences in epistemology, and to warn against mystagoguery in politics.

Revising *The Mystic and the Ineffable*, now almost four years after its initial binding in thesis form, I have come to recognize some of its inherent weaknesses and blind spots, for which I retain full responsibility. Nevertheless, I am glad to have had the chance to reconsider the work in earnest, and to share it with others for the first time in a more widely-accessible form of publication. It is my opinion that there remains enough original content in the work to spark the interest of many readers who wish to look deeper into these topics—enough, at least, to serve as a springboard for additional personal research—and so, I have opted to make stylistic over substantive changes wherever possible in the text in the course of my revisions.

Sincere thanks must go out to my past teachers and colleagues beyond those already mentioned, and without whose support I would have been lost many times over: Duncan MacIntosh and Susan Sherwin at Dalhousie University, Dudley Knowles at the University of Glasgow, and Masaki Ichinose at the University of Tokyo. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Kai Nielsen, at whose home the bulk of this work was written, and whose impressive personal library I often availed myself of. Last, but far from least, I would like to thank Lois Rowe, who read and discussed many earlier drafts of this work with me, and whose photo of the author graces the back cover.

The Mystic and the Ineffable: Some Epistemological, Political, and Metaphilosophical Concerns

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Introduction

The Mystic and the Ineffable:

Plato's Contested Cave

Mysticism, like philosophy and science, is a discipline that quests for the discovery of knowledge, or truth(s).[1] However, mystical knowledge differs in important regards from other kinds of knowledge, in that (i) it derives solely from a special sort of experience, that is, 'mystical experience'; and (ii) it ostensibly cannot be expressed, and thereby made public, i.e., it cannot be verified or falsified. This is because, variously, the source of mystical experience, or the mystical experience itself, or the purported knowledge derived from the mystical experience, have been held to be ineffable—thus frustrating discourse on the subject. Mystical knowledge is thus seen to be a species of private language, as it cannot be taught in the conventional sense (although mystical 'coaching' is said to be possible), but must be arrived at through the private experiences of individual experients. Due to the theoretical importance of the mystical *experience* in this schema, the mysticism we are interested in analyzing here can be provisionally defined as a species of "extreme empiricism, teaching absolute

[1] In this work, I define the 'mystic' as being an individual who has mystical experiences, where 'mystical' corresponds with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* conception of 'the mystical' as something supposedly ineffable—beyond what can be described in language. The mystic, thus stated, will be interested in making incursions into the realm of the mystical, into experiences that appear to defy description, in the hopes of gleaning mystical knowledge. 'Mysticism', then, is the belief in such mystical experiences, and in the purported knowledge arising from them.

obedience of the mind to given data",[2] ideally without codification in language, or the interference of reason generally, to mediate between the mind and that data.[3]

The mystical model of knowledge acquisition seems, *prima facie*, to fit well with Plato's 'allegory of the cave'. The allegory runs roughly as follows: a group of cave-dwellers are bound in a cave with a fire burning behind them, and positioned such that they can only watch shadows flit about on the cave-walls in front of them. These shadows are produced by a procession of objects being paraded between the firelight and their backs. This is Plato's pessimistic evaluation of the human condition from an epistemic standpoint. After sketching out this scenario for the reader, Plato asks us to

[2] T. W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 116–7. This description is taken from Adorno's analysis of how the Enlightenment overstepped itself and brought on Romanticism. Here I have borrowed this particular phrase because it sums up rather nicely what I take to be the core of mysticism: doubts and rational thought are, for the mystic, normatively to be suspended in favor of enhanced sensitivity to and awareness of her own internal experiences, which then become 'given data' for her. For those who would object that the word 'empiricism' should be reserved for what can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or touched, I may make two replies: one, I am speaking of an atypical, 'extreme' empiricism, one that admits of the possibility of alternate modes of sensory (and perhaps even extrasensory) experience; and two, that in many cases mystical experiences begin in the 'normally empirical' and are, at certain transitional points, indistinguishable from it. Many mystics, for example, will concentrate on a selected object (such as a *mandala* pattern) until it begins to be seen in a new way, and perhaps even 'felt' (though not touched): for the mystic, this object functions analogously to a springboard in diving, facilitating a shift from one mode of sensation (metaphorically 'being-in-air') to another (metaphorically 'being-in-water'). The object, then, is often an essential element in what is seen, felt, or otherwise perceived through its use as a focal point; and thus borders between where 'empirically warranted' sense-impressions of the object stop, and where mystical experience begins, may be too nebulous to be drawn in such cases. However, the object itself is clearly not as important as the mystic's unique experience which is facilitated through its use.

[3] The epistemic ideal for the mystic, I hypothesize, would be to perpetually subsist in a mystical experience, perhaps in a trance-like state, in order to glean as much mystical knowledge as possible, mystical knowledge being, for the mystic, *a fortiori* more valuable than publicly accessible knowledge. These assumptions, however, should not be interpreted as having a direct correlation to the practices of any actual mystics. As this work is intended as a philosophic-theoretical study, and not an anthropological or sociological one, I will not be considering any specific tribal rituals or religious sects, but rather working with the abstract archetype of the mystic as a concept. It is enough to say that the mystic I have in mind here is a kind of radical empiricist, or phenomenologist, one who believes that "direct experience and vision, as opposed to syllogistic reasoning and common sense, are the sole [or ultimate] basis of knowing." [Alessandro Scafi, "Mapping Eden", in *Mappings*, Denis Cosgrove, ed. (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2002), p. 53.] An atheistic mysticism is atypical, but not theoretically inconsistent. As Kai Nielsen writes, "mystical experience itself is religiously and theologically neutral, and careful phenomenological descriptions of the common core of mystical experience make this evident." [Kai Nielsen, *Contemporary Critiques of Religion* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 52.]

> [i]magine that one of [the cave-dwellers] has been set free and is suddenly made to stand up, to turn his head and walk, and to look towards the firelight. It hurts him to do all this and he's too dazzled to be capable of making out the objects whose shadows he'd formerly been looking at…imagine him being dragged forcibly away from there up the rough, steep slope…without being released until he's been pulled out into the sunlight…[h]e wouldn't be able to see things up on the surface of the earth, I suppose, until he'd got used to his situation…at last, I imagine, he'd be able to discern and feast his eyes on the sun—not the displaced image of the sun in water or elsewhere, but the sun on its own, in its proper place.[4]

Despite Plato's generally pessimistic epistemological stance, via the example of the cave-escapee he seems to indicate that there could be special individuals who somehow transcend ordinary epistemic constraints and come to an apprehension of a 'truer truth' than their less epistemically privileged fellows. Thus the dark picture of the cave-dwellers' situation is lightened somewhat, in that we are given hope that at least a select few may be able to come to see true reality. This figure of the cave-escapee, indeed, resembles what we could describe the archetypal mystic, a lonely epistemic figure who can see more than others, and who has great difficulty relating the contents of her knowledge to others.[5] However, as Karl Popper points out:

> Plato taught that we can grasp the Ideas with the help of some kind of unerring *intellectual intuition*; that is to say, we visualize or look at them with our 'mental eye,' a process which he conceived as analogous to seeing, but dependent purely upon our intellect, and excluding any element that depends upon our senses.[6]

This schema of knowledge acquisition seems to runs counter to my account of mysticism as an 'extreme empiricism'—indeed, for Plato, apprehension of the Forms is a purely intellectual pursuit, and not an empirical one. So in this regard, my archetypal mystic is disanalogous to Plato's cave-escapee. But insofar as Plato stresses the role of intuition in knowledge acquisition, the cave-escapee retains some resemblance to the figure of the mystic: for the mystic, who seeks out mystical experiences and alternate

[4] Plato, *Republic*, Robin Waterfield, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), §§ 515c–516c.
[5] Here and throughout, by "archetype" I mean an idealized person, an exemplar of a type of individual who has a definitive approach to both acquiring knowledge and/or acquiring power (an ideal type, in short). Such archetypes have applications in, and relevance to both the epistemological and political concerns discussed in later sections of this work.

states of consciousness, apprehends those experiences and states in a fully intuitive (yet non-intellectual) manner.[7]

Part of the enduring appeal of Plato's allegory is that the select few cave-escapees (or perhaps only one) are singled out for epistemic and political commendation. Thus, the allegory can be ideologically laid claim to by almost any intellectual discipline, to bolster its self-image of comprising an elite; of its agents being the revealers of 'superior' or 'real' knowledge. Max Weber, for example, claims that Plato's allegory describes the role of the scientific disciplines (and, to a lesser extent, the philosophy of science) in broadening humanity's intellectual horizons, thus giving science the ultimate place of epistemic privilege:

> Finally one of them succeeds in shattering his fetters, turns around, and sees the sun. Blinded, he gropes about and stammers about what he saw. The others say he is raving. But gradually he learns to behold the light, and then his task is to descend to the cavemen and to lead them to the light. He is the philosopher; the sun, however, is the truth of science, which alone seizes not upon illusions and shadows but upon true being.[8]

Weber's interpretation of the allegory is quite loose, and some details of his account differ slightly from Plato's original, but he succeeds in conveying the basic idea here. The problem, however, in Weber's claiming the allegory of the cave for science is that when the cave-escapee returns to his fellows, his words are unintelligible

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[6] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 208.

[7] Whether this intuitive manner of grasping mystical truths implies some sort of 'third way' of knowing which is neither empirical nor rational is outside the purview of this work. Nevertheless, Popper's use of the phrase "intellectual intuition" above is somewhat odd; it appears to be a contradiction in terms—for how can we have both mental apprehension without reasoning (passive intuition), and reasoning leading to mental apprehension (the active exercise of intellect), occurring simultaneously in one subject? It seems that we can arrive at a conclusion from either one or the other—that is, via the intellect or through an intuition—but not both at the same time. For if we used reason, then we ought to be able to demonstrate how we arrived at that conclusion: whereas we ought *not* be able to demonstrate how we arrived at that conclusion if we relied solely upon intuition. There appears to be no third option: we can either demonstrate our reasoning on a subject to others, or we cannot, and if we cannot demonstrate our reasoning then it seems we must have come to our understanding of that subject intuitively, not through a process of reasoning. Thus the concept of "intellectual intuition" has an air of paradox about it.

[8] Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, S. N. Eisenstadt, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 299.

to them. Science, conversely, is often taken to be nothing but communicable knowledge, knowledge that is objectively demonstrable and justifiable. Plato's allegory is thus inconsistent with Weber's interpretation, as long as the cave-escapee is unable to convey his knowledge to his fellows and lead them to a new understanding of their world. The story, as Weber indicates above, continues on with the cave-escapee returning to the cave from his experience above, to enlighten and/or rescue his fellows. Plato worries, however, that after his time on the surface, the escapee's eyes would no longer be adjusted to the darkness of the cave like those of the other cave-dwellers, and thus upon his return:

> Wouldn't he make a fool of himself? Wouldn't [his fellow cave-dwellers] say that he'd come back from his upward journey with his eyes ruined, and that it wasn't even worth trying to go up there? And wouldn't they—if they could—grab hold of anyone who tried to set them free and take them up there, and kill him?[9]

Conditions for intellectual demonstration are clearly lacking here. The society of cave-dwellers does not constitute an ideal speech situation. For the allegory to fit with the manner in which science currently understands itself, Plato would have to have written it quite differently. We can imagine an alternate ending to the allegory, wherein the escapee uses her knowledge gained on the surface to build a crude excavating tool, and then proceeds to tear part of the roof off of the cave. This would be a more fitting allegory for scientific demonstration. The inhabitants of the cave, in such a scenario, could not then mock the escapee, as they would be too busy trying to shield their eyes, Wellsian Morlocks blinded by the light of science. If the cave-escapee's knowledge were of a scientific variety, then she would then be in a position to declare what knowledge is, and what truth is, to the other cave-dwellers with utter impunity. Questioning his statements would be a fruitless exercise, as the truth would be made

manifest through unquestionable demonstration: such is the way of science. The fruitless debate-turned-debacle described by Plato is the way of philosophy: it mirrors the martyrdom of Socrates.

But we are not primarily concerned with science in this work. Science interests us here only insofar as it provides a sharp contrast with mysticism, which holds that only those who have mystical experiences can approach the ultimate, or at least the most important, truth(s). Brute demonstration of such mystical experiences, or the purported knowledge generated by them, is thought to be—strictly speaking—impossible. Because of this fact, it appears to some that mysticism constitutes a kind of irremediable epistemological elitism, and it is on this basis that Weber would have to concede that Plato's allegory tracks better with mysticism than science, as Popper points out:

> In the famous story of the prisoners in the cave [Plato] shows that the world of our [everyday] experience is only a shadow, a reflection, of the real world. And he shows that even if one of the prisoners should escape from the cave and face the real world, he would have almost insuperable difficulties in trying to make those understand who stayed behind. The difficulties in the way of an understanding of the real are almost super-human, and only the very few, if anybody at all, can attain the divine state of true knowledge, of *epistēmē*.[10]

The mystic, similar to the cave-escapee, is thought to be one of the rare few who, through lived experience, cleaves directly to the truth, a truth so pure that she is left speechless, or at the very least her words regarding the content of her experience are rendered unintelligible to others. Of course, because such a person is so rare, she may be accorded special social status due to her epistemic accomplishments. But is the mystic, because she is sometimes thought to merit special treatment, any more an epistemically elite figure than, say, a physics professor? The answer to this question

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[9] Plato § 517a.
[10] Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1965), pp. 10–11.

depends, I suppose, on the success the physics professor has in her attempts to explain her subject to various audiences. And this, in turn, has to do with the status afforded the subject, the money and time invested in it, the audience's expectations of the intelligibility of the subject, and so on. Because of science's high social valuement, we might expect that the physicist should have an easier time making herself (at least appear) understood than the mystic. But the actual level of understanding of an audience at a physics lecture or at a meditation class might not differ overmuch: science and mysticism are both, in their own various ways, epistemically elitist. Mysticism, however, is generally thought to be more esoteric than science, as it supposedly deals with ineffable truths. And thus science cannot process claims to mystical knowledge: verifiability and falsifiability have no role in evaluating the mystic's ineffable knowledge claims, nor is any practical demonstration forthcoming, and so the mystic rests safely outside of the scientific realm.

This insulation from external epistemic standards may tempt some mystics to become *mystagogues*, and attempt to use their unverifiable, unfalsifiable knowledge claims to exercise political influence upon others. The term 'mystagogue' refers to a mystic who attempts to construct a political, scholastic, or spiritual institution around her mystical experiences and the purported knowledge derived or imparted from them. There is an apparent political risk inherent to allowing such figures to take hold of public offices—after all, anything might be demanded by them, and no explanations could be demanded in response by those charged to obey their commands. As it has been noted, the mystical experience, the ostensive source of the mystagogue's dictates, lies behind a veil of ineffability, and is thus inaccessible.

Some, understandably then, take mysticism not to be a path out of Plato's cave, but an exploration of a sub-cavern of it, a celebration of life in the epistemic darkness. J. N. Findlay comes very close to describing such a mystical philosophy:

> A cave ceases to be a cave if one pours harsh external light into it, if one strips it of its glooms, echoes and reflections, of its various queer lighting devices, if one explains it all atomistically or neuro-physiologically or psycho-analytically or behaviouristically or linguistically or in some other external—and I may here add quite questionable—manner. To be a cave-delineator, a transcendental speleologist, one must be a phenomenologist in Husserl's sense of the word, one who thinks nothing more solid, more factual than the way things look or feel to the human observer or experient, the peculiar way in which they impress or express him, and who is never willing to sacrifice the oddest, most irrational flicker of an appearance for the most conclusive experimental demonstration of what is actually there, or for the most irrefragable logical argument as to what can or cannot be there.[11]

This idea of the mystic as a species of phenomenologist is indeed closer to the archetype of the mystic that I have in mind here than Plato's seeker of the Forms. For this kind of mystic, not only are there things to be learned outside the cave, but there are also things to be learned inside the cave, as well, if we take some aspect(s) of our innermost selfhood as constituting some variety of cave-space. If, as the mystic believes, mystical experience is the epistemically preferred route to knowledge, then one will want to have phenomenal experiences (which, perhaps, include some trans-phenomenal elements) of a variegated kind: one will want to know valuable experiences from worthless experiences, 'higher' experiences from 'lower' experiences, 'inner' from 'outer', and so forth. Such a mystic will want to become a connoisseur of experience, to have a broad palette of experiences to draw from; for it is in this way that she will come to recognize and appreciate the special character of the mystical experience if and when she encounters it.

[11] J. N. Findlay, *The Discipline of the Cave*, H. D. Lewis, ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), pp. 24–5.

In this work we will, specifically, examine what can be said, and what purportedly cannot be said, regarding such mystical experiences.[12] Necessarily then, we will touch on issues in the philosophy of language. Hence, we will also be examining what can be known, and what purportedly cannot be known, about these experiences, by the mystic. This leads us into the domain of epistemology. Due to the philosophically troubling nature of mysticism, throughout this work the question of what constitutes a proper subject of philosophical study will re-emerge. [13] Unsurprisingly then, we will also be broaching metaphilosophical issues. Finally, because philosophy also influences the real world, and takes its cues from real world problems,[14] we will discuss how these philosophical issues cash out politically: how mystagoguery can arise from the mystic's desire to use her mystical knowledge to 'enlighten' her social milieu.

[12] It may seem odd to write on the subject of experiences that are, at bottom, supposedly inexpressible. But this project is not without precedent, nor should we prefigure any intellectual difficulty in writing about, or around, a philosophical null space. As Bertrand Russell, for example, writes in his introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: "after all, Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said". [Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, trans. (New York: Routledge, 1974), p. xxiii.] Ninian Smart, on a similar note, comments that "it may after all be presumptuous to attempt to unfold the meaning of that which is recognized as a mystery. But if words are used to speak of this mystery there is room for philosophical analysis." [Ninian Smart, *Reasons and Faiths* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 203.]

[13] This is what Richard Rorty describes as "a bedrock philosophical issue: Can one ever appeal to nonlinguistic knowledge in philosophical argument?" [Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism and Philosophy", in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), p. 53.] This work, will, I hope, help contribute to the dialogue on precisely this issue.

[14] I concur with Popper that "*Genuine philosophical problems are always rooted in urgent problems outside of philosophy, and they die if these roots decay*." [Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 72.]

Chapter 1

Metaphysical Concerns:

Antiphilosophy vs. Metaphilosophy

> [P]hilosophy is a gigantic effort at superficiality, that is to say, at bringing up to the surface and making open, clear, and evident that which was subterranean, mysterious, and latent. It detests mysticism and the melodramatic gestures of the mystagogue…If mysticism is keeping silent, philosophizing is saying, discovering in the great nakedness and transparency of the word the very being of things—ontology.[15]
>
> - José Ortega y Gasset

> There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical.[16]
>
> - Ludwig Wittgenstein

One of the more brilliant turns in the history of modern philosophy is Wittgenstein's reduction of many traditional philosophical problems to the status of misuses of language in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the later *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein's work in this area has obviously had a great deal of influence on the course of contemporary analytic philosophy, generating as it has numerous tomes by various authors on the pseudo-problems of philosophy and the proper means for their dissolution. However, even in the considerable wake of

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Since mysticism is clearly distinct from contemporary philosophy's self-image, I expect the roots of the problems I examine in this work to be quite thick and healthy.

[15] José Ortega y Gasset, *What is Philosophy?*, Mildred Adams, trans. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1960), p. 111.

[16] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, § 6.522.

Wittgenstein's deflationary antiphilosophy,[17] traditional philosophical problems still retain much of their intuitive appeal, and have preserved their role in motivating promising research in various disciplines within the sciences and humanities.[18] Certain paradoxes, as well as foundational and methodological concerns, continue to challenge our contemporary presuppositions that all that can be learned, can be learned from science, or at least in a scientific fashion.[19]

A voice in continental philosophy, representative of the camp conceptually opposed to any deflation of a Wittgensteinian variety, can be found in José Ortega y Gasset, a philosopher who was contemporaneous with Wittgenstein, but mainly active in, and popular with, academic circles in Spain and South America.[20] Philosophy, as Ortega sees it, is charged with the task of making the seemingly unintelligible structure of the universe meaningful to human beings. If this task requires creative embellishment, gross oversimplification, or asking questions that may not necessarily

[17] Wittgenstein celebrates his chosen role as deflator and flattener of philosophic terrain in the following passage:

> Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand.
> [Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1958), § 118.]

[18] That there may be no answer to certain philosophical questions has been a source of controversy regarding their legitimacy. There have been those, like Wittgenstein, who have held that if there is no answer, there can be no question either, and there have been others, like Thomas Nagel, who hold that "[i]t may be true that some philosophical problems have no solution…[but u]nsolvable problems are not for that reason unreal." (Thomas Nagel, quoted in Rorty, "Pragmatism and Philosophy", p. 48) Debate on this issue has unsurprisingly yet to be resolved, and therefore it is too early to remark on whether the question "Does an unanswerable question count as a question?" has an answer or not.

[19] We would do well to remember with Russell that "[s]cience, speaking broadly, is a tree growing from animal faith, but clipped by the shears of reason…" [Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 178.]

[20] The level of Wittgenstein and Ortega's familiarity with each other's work is a valid avenue of inquiry for historians of philosophy. Although I mention it in passing, I will not pursue it at length here, as it is not of central importance for this work.

have any corresponding answers, then so be it.[21] On Ortega's metaphilosophical account philosophers are justified on their part in making such moves. Wittgenstein, ostensibly with the same motive in mind as Ortega—that of creating and preserving meaning—claims that such philosophical methods would produce utterances that are meaningless.

The differences in methodology and metaphilosophical approaches are thus very deep between Wittgenstein and Ortega. As I have stated above, a major theme of Wittgenstein's work is the deflation of the majority of classical philosophical problems to misuses of language and the confusions resulting thereof. He holds that philosophical problems are

> solved…by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.[22]

Hence in Wittgenstein's deflationary view, metaphysics is sheer nonsense[23] and metaphilosophy is a superfluous exercise.[24] Unfortunately, in endorsing such strict theoretical limitations, Wittgenstein unwittingly delivered philosophy into the clutches

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[21] This is because Ortega is interested in the intrinsic value of the act of questioning—that is, philosophical theorizing—without worrying overmuch about how that theory tracks to the facts. More will be said on this below.

[22] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 109.

[23] Wittgenstein's project, on the face of it, allows no room for metaphysics. As he puts forward in his *Tractatus*:

> The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—*this* method would be the only strictly correct one."
> [Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, §6.43]

All the same, I hope to show later in this chapter that Wittgenstein himself endorses a kind of metaphysics in his conception of 'the mystical'.

[24] See Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 121, wherein Wittgenstein states that: "One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word 'philosophy' there must be a second-order philosophy. But it is

of Rudolf Carnap and the other members of the Vienna Circle. These theorists, and subsequent others, reworked philosophy into "the cleaning lady of the sciences",[25] giving it the task of tirelessly sanitizing and reorganizing empirical propositions. This, for Ortega, is hardly a paradigm of philosophy worth striving for, and rather one to be conscientiously avoided.

Ortega advocates, above all, "intellectual heroism",[26] and holds that a philosophy which is distinct from the sciences (i.e., germane to heroics) is more desirable than a philosophy that is subsumed by them. He states that:

> We want a philosophy which will be philosophy and nothing more, which accepts its destiny, with its splendor and misery, and does not look enviously in all directions, seeking for itself the cognitive virtues which belong to other sciences, such as the exactness of mathematical truth or the verification by the senses and by practice which belong to physical truth.[27]

We can see here that, by Ortega's lights, philosophy ought to be something separate from the sciences; indeed, free from all the formal requirements of proof inherent to the physical sciences, and yet somehow historically self-conscious, i.e. aware that it has its own 'destiny'.[28] Further, he holds that the scientist, "whether he likes it or not", needs such a philosophy, that is to say, a philosophy with an end distinct from those of the sciences, because "[w]here physics ends, the problem does not end", and "the man who

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not so: it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word 'orthography' among others without then being second-order."

[25] As Sarah Stroud humorously remarked in her "Problems of Analytic Philosophy" lecture at McGill University, March 13th, 2003.

[26] Intellectual heroism, however, is a radical metaphilosophical attitude by contemporary academic standards. Intellectual heroism and intellectual conservatism are obviously at odds with each other, and the contemporary academic climate seems to strongly favor conservatism. But it is clear that in a case where intellectual conservatism and heroism are directly in conflict with each other, Ortega would claim that "[t]he philosopher who is prepared for the maximum degree of intellectual danger, who expounds his whole thought, is under an obligation to exercise full liberty—to free himself from everything, including that rustic suspicion in the face of a possible metaphysics." [Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 90]

[27] Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 104. Presumably, by using the word 'destiny' here, Ortega is merely iterating the point that philosophy should have a different end than the sciences, and follow a different route towards that distinct end.

[28] This lack of regard for scientific proof does not mean that Ortega is not concerned with the problem of demonstrability, as we shall see in the following sections.

stands behind the scientist needs a truth that is whole and complete".[29] Philosophy, for Ortega, is a kind of existential therapy in itself—not a condition that requires Wittgensteinian linguistic therapy to excise.[30]

1.1: The 'Mystical', the Metaphysical, and the Limits of Language

Notwithstanding his comparatively restrictive metaphilosophical programme, Wittgenstein succeeds, at least, in driving home the point that philosophy cannot exist apart from the language that gives it intelligible form. It should be noted, however, that Wittgenstein's deflationary antiphilosophy itself lacks an ultimate grounding or justification outside of references to entrenched linguistic practices. This stance amounts to an irreducible circularity: for Wittgenstein, language alone can tell us that language can mislead us.[31] And thus, even in the throes of theoretical self-abnegation,[32]

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[29] Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 72.

[30] Wittgenstein famously states that he views deflating philosophical problems as a kind of linguistic therapy:

> It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of words in unheard-of ways.
>
> For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear.
>
> The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.—Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off.—Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem.
>
> There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.
>
> [Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* § 133.]

[31] Karl Popper points out, in his long parenthetical remark in *Conjectures and Refutations* (p. 17), the inherent folly in blaming language for producing pseudo-problems, while at the same time adducing unquestionable authority to that language. He states:

> (So our man-made language was at fault [for producing errors and philosophical pseudo-problems]. But then it was discovered that our language too was 'given' to us, in an important sense: that it embodied the wisdom and experience of many generations, and that it should not be blamed if we misused it. So language too becomes a truthful authority that could

he seems to beg an important methodological question, namely the reliability of language itself as a tool for philosophical clarification. This exclusive focus on the linguistic leaves us with a picture of the world that is incomplete; a yin bereft of its accompanying yang.

Wittgenstein himself acknowledges this lacuna, and attempts to remedy it in his philosophic schema, via his positing of the "mystical", that which transcends language, and which no language can describe.[33] This move brings completion to the Wittgensteinian ontology. There is the world, the totality of all articulatible facts;[34] and there is the mystical, that which cannot be captured by the language of facts—and these two categories exhaust the set of what is and what can be.[35]

> never deceive us. If we fall into temptation and use language in vain, then it is we who are to blame for the trouble that ensues. For language is a jealous God and will not hold him guiltless that taketh His words in vain, but will throw him into darkness and confusion.)

Clearly, Wittgenstein cannot have his cake, and eat it too, in this instance. Either Wittgenstein can claim that language is the ultimate court of philosophical appeal, or that language is responsible for all of our philosophical woes, but not both simultaneously. To do so would be to hold that most philosophers are guilty of using language in an improper way. That is, it would be to say that even the most educated members of academic culture are incapable of handling language; a tool presumably understood and adroitly wielded by any individual of average competence. This is a highly implausible claim on the face of it—one so audacious and shocking, that many have been stunned into attributing plausibility to it.

[32] As in when, at the end of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein implores the reader to "throw away the ladder", in effect, to discard the book of his that they have just read (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, § 6.54). Those interested in further exploring Wittgenstein's concept of "the mystical" described there should refer to Eddy Zemach, "Wittgenstein's Philosophy of the Mystical", in *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Copi, Irving M. and Robert W. Beard, eds. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966). For those interested, rather, in reading Wittgenstein as a mystic himself, it should be noted that his brand of self-effacement at the end of the *Tractatus*, accompanied by his stress on the transitional aspect of knowledge, has venerable precedents in numerous spiritual traditions. For instance, long before Wittgenstein, another sage, Buddha, advised his followers to see his teachings as a raft, to be abandoned after certain spiritual 'rivers' had been crossed. [See Brian Bocking, "'If you meet the Buddha on the map…': The Notion of Mapping Spiritual Paths", in *Mapping Invisible Worlds*, Gavin D. Flood, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.160.] Perhaps the similarity of Wittgenstein's pedagogical style with those of certain spiritual figures may help explain why many philosophers invested his work with a significance that borders on religiosity.

[33] See Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, § 6.522 (quoted as the epigraph of this chapter).

[34] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, § 1.1: "The world is the totality of facts, not of things."

[35] Karl Popper, in his *Unended Quest*, accuses Wittgenstein of producing an over-simplification with this distinction:

> Wittgenstein exaggerated the gulf between the world of describable ('sayable') facts and the world of that which is deep and cannot be said. There are gradations; moreover, the world of the

Acknowledging the mystical is thus a necessary manoeuvre, if Wittgenstein wishes to avoid theoretical circularity. However, in doing so he must, in effect, endorse the existence of one or more (perhaps infinitely many) mystical entities. This move forces Wittgenstein to endorse what he apparently abhors the most: namely, *a metaphysics*.[36] Given his anti-metaphysical commitments (sketched above), this is a surprising outcome, to say the least. Nevertheless, we are not interested in rubbing Wittgenstein's nose in his inconsistencies here.[37] What we are interested in, by way of this line of inquiry, is what can be sensibly said of this metaphysical realm, and about the mystical, generally.

Ortega, too, disparages metaphysics, and refers to his own philosophical enterprise as "ante-physical".[38] Oddly enough, his ontology, which will sound all-too-familiar to many readers of philosophy, can be succinctly laid out as follows:

> sayable does not always lack depth…[i]t is his facile solution of the problem of depth—the thesis 'the deep is unsayable'—which unites Wittgenstein the positivist with Wittgenstein the mystic.
> [Karl Popper, *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 236–7, n. 301.]

[36] When we discuss mystical experience vis-à-vis the ineffable, unverifiable experience, i.e., "there is an *x* such that *x* is an experience that is ineffable and unverifiable", then the mystical in this case is also the metaphysical.

[37] Karl Popper, on the other hand, *is* interested in ruminating on Wittgenstein's theoretical gaffe on this subject. He intones that

> [t]he antimetaphysical theory of meaning in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, far from helping to combat metaphysical dogmatism and oracular philosophy, represents a reinforced dogmatism that opens wide the door to the enemy, deeply significant metaphysical nonsense, and throws out, by the same door, the best friend, that is to say, scientific hypothesis.
> [Popper, *Open Society*, p. 635 n. 51)

[38] Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 74. The prefix 'ante-' means to come before, to be prior in order to (in this case physics); hence Ortega presumably formulated his 'ante-physics' to be in linguistic opposition to 'metaphysics'; specifically the sense of the prefix 'meta-', which means to come after, to be latter in order ('second-order', as Wittgenstein put it). Thus Ortega's so-called 'ante-physics' is that philosophical inquiry which logically and historically precedes and causes talk of the physical, rather than that which follows and is produced by it. But as his ontology boils down to talk of 'essences' and 'being', I fail to see how he is not simply engaging in plain old metaphysics, in the other sense of 'meta-': inquiring about what lies behind, or transcends, the physical. Semantic quibbling aside, the two appear to be identical.

the "beings" of things are "located behind"[39] their outward appearances, and these beings are comprised of the things' "essences". According to Ortega, knowledge is generated when the "inadequacy"[40] of the things that are given and apparent arouse innate human "curiosity".[41] This motivates us, as humans, to quest for a more adequate knowledge of things, i.e., to posit the existence of essences, which leads, in turn, to a "duplication of the world."[42]

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[39] For example, regarding light, Ortega says that

> the being of the light is located behind and beyond it, and it is—mark this well—concealed by it…The light [thus] incites me to seek after its being, inasmuch as the light does not, in conjunction with its presence, surrender its being to me.
> [José Ortega y Gasset, *What is Knowledge?*, Jorge Garcia-Gómez, trans., ed. (New York: State University of New York, 2002), p. 79.]

This is also a fitting analogy for the mystical quest, inasmuch as "God does not reveal himself in the world" (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, § 6.432), but remains hidden, a mystery, a secret that challenges us to pursue our investigations ever further. Georg Simmel writes that "[t]he secret contains a tension that is dissolved in the moment of its revelation." [Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, Kurt H. Wolff, trans., ed. (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), p. 333.] The concept of the secret thus implies the concept of *revelation*, real or promised, which functions, as Smart points out, as "a natural adjunct to the model of the divine as concealed by phenomena…Given…the concealment of the divine and the way in which traces of the holy are found about us, the concept of revelation falls naturally into place. What is hidden is now revealed; we are afforded a glimpse behind the veil…" (Smart, p. 162). In this vein, we can say that mystical revelation—communion with hidden 'beings' or an ultimate 'Being'—is the primary end sought by disciples of mysticism.

[40] If the world were already epistemically adequate, then knowledge acquisition would be effortless and automatic; but this is evidently not the case. Therefore, for Ortega, "[t]o know, then, is precisely not to be content with seeing what one can see, but rather to refuse what one sees, as being insufficient, and to postulate the invisible." (Ortega, *What is Knowledge?*, p. 85)

[41] Indeed, Ortega goes so far as to claim that "*all questions*…derive from a fundamental human condition…called 'curiosity.'" (Ortega, *What is Knowledge?*, p. 78, emphasis added) Presumably, if all knowledge arises from our attempts to answer questions, and if all questions arise from curiosity, and if all curiosity arises from the inadequacy of that which is given, then all knowledge is the product of the given's inadequacy, in a roundabout fashion. Thus the inadequacy of the given world, insofar as it motivates the quest for knowledge, is in itself normatively desirable. This chain of argument is used, in slightly different form, to argue against perfectionist utopian schemes; the rationale being that perfection (total adequacy) leaves no room for human intellectual or ethical development—our current, imperfect socio-political conditions are thought to be more stimulating (parallels could also be drawn here to the so-called 'problem of evil' in the philosophy of religion).

[42] It is best to let Ortega explicate his duplication of the world, in his own words, so that we can clearly apprehend the mathematical basis of his reasoning, which at its root is no more complex than the algebraic expression $\{E + E = 2E\}$:

> Let us call 'world' the ensemble of all things that are non-mediate entities, or which are present by themselves. But, as it turns out now, each one of them is endowed with a being or essence, and that involves a duplication of the world. The world of essences lies behind the world of things. The sphere consisting of the being of entities lies behind the entities.

At this point one might like to apply the brakes to this train of thought, and draw Occam's razor liberally across Ortega's ontological throat.[43] The philosophical picture that is emerging here is suspicious at best: Ortega posits a human nature notable for its characteristic curiosity, through which everyone is automatically a philosopher by birth. Therefore ante-physics (read metaphysics—see footnote 38), defined by Ortega as the quest for essences, is naturally generated by that curiosity, and forms a static part of the

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[Ortega, *What is Knowledge?*, p. 80]

Ortega's description resounds with mystical overtones, as it treats 'essences' as ultimate (perhaps even divine) secrets about the given. The duplication of the world is basically an addition of what is hidden (indescribable) to what is non-mediate (describable): the world is the sum of each thing plus the secret behind (and belonging to) it. Similarly, in Simmel's words, "[t]he secret offers, so to speak, the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world; and the latter is decisively influenced by the former." (Simmel, p. 330.) In other words, the metaphysically mediate opens up the possibility of a secret world invested with the mystical power to change the public world, thus creating a schism between the given mundane and the inferred supermundane. We might think that Ortega's duplication of the world into entity and essence mirrors Wittgenstein's division of the world into two categories: what can be said (language) and what cannot (the mystical). I confess that I myself have been tempted by such a comparison. But again, it is illuminating to regard how fundamentally anti-Wittgensteinian Ortega's understanding of the world is: for Wittgenstein, the world is simply facts; he explicitly claims that, in effect, the world is *anything but* things and their essences (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, § 1.1). There is, however, an undeniably unique fit between the work of Ortega and Wittgenstein. Opposed to Wittgenstein's *deflation* of philosophical problems, Ortega's duplication of the world presents us with an *inflation* of the same. This model of metaphilosophical opposition we may here call the "lungs of philosophy": an inflation is a letting in of new ideas and problems; a deflation is a jettisoning of old ideas and problems. We cannot judge between Wittgenstein or Ortega as to who is ultimately 'right', as each is pursuing their opposing metaphilosophical projects, and performing an important function for the discipline of philosophy: Ortega is 'inhaling', admitting philosophical material for the discipline to examine, and Wittgenstein is 'exhaling', refusing to consider certain matters to be within the scope of philosophic discourse. It is, of course, not only the two figures I mention here who are engaged in this seemingly opposed, yet ultimately synergetic, venture: an entire history of philosophy could be sketched using this dialectical model as a framework. To my mind, if the lungs of philosophy stop inflating, then philosophy itself is dead…perhaps this is why I think it important for philosophy to take a deep, post-Wittgensteinian-deflation breath in, regardless of what pollution the discipline ends up inhaling (asthma being preferable to suffocation, in the terms of the analogy… contemporary analytic philosophy is considered by some camps to be suffocating the creative aspects of philosophical thought that are central to its flourishing).

[43] Ortega anticipates our potential alarm here at his bolder ante-physical remarks, but can only respond with this unconvincing *ad hominum* defense: "The Occamites who protested in metaphysics that the principles or *entes* were multiplied unnecessarily were at the same time carrying to a supercharged and grotesque extreme the multiplication of distinctions in logic, which was the field that interested them." [José Ortega y Gasset, *Man and Crisis*, Mildred Adams, trans. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1962), p. 213.] Obviously, simply because the Occamites may have been hypocritical in some sense does not imply that their philosophical concerns are somehow therefore invalid.

human condition, as inescapable as genetics.[44] Unfortunately, in the realm of ante-physics, how things appear can be just as important as how things actually are, and so it seems that our individual curiosities will almost certainly lead us to different epistemological conclusions.[45]

Metaphysically however, things may not be as bad as they seem at first glance for Ortega. At bottom he, like Wittgenstein, still acknowledges the existence of facts. Unlike Wittgenstein, however, he leaves ample room for language users to formulate novel interpretations to bridge the gaps between individual facts in a multitude of ways.[46] He allows us, in other words, to speak in novel metaphors, and of the metaphysical. Here concepts, acting as the receptacles that bind together constellations of facts, are far more flexible for Ortega than they are for Wittgenstein. Ortega, for instance, is not constrained by theoretical adherence to a "community of language users" who might disallow new interpretations and usages of any given word or concept (again, seen here as a fact-amalgam or fact-arrangement) as invalid moves in a language-game.[47] In this way, Ortega allows for radical developments and sudden

[44] Metaphysical speculation is unavoidable, on Ortega's account, because "it is literally impossible for man, bound as he is by psychological necessity, to renounce the attempt to possess a complete idea of the world, an integral idea of the Universe." (Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 65)

[45] Speaking metaphysically, J. N. Findlay, for example, holds that "[t]he reality of bodies, and of the space in which bodies are, is in fact nine-tenths blind conviction, something felt in our bones, and only one-tenth palpable presence." (Findlay, p. 26) So according to Findlay, if we believe in essences, well then: there they are, or at least the most important nine-tenths of them. But, now speaking negatively, what would it mean to suspend one's belief in a physical object? Would one attempt to run through a brick wall divested of one's belief, because, after all, at most only one-tenth of it could yet remain? Is the only reason that such a wall might stop us because we still believe in it too much? It does indeed seem as if such a radical idealism could only take root if, as Wittgenstein metaphorically puts it, "language *goes on holiday*." (Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 38) Conflating subjective belief with objective reality is not a valid move in our language-game: it is generally recognized that without such distinctions an unproductive state of epistemic anarchy would ensue.

[46] Against the idea of there being an ultimate way in which the world must be described, Ortega holds that "many theories are equally adequate and the superiority of any single one is, strictly speaking, founded solely on practical reasons. The facts recommend it, but they do not impose it." (Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 53)

[47] However, Ortega does concede the very Wittgensteinian point that:

changes in language use, which Wittgenstein has much more difficulty accounting for.[48] Additionally, through what Ortega calls "the human doing of questioning"[49] a productive discourse can emerge on fascinating but ultimately irresolvable problems (indeed, the irresolvability of a problem may be the main reason for a conversation about it to commence, and to continue indefinitely thereafter),[50] whereas for

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> Language is precisely something not created by the individual but something that is found by him, previously established by his social environs, his tribe, *polis*, city, or nation. The words of a language have their meaning imposed by collective usage.
> [José Ortega y Gasset, *The Origin of Philosophy*, Toby Talbot, trans. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1967), pp. 60–1.]

Ortega gets around this potential theoretical stumbling block to linguistic generativity by allowing individuals to derive neologisms from the novel contents of their unique experiences of the world, and in doing so implicitly validates the employment of novel metaphors and other poetic uses of language. Ortega's language-user is thus free to name the things that lack names for him, including complex relationships that can only be expressed indirectly or incompletely. Wittgenstein would most likely take issue with Ortega on this point—even though the two are seemingly close to agreement here—calling Ortega's non-traditional process of naming "an occult process…a *queer* connection of a word with an object…as [if] it were a baptism of an object." (Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 38)

[48] Pierre Mailly has commented, in *Language and Ethics: A Wittgensteinian Perspective*, his M. A. (Philosophy) thesis (Montréal: Concordia University, 2003), on the great, although not insurmountable, theoretical difficulties one encounters when attempting to account for emergent uses of language (i.e., new metaphors) within a Wittgensteinian framework (see Mailly, especially pp. 79–95).

[49] For Ortega, this questioning invites answering(s), ostensibly even in cases wherein no fully appropriate answer could, sensibly, be forthcoming due to the paradoxical nature of the question itself, e.g.: the Zen Buddhist *koan* "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" This is because Ortega believes that the answerer is naturally as curious as the questioner, and hopes to contribute to the refinement of the question, even if only by offering a tentative or searching response, 'trying on' different replies and reformulations of the query in order to advance the dialogue (for no other reason, perhaps, than to hone its usefulness as a goad to future conversations). The "human doing of questioning", then, can be seen as an inter-subjective game of 'Fill in the Blanks' with shifting variables. As Ortega states:

> A question is an incomplete way of speaking, for a response is solicited therein. Strictly speaking, it is nothing [but] a request; or, equivalently stated, to raise a question is to ask [someone] to speak… In an essential question, we make a request, to wit: [that someone] declare the being of something to us.
> [Ortega, *What is Knowledge?*, pp. 92–3]

What we find in the blanks of tentatively answered questions might, in some cases, perhaps be dry facts, and in other cases, the punchlines to jokes. It all depends, of course, on the unique content we have to offer up. Even if we don't know the answers, we will certainly have an impulse to make them up; Ortega's 'curiosity' dictates that we, as humans, simply cannot leave the blanks blank (_____).

[50] Compare Ortega's positive outlook towards the act of philosophical questioning to Wittgenstein's talk of philosophy being "tormented by questions" in *Investigations*, § 133. Metaphilosophically, Wittgenstein wants to settle questions and give philosophy peace, a peace that Ortega would interpret as "the peace of the grave" (with apologies to Immanuel Kant). For Ortega, the act of questioning is a vibrant and meaningful act in itself, not a disturbance to be quieted.

Wittgenstein, famously, "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."[51] This is a tautological conversation-stopper, not a metaphilosophy that will generate productive discourse. In thus ostensibly paving over any possible metaphysics (by making them taboo), Wittgenstein unjustifiably invalidates the practices of the community of language users who play the language-game of metaphysics. Additionally, since there are such strict theoretical constraints operating within the Wittgensteinian framework, it makes sense that we are able come to know fewer things within it, than within less constrictive competing frameworks, making it a less epistemically appealing position overall.

Let us now return to Ortega, whom we left peering "behind" things, looking for their essences. Strangely, for an intellectually heroic "ante-physician" of his professed stripes, Ortega decries what I have argued to be the potential basis for a Wittgensteinian metaphysics: "the mystical". The mystical, as well as the mystic who encounters it, is of no use to Ortega, as he holds that philosophy has no truck with subjects which cannot be made intelligible and communicated *a posteriori*. In the end, Ortega says, "[t]he mystic's knowledge is untransferable, and in essence silent", and thus "out of the mystic vision no intellectual benefit redounds to mankind."[52] Yet, if Ortega can talk intelligibly about "essences" and "being", then perhaps Wittgenstein's concept of "the mystical" is something that Ortega would want to bring within the admittedly flexible boundaries of what we can reasonably speak on, and thus generate knowledge about.

[51] See Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* § 7. Zemach interprets Wittgenstein to be speaking here of, among other things, his conception of God. He states that "God, the inexpressible, the mystical, is a formal 'fact'. The formal 'fact' *that* the world is, namely, *that* there is the totality of facts, is God." (Zemach, p. 363) In other words, the limits of language can only be expressed in language: the Fact of all facts is itself unutterable. The fact that there are facts is a truth that cannot be justified, only "shewn". (This poses an interesting theoretical problem here, which presages my later discussion on mystical experience: i.e., is it possible to give language to the divine? Or does the written word inevitably fail at this task? In this case, must the flesh—or the deed enacted by the flesh—suffice by way of demonstration?)

Even if we cannot—by definition—say what cannot be said, no doubt some theoretical benefit will accrue to our efforts towards delineating *what*, exactly, it is that is purportedly ineffable, and *why* it is that it 'cannot be said'.[53]

Even in light of this sticking point in Ortega's schema, we have many more avenues towards knowledge open to us with Ortega than we do with Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's deflationary antiphilosophy, as discussed above, tends to discourage the exploration of novel and unconventional avenues to the ultimate end of knowing. Inasmuch as the germ of knowledge is nurtured by the spirit of experimentation, Ortega's more open-ended metaphilosophical approach lets, to borrow a phrase of Kai Nielsen's, "many flowers bloom",[54] and encourages the exploration of alternate forms of knowing (under the condition that these forms of knowledge can be linguistically communicated to others—that we can, in short, both 'know and tell'). Ortega gives the philosopher-by-nature in each of us license to play connect-the-dots between points of fact in any manner we deem fit,[55] meaning that each philosophic agent may potentially

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[52] Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 109–10.

[53] There is obviously a definitional constraint at play here, what with 'the mystical' being, conceptually, just that which is ineffable. There is perhaps, also a psychological constraint: as Brian Bocking writes, ego (mind) and mystical experience (that which transcends our comprehension), or, as he metaphorically represents them in his discussion of the story of King Solomon, "gnat" and "wind", are mutually exclusive, and cannot be thought of as "occupying the same map" (Bocking, p. 162). However, there is a third constraint, a political one, which is sometimes confused with the definitional and psychological constraints, but in actuality has a much simpler explanation than either of the preceding two. It may be that the mystic possesses (contingently) unspeakable knowledge that social taboos prevent her from revealing (for fear of reprisal), or that a dogma exists that prevents others from recognizing what she has to say as knowledge. I shall argue in following sections that this third constraint is, indeed, most often at work against the contingent communicability of mystical experience, making silence the most politically prudent option for the mystic. I return to a discussion of the various contingent constraints on what can be said in the subsequent chapters.

[54] For Nielsen to let "many flowers bloom" is to "encourage many different philosophical tasks and not to engage in any attempted imperialistic cornering of the market…" [Kai Nielsen, *On Transforming Philosophy: A Metaphilosophical Inquiry* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press Inc., 1995), p. 184.]

[55] I am reminded here of Antoine Roquentin, Sartre's main character in the existentialist novel *Nausea*, who reflects on the manner in which: "Slow, lazy, sullen, the facts adapt themselves to the rigour of the order I give to them; but it remains outside of them." [Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, Lloyd Alexander, trans. (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964), p. 13.] While revisiting this novel, I was

be possessed of her own unique conceptual vocabulary (a not altogether uncommon phenomenon for philosophers), resulting in a diverse plurality of philosophical approaches and methodologies. A Wittgensteinian "community of language users", on the other hand, would be likely to disparage as nonsense any claims to knowledge that did not fit with their implicit community standards governing which utterances are deemed to be valid uses of language.[56] Wittgenstein's theoretical dogmatism reduces the total possible number of epistemic paths leading toward knowledge, and the number of valid metaphilosophies, to one: his own deflationary antiphilosophy.[57]

Perhaps, at the end of the day, "metaphysics *is* moonshine", as Nielsen puts it.[58] But so what? Metaphysical talk can help us come to new ways of contemplating, and understanding, the possible structure of the unknown universe. Nonsense, as such, is a developmental phase on the way to sense, and, perhaps, sensibility.[59] It could be that

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struck by numerous surface similarities between existentialism and mysticism. However, I have come to agree with Peter Conradi (who writes on the work of Iris Murdoch) that while

> [i]t is true that both existentialism and mysticism *appear* to emphasize a full inhabiting of the present moment…the existentialist is not immersed in the real world at all. It is the mystic who is so immersed, while the existentialist moment of choice is described in terms of the *discontinuity* between the moral agent and his/her world.
> [Peter Conradi, "Editor's Preface", , in Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*. Peter Conradi, ed. (New York: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1998), p. xxiii.]

[56] They function as linguistic enforcers: as figurative witch-hunters envigilating against the "bewitchment of language" Wittgenstein speaks of in *Investigations*, § 109.

[57] Popper holds that "[i]f Wittgenstein's doctrine is true, then nobody can philosophize…", that is, nobody can try to solve philosophical problems (Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 68). Popper's challenge to Wittgenstein on this point is reputed to be the cause of the celebrated 'poker incident' wherein Wittgenstein became quite agitated with Popper and, after shaking a poker at him, stormed out of Popper's October 1946 lecture to the Cambridge Moral Sciences Club. (See Popper, *Unended Quest*, pp. 122–4, for more on this.)

[58] Nielsen, *On Transforming Philosophy*, p. 36, emphasis added. Apparently, Nielsen looks upon metaphysics as a weed to be cut, and not as a flower to be nurtured to full bloom. Perhaps, in turn, we could look upon Nielsen, and Wittgenstein as well, as partaking in an "imperialistic cornering of the [philosophic] market"; that is to say, they stake their theoretical claims by posting signs to the effect that: "No matter what philosophy is, or becomes, metaphysics isn't—or at least shouldn't be—part of it."

[59] Popper defends the potential value of what would be considered nonsense on the Wittgensteinian account in the following passage:

we, not unlike children, require practice in talking about things that we initially find difficult, puzzling, or plain nonsensical to us, and that we should not let our fears of 'getting it wrong' inhibit our attempts at 'getting it right'. The value of certain vintages of "moonshine" becomes clearer when we see the metaphysics of the ancients reflected in the foundational axioms of contemporary science.[60] Instead of fearing nonsense, it might be more sensible for us to embrace it on occasion, and even, on a prescriptive note, to enjoy doing so.[61] Such pleasures ought to be pursuable without fear of derision from the hard-nosed playground bullies of analytic philosophy.[62] Why should we ridicule and malign the metaphysicians' language-game, or the mystics' for that matter? Outside of pure obedience to the dominant philosophic dogma, guided as it is by the ideal of a fully transparent logical proceduralism, the only other reason to do so would be to protect ourselves against the political threat posed by ambitious mystagogues, a concern I will soon address.[63]

> …I believe that some people have said things which were not very good sense, and certainly not very good grammar, but which were all the same highly interesting and exciting, and perhaps more worth listening to than the good sense of others.
> [Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 70.]

[60] Here I am thinking specifically of the atomism of the ancient Greeks. Interestingly, Popper notes that "myths may be developed, and become testable…historically speaking all—or very nearly all—scientific theories originate from myths, and…myth[s] may contain important anticipations of scientific theories." (Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 38) He has also criticized the Vienna Circle for "trying to find a criterion which made metaphysics meaningless nonsense, sheer gibberish", because "any such criterion was bound to lead to trouble since metaphysical ideas are often the forerunners of scientific ones." (Popper, *Unended Quest*, p. 80)

[61] Even if it is not well founded, epistemological optimism can be "a case of a bad idea inspiring many good ones", as Popper reminds us (Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 8). Science *is* the progeny of metaphysics, after all. Sometimes philosophical 'errors' can be quite germane to the development of new fields of knowledge.

[62] I must add a point of clarification here: although I would allow Ortega his "duplication of the world", I personally have no use for it. I defend it solely on principle, as a not wholly unintelligible manner of communicating a certain picture of the world to others. If this picture can move people in some way, if it can incite them to belief or even action, then so be it. The genius and the liability of a belief is that it does not have to be either true or justified to potentially motivate behavior and transform the social practices of its believers.

[63] Popper does not let us forget the political dark side of epistemological optimism: "The theory that truth is manifest…is the basis of almost every kind of fanaticism…it may also lead, though perhaps less

1.2: Hyper-Codification and Apoliticality

Hannah Arendt poses a possible problem with unhesitatingly accepting an Ortegean ante-physics—having to do with its freedom in positing entities, which may result in the eventual loss of understanding despite gains in knowledge. That problem comes to us in the form of what I will call here *hyper-codification*, or the laying on of linguistic code over linguistic code until the final form of the code retains no meaning that could be translated back into ordinary human language. The codes themselves may transmit knowledge, but when they themselves become recoded, or combined with other codes, they cease to be exoterically intelligible. Arendt warns of a kind of hyper-codification in terms of the scientific use of a "…'language' of mathematical symbols which, though it was originally meant only as an abbreviation for spoken statements, now contains statements that in no way can be translated back into speech."[64] Perhaps, if Ortega's metaphysical essence-talk was given limitless linguistic and ontological *carte blanche*, it would grow as impenetrably dense as the mathematical symbolism that troubled Arendt. If such coded 'speech' becomes untranslatable into ordinary human language, then clearly epistemic accountability on the part of the speaker cannot be volunteered or demanded, which becomes a political problem; for as Popper points out, "mankind is united by the fact that our different mother tongues, in so far as they are rational, can be translated into one another."[65] The proverbial Tower of Babel collapses when translation is either conceptually or

directly than does a pessimistic epistemology, to authoritarianism." (Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, pp. 8–9)

[64] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 4.

[65] Popper, *Open Society*, p. 424.

contingently impossible…and those who cannot, or do not, make themselves intelligible to others may make themselves, or be made by others into, the enemies of humankind.

Arendt's concern for the scientist was that she would become as silent—or as unintelligible—as the mystic, inhabiting as she does "a world where speech has lost its power."[66] For Arendt, "[w]herever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition, for speech is what makes man a political being."[67] Thus to lose the faculty of speech is, *mutatis mutandis*, to become an apolitical being in her framework, an outcome which Arendt views as most undesirable.

The mystic, however, faces a slightly different problem than Arendt's scientist. Although both evade epistemic accountability, they do so for opposite reasons: the scientist because the knowledge contained within her hyper-codified language cannot be translated back into ordinary language, and the mystic because her alleged knowledge cannot be composed in ordinary language in the first place (it is purportedly ineffable). Moreover, the mystic is not troubled by the Arendtian threat of apoliticality. In fact, according to Max Weber, archetypally "[t]he contemplative mystic minimizes his activity by resigning himself to the order of the world as it is, and lives incognito…constantly striving to escape from activity in the world back to the quietness and inwardness of his god."[68] By Weber's lights, the mystic is a kind of extreme political conservative, a quietist, accepting the world completely as it is, with

[66] Arendt, p. 4.
[67] Arendt, p. 3.
[68] Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, p. 280. Here and elsewhere where Weber uses the term 'god', I take it to be interchangeable with what I most often refer to in this work as 'mystical experience'. This is, I stress again, because I am not interested in discussing the metaphysical commitments of particular mystical sects, but rather the mystic as an ideal type, or archetypal figure, who values non-mediate experience over all other possible sources of knowledge.

no resistance.[69] This quietism—constituting neither an explicit endorsement, nor an explicit condemnation, of the political status quo—is at least consistent with what Karl Popper refers to as "*ethical and juridical positivism*, the doctrine that what is, is good, since there can be no standards but existing standards…the doctrine that *might is right*."[70] By giving herself over completely to private experiences, the mystic—perhaps inadvertently—can be construed to *implicitly* endorse, through non-action, the political conditions under which mystical experience is facilitated, i.e. the status quo; as the mystic experience is that which the mystic places ultimate value upon.

Opposed to Weber's portrayal of the mystic as an apolitical figure, conventional wisdom in political philosophy holds that the successful evasion of epistemic accountability—whether due to hyper-codification (in the case of Arendt's scientists) or the utter lack of codification (in the case of the mystics' phenomenological encounters with 'the mystical')—generally results in extreme political radicalism, ultimately culminating in some form of authoritarianism. In the first instance, the establishment of a monological technocracy is a troubling prospect, and in the second, the threat of being charismatically led by a mystagogue, who remains silent as to the source of her political inspirations, also gives us pause.[71] In both of these cases, the

[69] Perhaps this is because the world itself can be seen as divine by the mystic—to seek the divine is to seek the 'being behind the object', and thus to commune with both the being and the object. This form of pantheism is also seen in some Eastern religions, including Japanese Shinto. Shinto, "from which all true [Japanese] mythology springs, accepts that every natural thing, be it a man, a volcano, or a plum tree, has, in varying degrees of intensity, a *kami* or spirit. Some parts of the vegetable and animal kingdoms are believed to have emanated from or to be descendants of the deities." [Juliet Piggot, *Japanese Mythology*, 3rd printing (Toronto: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1975), p. 12.] If God(s) is (are) everywhere, and if the world itself is thus divine, then mystical experience consists of living sensitively in that world, and quietly studying the 'Book of Nature'.

[70] Popper, *Open Society*, p. 236.

[71] In hyper-codified or non-codified politico-epistemic systems, the bases of knowledge claims are not exoterically discernable. Thus in both cases we cannot see, in Rortian terms, whether these claims to hidden knowledge (and thus potential reserves of political power) are 'deep' or 'empty'. In the case of mystical (and, taken to the extreme, perhaps even ordinary) experience, for example, it seems as if such discernment might even be conceptually impossible:

worrying aspect from the standpoint of political philosophy is that claims to knowledge, and thereby epistemic and potentially political authority, can be made by epistemically unaccountable agents, who are in turn unwilling to, or incapable of, justifying their claims through rational discourse with others—those who, in other words, will not, or cannot, show us the 'beetles' in their 'boxes'.[72] In the background, there is also an underlying suspicion that those who do not give reasons for their actions or beliefs must have something to hide—that mystics are perhaps concealing seditious intentions, lying in wait to seize power away from the scientific and democratic institutions which ostensibly function to facilitate the 'free exchange' of knowledge.

> the intuition that there is something ineffable that it is like to be us—something one cannot learn about by believing true propositions but only by *being* like that—is not something on which anything could throw further light. The claim is either deep or empty.
> [Rorty, "Pragmatism and Philosophy", p. 53.]

[72] These terms refer to a famous passage from Wittgenstein's *Investigations*:

> Now someone tells me that *he* knows what pain is only from his own case!—Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a 'beetle'. No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word 'beetle' had a use in these people's language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty.—No, one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.
> [Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 293]

What Wittgenstein is arguing here is against the possibility of a private sensation-language, and it doing so he takes it for granted that we cannot have access to the experiences of others. But it could be argued that we, at times, *can* see inside each other's boxes: for example, we know simply by looking sometimes that another person is in pain. This fact, however, does not commit us, wholesale, to a variety of behaviorism, for at other times experiences of pain are successfully hidden from us. If this is the case then, as Wittgenstein points out, we cannot simply 'divide through' the contents of the boxes, as they are at least conceptually (if not contingently) openable. And even if the 'boxes' were conceptually unopenable—say with a case like purportedly ineffable mystical experiences—we could still not happily 'divide through' the private experiences of others, as if they admit of being represented by a single variable in a mathematical equation. To collect everything that cannot be made into public knowledge under one heading, and then to label everything under that heading as irrelevant, is an evasion of the real problem of the ineffable, which is too complex and multi-faceted to warrant such a rough and unrefined treatment by Wittgenstein.

Chapter 2

Epistemological Concerns:

The Mystical Experience

> The mystic's knowledge is untransferable, and in essence silent…[but it would] be a mistake to disdain what the mystic sees for the mere reason that only he can see it. One must root out of knowledge that curious "democracy" of knowing which would have us believe that the only existent thing is that which the whole world knows. No; there are men who can see more than the others do, and the others cannot properly do anything but accept that superiority when it becomes apparent. To put it another way, he who does not see must have faith in he who does.[73]
>
> - José Ortega y Gasset

> Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.—Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us.[74]
>
> - Ludwig Wittgenstein

In the epigraph above, Ortega suggests both that private knowledge might possibly be possessed by the mystic, and that private knowledge might possibly trump public (common) knowledge. His conclusion is reminiscent of the adage, "In the valley of the blind, the one-eyed man is king"; or in other words, "we must trust in those who claim to know when we admit that we do not."[75] To determine whether Ortega's trust in

[73] Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 109–10, substitutions mine.
[74] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 126. Note how Wittgenstein embraces the epistemological optimism, "the doctrine that truth is manifest" (and thus all the concomitant danger of a slide toward fanaticism and dogmatism) that Popper warns us of in *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 7.
[75] Nielsen concurs that "[t]he blind can understand what sight is; they just cannot see. The mystical experience case seems to be fully analogous." [Kai Nielsen, *Naturalism and Religion* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001), p. 416.] At the same time, we must be cautious in our employment of this analogy. A person who is blind from birth can understand the *abstract concept* of sight, i.e.: "Eyes, these spherical organs in my skull, somehow enable in others a kind of perception that I have never

epistemic superiority, or Wittgenstein's belief that what is true should be evident to all, is the correct epistemological strategy in light of the problem of purported mystical knowledge, I must turn to the foundation of the problem.

First, there seems to be something amiss in Ortega's formulation above. In order for something to count as knowledge it must be—at least in theory, if not in practice—communicable; on the standard epistemological account, knowledge must be formulated in a language, to count as knowledge. Without language, justification—the "J" of the justified, true belief (JTB) account of knowledge[76]—would, *sine qua non*, not be possible. Thus, if (*a la* Wittgenstein) there are no private languages, there can, of necessity, be no private knowledge. One may choose not to communicate knowledge to others, but this is importantly different from being *unable* to communicate it to others.

Moreover, there seems to be a pragmatic burden on the part of the bearer of knowledge to explain or otherwise justify her knowledge to others, if she expects others in her social milieu to sustain, as Ortega puts it, "faith" in that knowledge. This burden becomes all the more apparent when we consider Ortega's backhand swing against the mystic, his maxim that "I will believe that someone sees more than I when that superior vision, invisible to me, gives him superiorities which are apparent to me. I judge by its effects."[77] With this statement, Ortega—somewhat surprisingly—puts an empirical criterion on the existence of purported knowledge resulting from a mystical experience.

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experienced." However, they cannot *know what it is like to see*, an understanding that can only be given through experiencing sight firsthand. Likewise, we should be cautious when we, as non-mystics, claim to 'understand' mystical experience.

[76] The JTB account of knowledge has been, admittedly, contested by some epistemologists. However, this thesis is not concerned with the current theoretical status of the JTB account, but merely its extrinsic usefulness in advancing the discussion at hand. I use the JTB account here as a simple yardstick, a guide by which to judge, and critique, what is commonly understood when we use the word "knowledge" in a standard epistemological context.

What Ortega seems to be driving at here is akin to what various virtue theorists have claimed about the virtues: that they can only be detected and identified in the actions of others—this is, in effect, a kind of behaviorist account of mysticism.[78] In the end, knowledge must be somehow demonstrable (even if it is not linguistically codifiable) for Ortega. Similarly, for Wittgenstein, certain things can be "shewn" which cannot be said.

Put plainly, Ortega is not satisfied with a quietist, untransformed mystic experient. He would prefer that the mystic gave a lucid description of her mystical experience to a willing audience, or better yet to register some sort of publicly demonstrable shift in her behavior or appearance.[79] If the mystic fails in making such an exhibition, Ortega (and much of the rest of the mystic's audience) can be expected to

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[77] Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 110. However, to put a behaviorist standard on the mystical experience—to say that the mystic should be able to share her private experiences with others via direct demonstration—is to deny that mystical experience is a species of private language.

[78] This behaviorist account of mysticism may derive from Ortega's account of "com-presence"; the idea that:

> though there are present to us only a figure and some bodily movements, in or through this presence we see something that is essentially invisible, something that is pure inwardness…when we see it, not only does it signal to us, like all other colors and resistances, a certain corporeality, it is also the sign of something completely new and different—namely, an incorporeality, a *within*, an *intus* or *intimacy* or inwardness…an element of co-existence…two inwardnesses in one way or another become present to each other.
> [José Ortega y Gasset, *Man and People*, Willard R. Trask, trans. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1963), p. 91.]

This positing of a sensed '*intus*' and the consequent assumption of com-presence seems to ignore the problem of other minds, which, to be fair, is perhaps necessary if progress is to be made on the question of the epistemological status of mystical experiences—for we must already assume the existence of other minds if we are to take up questions regarding the status of those others' experiences. This tack is (at least) consistent with Ortega's enthusiasm to offer tentative answers to ultimately irresolvable philosophical questions.

[79] The purported physical transformations of such mythical, enlightened beings as the *Bodhisattva* of Buddhist lore come to mind here. But would it be proof enough for Ortega that the mystic was sincere if she were to develop elongated earlobes, blue skin, or perhaps a third eye (i.e., manifested attributes recognized by certain spiritual traditions as signs of divinity)? Or would it be equally reasonable to assume that she had been transformed by something else—say, perhaps, by a very talented plastic surgeon? It is hard to assign the real cause of transformation here, precisely because the evidence can speak more convincingly for other sources of transformation that are non-divine in origin. For a more complete discussion of the problem of citing or denying mere visible phenomena as proof of a divine

remain—mistakenly or not—skeptical of her knowledge claims. However, if we accept the view that the mystic is a species of private-language user, then all avenues towards demonstrability are pre-emptively closed to her, leaving her in a perpetually unsatisfactory epistemic predicament.

2.1: Problems with Demonstrability

To iterate the initial concern of this chapter: for something to count as a piece of knowledge, it must satisfy the criterion of communicability—i.e., it must be sayable, teachable, or otherwise demonstrable in some sense. Thus, many theorists have dismissed mystical experience as a potential source of knowledge, based on the apparent theoretical impossibility of communicating the (definitionally) ineffable. But *the ineffable experience itself is not what must be demonstrated* [80]—rather, all that needs to be demonstrated is the knowledge that can be derived from that experience. It is not the mystical experience itself, but the content of the mystic's knowledge, that is

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entity (or entities), see John Wisdom's "Gods", in *Contemporary Analytic and Linguistic Philosophies,* E. D. Klemke, ed. (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1983).

[80] Of course it would be impossible to demonstrate the existence of the mystical experience in itself (barring the use of telepathy). But, as Findlay notes, we can nevertheless *imagine* what the mystic's experiences are like via a (Husserlean) analogy to our own private sensations:

> The world for us, we may say, is an assemblage of contrasting privacies, converging upon a common zone of publicity. The apartness of people's interior states does not, however, preclude basic similarity and analogy, but in fact demands it, every phase or passage in anyone's experience being potentially a phase or passage in anyone else's, a possibility we perfectly understand though it neither requires nor is capable of direct illustration.
> [Findlay, p. 29]

It should be noted here, however, that Findlay's assertion of experiential similarity between human beings completely disregards the so-called (i) 'mutant' and (ii) 'zombie' objections to a (Husserlean) argument by analogy—the possibilities that, respectively, (i) other experiential lives may radically differ from our own in an important but undetectable manner, and (ii) others may have no experiential lives to speak of at all. Additionally, the ultimate epistemological worth of an analogy drawn from one individual's experiences to cover billions of other, unknown sets of unquantifiable experiential data, is questionable at best. Findlay's statements here, then, are highly contestable.

of primary philosophical interest here. The fact that we cannot ignore (and that gives the mystic so much trouble), is that in justifying her mystical knowledge, the mystic must inevitably refer to her mystical experience as the wellspring of that knowledge; but the mystical experience itself cannot be demonstrated to others, and thus cannot serve as the ultimate source of justification.[81] Wittgenstein, helpfully, admits of an end to the justificatory process; there are, simply, certain bedrock propositions that we cannot give further justifications for.[82] But the fact that the mystic offers her mystical experiences as the end of her justificatory chain still does not guarantee that her neighbors will accept them as grounds for her knowledge claims.

An example is in order here to clarify the dilemma of the mystic experient. Let us say that Mr. B encounters Mr. A, who claims to have had a mystical experience, and they converse together as follows:

> A: "Since I had that mystical experience, I garden in a new way. It's incredible how quickly things grow for me now. You must see my garden."
> B: "Wow. It's incredibly verdant."
> A: "I couldn't garden to save my life before, do you remember? Everything would just die on me."
> B: "Yes, I remember all too well."
> A: "Yet now my garden is thriving."
> B: "It's an amazing turnaround, all right."

Now we might observe how Mr. A gardens, and learning how he gardens might turn out to be a kind of knowledge, revealed via a mystical experience (that is itself ineffable), a knowledge which is itself nevertheless (conceptually) transferable. Given

[81] Except perhaps to herself—and, at the mention of such a hypothesis, we must at least consider the Wittgensteinian point that we perhaps cannot properly talk of 'justification' in such a case. (See the latter part of Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 258.) I turn more fully to the problem of justification with regard to mystical experiences in the next few sections.

[82] However, it should be noted that bedrock propositions may, themselves, shift over time; see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1972), § 97: "The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other." Also see Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, § 192: "To be sure there is justification; but justification

Ortega's requirement of demonstrability, this is perhaps the best case scenario for the mystic, in her efforts to justify her knowledge claims. We might picture our Mr. B exclaiming to a friend, Mr. C: "I now garden like my friend the mystic, Mr. A, taught me to, and my plants have definitely flourished for it." If this were actually how things turned out for mystics and their followers, we might come to think that mysticism was as useful as science, even superior to science in that it disposes of the need for the fretful procedures and rules that characterize adherence to the scientific method. The actual disposition of affairs, however, offers support for prejudice in the opposite direction: that science is far more useful than mysticism, and that mysticism is inferior to science for its over-reliance on, and under-description of, arbitrarily-occurring experiences, rather than well-designed and repeatable experiments with predictable outcomes.[83]

Moving slightly closer to likelihood, let us say that Mr. Y now gardens like Mr. A does, but sees no change in his garden at all. In this case, would Mr. Y trust that Mr. A possesses mystical knowledge? He did, indeed, learn something from Mr. A—namely, a new way to garden—but it was something that turned out to be unsuccessful for him. In other words, Mr. A's technique of gardening turned out to be *demonstrable* but *untransferable*. His gardening technique was like a secret that, when told to others, turned out to not have been worth keeping, as it was of no use to anyone

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comes to an end." Similarly in Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 485: "Justification by experience comes to an end. If it did not it would not be justification."

[83] Contrary to this conclusion, Smart claims that "the defining characteristic, of the mystic is that he undertakes a certain sort of mystical discipline" (Smart, p. 55). This makes it seem as if one can initiate a mystical experience via some exertion of effort or will, or that there is a sort of 'science' of revelation—although it is plain that mystical practices cannot guarantee success in attaining mystical states of being for their disciples. Perhaps the odds of having a mystical experience are increased by undertaking disciplined spiritual practices: but there is *no guaranteed outcome* arising from this. Indeed, some mystical experiences are not engineered through discipline, but occur spontaneously with no effort

else.[84] Still, I would argue that Mr. A's gardening technique should count as knowledge in this case (as well as in the case above), however useless it may be to others, as it can still be justifiably shown to others that he can somehow keep his garden incredibly verdant (let us say, to make the point clearer, that Mr. A's garden is inexplicably more bountiful than any other garden known to us). Some might want to say that the evidence given by Mr. A's wondrous garden is still not enough to substantiate a knowledge claim on his part. Perhaps, it could be argued, that Mr. A has an "instinct for gardening", and that this instinct no more constitutes knowledge than a bird's instinct to build a nest constitutes knowledge. There is an important disanalogy here, however: namely, that Mr. A is a human and not a bird. And as a human, although Mr. A might not understand the precise mechanisms that make his gardening technique so successful, he can still have *knowledge that* the technique works without having *knowledge how* it works in the scientific sense.[85] Mr. A might say, "Well, I sit for a while in my garden, and then a feeling just takes over, and, though I know I start gardening during that time, I lose concrete awareness of things for a while. Then, when I emerge from that state, whatever it is that I've done seems to have been successful in encouraging the growth of my plants." Here, Mr. A has no 'knowledge how' the mystical gardening technique works, but he has 'knowledge that' it works: specifically, he knows that he has to sit for a while in his garden, and that this act must be subsequently accompanied by a certain feeling,

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or intention on the part of the mystical experient—indeed, perhaps in spite of their will and best efforts (for example the conversion of Saul to Paul on the road to Damascus).

[84] Just as the knowledge *that* Shaquille O'Neal is tall will not help us come to knowledge *how* to be better basketball players.

[85] Smart (p. 137) divides mystical knowledge into three categories: knowledge *of* (the divine), knowledge *that* (mystical experience is like _____) and knowledge *how* (to live well, or righteously). While I find Smart's divisions useful with regard to understanding his text, I do not strictly adopt his usage of them here.

or state, and that this state somehow helps him to maintain his garden's splendiferous appearance.[86]

Still closer to the case of the archetypal mystic, however, we might find that Mr. A's garden is ordinary, and that he has nothing to directly show us to account for his claims to having had a mystical experience. Here, the mystic seemingly has no demonstrable 'knowledge how' to teach us (not worthwhile gardening tips, nor even gardening tips that turn out to be worthless to us), but he nonetheless offers us something else. More precisely, the mystic claims to have 'knowledge of' the existence of varieties of experience that we may never have experienced before, ones that make possible (more or less predictable) transformations of character.[87] In this way, the mystic figure is akin to an experiential pioneer, discovering, reporting on, and settling into rare or unusual states of being with transmutative potential. Alternately, the mystic

[86] Although I do not explore the theme in this work, it would be theoretically interesting to explore an emotionalist epistemological position that takes intuition, and emotional feelings, to be direct knowledge *that*, i.e., emotional experience taken as knowledge in itself, without further justification. Martha Nussbaum and other contemporary virtue theorists often speak of the 'intelligence' or underlying 'rationality' of the emotions, with regard to them as a mode of sensitivity to the surrounding epistemic features of the world though they may require further rational explanation, or 'cashing out' in rational terms. Nussbaum holds that "[b]ecause the emotions have this cognitive dimension in their very structure, it is natural to view them as intelligent parts of our ethical agency, responsive to the workings of deliberation and essential to its completion." [Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 41.] However, this is a more moderate position than the one I would be interested in analyzing, which, to reiterate, would take information given via the emotions not as epistemic clues but as epistemological solutions in themselves. This position can be seen as but one of many possible branches of extreme empiricism.

[87] Some theorists claim that in order for an experience to *count* as a mystical experience, the experient must herself be transformed in some regard. Smart, for one, asserts that "[t]he mystical experience…being of an overwhelming and glorious nature, is held to transmute the moral capacities…and to be a source of depth and power of character such as are rarely found—if at all—in ordinary men." (Smart, p. 191) It would seem, however, that the most common mystical transformation is simply the inability to speak of the mystical experience itself, and that this is more akin to an epistemic handicap than a glorious transformation of character. This block to communicability might be psychological in nature, the mind of the mystic being so overwhelmed by the bliss and/or wonder of the mystical experience that it is incapable of accurately recalling it. We talk about the mystic not being able to discuss their mystical experiences here in the same way that we remark that "some veterans *can't* talk about the war", or "the widow Brown *can't* talk about the death of her husband." These latter cases regard contingent psychological obstacles to disclosure that may prove to be surmountable over time, say via therapy or the gradual dimming of emotional pain. The obstacles to experiential disclosure reportedly encumbering the mystic experient may turn out to be similarly soluble.

may function as a connoisseur of experience, informing us as to distinctions in types of seemingly ordinary experiences that we were previously ignorant of, or insensitive to. On either model, we may expect our mystic to (at least) be able to demonstrate to us how his experiences have changed his *outlook*. To better explore this possibility, let us slightly change the example above. Let us now say that Mr. A, rather than changing the world (i.e., gardening in a new way) after his mystic experience, instead becomes subject to a change in himself; i.e., he comes around to an appreciation of fine art:

> A: "Ever since I had that mystical experience, I can now appreciate fine art."
> B: "Really?"
> A: "Yes. Do you remember before, how I would stare at a beautiful painting for a long period of time and feel nothing?"
> B: "That's what you reported to me, yes."
> A: "Well, now I find that I am immediately moved by beautiful paintings whenever and wherever I encounter them."
> B: "Hmmm. Are you any better at discussing fine art than you were before?"
> A: "I'm sorry, but no. I can't even really describe exactly how encountering fine art makes me feel, and I don't know enough about art history to put my reactions into any sort of satisfying theoretical context for you."

Here what the mystic has to tell us may not be anything empirically verifiable about the world, but rather simply that there exists a certain species of experience that somehow has the potential to transform us, either in our behaviors or reactions. Assuming that we are physiologically constituted in a similar manner to other human experients, it is sensible to assume that it is at least possible, if not likely, that we could experience something similar to what the mystic has experienced (assuming that the mystic is reporting their experiences sincerely to us, and fabricating nothing).[88] Thus, if we adopt

[88] Taking my cue from David Estlund, and his discussions on epistemic inequality, I will refrain from making any "invidious comparisons" between persons on the basis of their ability, or lack of ability, to play host to mystical experiences. [See David Estlund, "Political Quality", in *Democracy*, David Estlund, ed., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002), especially p. 177 and p. 190.] I will assume, for the sake of this discussion, that it is theoretically equally likely for any given agent, as any other, to have a mystical experience (though, of course, this may not be the case in actuality). Call this, if you like, the "lottery model of mystical experience": anyone might have a mystical revelation, as everyone starts out in life with a theoretically equal chance of being 'enlightened' or 'awakened'; but time spent in pursuit of mystical disciplines will function like buying large amounts of extra tickets in a lottery (thereby increasing the percentile chance of a person to have a mystical experience). I use this as my background

the pioneering model of mysticism, we will have motivation to trust the mystic, perhaps even to follow his advice, in the hopes that we, too, may follow in his tracks and be benignly transformed.

But is a detectable transformation either in the character of Mr. A, or the status of his garden, needed to convince us that he indeed possesses mystical knowledge? The question can be restated as follows: what if Mr. A has exactly the same personality, both before and after his mystical experience? At this point, can we simply take Mr. A solely on his word, that although neither he, nor the world we live in, have been changed as a result of his supposedly having gleaned this mystical knowledge, that he nonetheless possesses it? It depends, I suppose, on something as simple as the level of trust Mr. A has built up with us; how reliable he seems to us.[89] But this seems—especially with the Ortegean criterion of demonstrability in view—grossly dissatisfying.

Let us imagine for the moment, then, that the mystic can only indicate to us (that is, give us his word) nothing but the fact that there exists a certain type of ineffable experience. This is a type of experience that we may or may not have experienced ourselves, and for which the only evidence outside of our own intuition is the word of the mystic, since no transformation of character or states of affairs in the world seem to

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theoretical model of mystical experience throughout this thesis. To not employ such a model would be to open the door to an 'experientocracy', a political system that advantages those who have had certain experiences over those who have not had them. The lottery model is more egalitarian than an experientocracy, in that everyone is considered to possess the *potential* to have mystical experiences, and not having had one is considered to be a contingent state, not something essentially deficient about the inexperienced person (as even those who undergo significant preparations to host a mystical experience are nevertheless not guaranteed to succeed in doing so).

[89] Sometimes, when we believe an agent is reliable, we give her special epistemic privileges, like a lower standard of proof for her statements. John Wisdom, in "Gods", discusses the example of Gertrude Stein's 'discovery' of Picasso. As a result of her being the first to correctly assess Picasso's artistic genius, he states, we might (without adequate grounds) give Stein's subsequent opinions regarding other emerging artists additional (read unjustifiable) weight (Wisdom, p. 348).

result from it. Our conversation with Mr. A, now, could only meaningfully proceed as far as what follows below:

> A: "Guess what? I had a mystical experience. I have nothing to show for it externally, I am seemingly unchanged internally, and all that I can say about it, is that it is ineffable."
> B: "Oh."

We are much less likely to accept Mr. A's bald claims in this case. But why should we now doubt the veridicality of Mr. A's claim here? Mr. A has given us his word that he has had a mystical experience, and we cannot disprove that he may indeed have had one. As well, there seems to be no test that Mr. A could perform, or experience that he could have, which could make him doubt that he had had that experience. In Wittgensteinian terms, "[e]verything speaks in its favour, nothing against it."[90] Thus, why oughtn't we trust Mr. A when he claims to have had a mystical experience? It certainly seems like the kind of innocuous concession that would do us no harm.

2.2: Problems with Trust

All the same, we may come to doubt Mr. A's word. It seems, however, that we would be less likely to doubt Mr. A if he had claimed "I had a pain in my arm", instead of "I had a mystical experience." And this is so even though he offers an equivalent amount of evidence for his claims in both instances—that of having experienced pain and that of having had a mystical experience—namely, his word. So why, then, do we extend trust to Mr. A in one case, and doubt him in the other? Do we trust that Mr. A had a pain in his arm only because we think that we too have had similar

[90] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, § 4.

experiences—that of having had pains in our arms? And is it only because we think that we lack having had another experience—that of the ineffable variety—that we doubt Mr. A in the latter case? If this is so, then it appears that we trust Mr. A only insofar as he tells us something that fits with what we take ourselves to already know—in this case, that humans can experience pains in their arms, and that Mr. A is human. In cases where someone tells us something that doesn't fit with what we already know—for example, that someone has had an experience which we have not, and might never, share in (and therefore might never even come to think about or believe in)—we usually expect proof to be forthcoming in order for trust to be extended to that person. This is an impossible task for Mr. A, as he can show us nothing to substantiate his claims to having had a mystical experience.

Yet the epistemic policy of only offering trust in cases where what is claimed affirms what is already known by us (or in some cases suspected, or hoped for), or can be immediately proven, is a formula for producing closed-system dogmatism. Moreover, it is not in itself necessarily consistent with doubting Mr. A's testimonial. This is because we should already know that we are candidates for having mystical experiences (although our chances of having such experiences are admittedly lower than our chances of, say, experiencing pain). After all, there are numerous historical figures that have reportedly had 'visions' of some sort, or who claimed to have gained knowledge from non-verifiable, non-intellectual sources—and it is at least conceivable that, *ceteris paribus*, we might end up having experiences similar to one of these figures.[91] Hence we might realize, even before speaking with Mr. A, the potential

[91] Of how the claims of mystics can be taken to constitute knowledge, Smart writes that "[t]he [mystical] experience is often described as illumination (etc.); and seems to be something like realizing something:

candidacy of both Mr. A and ourselves to play host to experiences both painful and mystical. That fact alone, however, does not seem to change the likelihood that we will be surprised by, and skeptical of, Mr. A's claim unless we, too, have personally had mystical experiences in the past, or have known somebody else (presumably someone in whom we trust) who has also had such an experience.

But another epistemic impediment emerges here for the mystic, one that threatens to close off all potential sources of trust from others. Because we have no mechanism, linguistic or otherwise, by which to gauge the similarity of two ineffable experiences, the mystic, it seems, may have trouble even convincing other mystics of the validity of his experiences. Thus in the absence of evidence to help us objectively evaluate the mystic's claims, the only recourse for the mystic is our epistemic charity—a granting of the mystic's trustworthiness, awarded even in the absence of any solid grounds for justifying that trust. In the following sections, I will attempt to outline what level of epistemic charity it is appropriate to extend to—and withhold from—the mystic, in light of the probable socio-political consequences arising from such extensions and withholdings.

2.3: Problems with Justification

Wittgenstein writes that "[e]ven if the most trustworthy of men assures me that he *knows* things are thus and so, this by itself cannot satisfy me that he does know. Only that he believes he knows."[92] And yet, there are some instances wherein belief seems to

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one realizes the truth…[and] one cannot be said to have realized the truth of P and not to know that P." (Smart, p. 138)

[92] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, § 137.

be simply equivalent to knowledge, particularly in the case of intensely subjective experiences. If I awoke from a dream, and said aloud, "I dreamed that I could fly, and that I flew all the way to Amsterdam on my own power", *prima facie* nobody would be in a qualified epistemic position to say "No, you did not dream that you were flying. You dreamed that you were underwater, swimming in Lake Erie." This is because, barring the possibility of telepathy, the contents of my dream-experiences cannot be investigated past what I, the speaker, claim to be true about them.[93] Claims regarding personal experiences seem to have a certain epistemic priority over what others tell us about what they think we might have actually experienced. Others are free to offer us alternate hypotheses regarding how external influences might have related to, or affected, the contents of our private experiences (via psychoanalysis, for example), but they themselves can never epistemically override or invalidate the contents of those private experiences.

Let us turn for a moment to the JTB (justified, true belief) account of knowledge (mentioned briefly above), with regard to personal experience and knowledge. We will now use the JTB account to analyze whether having an experience, say that of my having had a pain in my arm, results in my having *knowledge* of having had a pain in my arm. We will start with the "B", or belief requirement, which is an entirely subjective criterion. Either an epistemic agent believes that she experienced something, or she believes that she did not. In the case of my experience of pain, we will say that

[93] If telepathy were possible, it would arguably solve the difficulties inherent to demonstrating and thus justifying mystical experiences. There would be no 'problem of other minds', or private sensation-languages, to speak of. Indeed, if other minds turned out not to exist, in a world wherein all humans were telepathic, then all efforts towards contacting those imagined other minds would be doomed to failure—and the concept of telepathy itself would prove to be incoherent. Consider the strangeness of the following counterfactual statement being uttered in a (solipsistic) world that contained only one mind: "If there were other minds, and if I could read the contents of those other minds, I would be telepathic."

the pain I had was especially vivid, and so I have no reason to believe that I did not have it. So my pain easily fulfills the belief requirement. The "T", or truth requirement, is more difficult to ascertain in this case. To say that something is true or false is to make a statement about the way "things actually are in the world". Since the world in this case is only the world of my own subjective experience, which cannot be invalidated by others, and my recollection of the pain is such that it gives me substantial evidence that I actually had the pain—for how could I have a memory of a pain which I myself didn't have?[94]—we may also (somewhat hesitantly) accede that the truth requirement has been met in this case as well. Lastly, we will consider the "J", or justification requirement, which is unlike the other two requirements in an important manner. Whereas the status of belief, and oftentimes truth, can be correctly ascertained by an individual, the grounds of justification are always socially determined. The grounds for justification can be prepared *by* the individual, but they are always prepared *for* (the purpose of facilitating the external judgement of) others. Whether the justification actually succeeds is invariably determined by the decision of the set of peers who demanded it in the first place, those whom one is trying to convince. So, according to the JTB account of knowledge, whether or not I have justifiable grounds for the belief that I had a pain, is a matter that can only be determined after the fact, by associates who will presumably attempt to objectively evaluate the grounds I have to offer them. In this case, the grounds for justification will simply be my word in itself, and my attempt to describe the painful sensation to them, to the best of my ability. Thus, strangely, on the

[94] It could be objected here that I could have imagined, or dreamt of, having had a pain when in actuality I was not in pain. However, this remark is not borne out either by experiential or scientific evidence. Even the well-documented phenomenon of 'phantom limb' (the experience some amputees have of feeling pain in their missing limbs), for example, shows us that so-called 'imaginary' pain can

JTB account I will not be able to "know" I had a pain until other people tell me that I did indeed have one. This, perhaps, is an undesirable aspect of the "curious 'democracy' of knowing" that Ortega calls for us to "root out".[95]

The above analysis of the JTB account, with regard to the experience of pain, mirrors that of mystical experience—with one notable difference. The chance of the mystical experience passing the justification requirement is much lower (perhaps even nil if one's peers judge the justificatory grounds on a purely rational basis that excludes the possibility of extending epistemic charity) than that of the painful experience. This is because the ground of the mystic's knowledge, the mystical experience itself, is purportedly ineffable. If this is true, then although the mystic can give her word that she had a mystical experience, she will not be capable of describing this experience to the satisfaction of her audience. The JTB test for mystical knowledge thus fails, merely because it cannot be socially justified. This is a fairly unsettling result, as the group can be wrong—it is likely that not all mystic experients (or experients of pain for that matter) are frauds, although this may be the decision yielded on a case-by-case basis by unsympathetic peers. Neither is it clear that we are able to fully accurately describe 'ordinary' feelings like pain, as ordinary descriptions consist largely of expletives and/or amplifiers preceding the verb 'hurt'.

Thus it appears that we must drop the "J" in JTB, if we are to oust the pernicious "democracy of knowing" from its seat of epistemic power, and establish mystical experience as a possible source of knowledge. But what will our account of knowledge

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nonetheless result in very real suffering, and can be indistinguishable in sensation from 'real' pain caused by actual injuries.

[95] See the epigraph quoting Ortega at the beginning of Chapter 2. This oppressive aspect of the JTB account of knowledge becomes more apparent when we look at it from a *realpolitik* perspective, as 'ATB', or merely 'authorized' true belief. For what is a failure to justify our claims to others, but to fail to

look like afterwards? Is the only epistemological alternative to JTB a completely subjectivist account of knowledge, the validation of countless "dictatorships of knowing"? I hold that this is not the case; that if we keep the "TB", and drop the justification requirement regarding the contents of private experience, epistemological anarchy will not ensue. This is because there are many things that humans cannot know without each other—objectivity is crucial to many kinds of knowing. The social element of knowledge that we cannot afford to lose, for fear of everyone claiming absolute knowledge via the advancements of their own unique idiolects, is crucially preserved in "T", the truth requirement. There are some facts about the world that are not obvious to the individual, facts that can only be ascertained in conversation with others, in a common language. These facts will be used to settle disputes about the status of publicly accessible objects of discussion. And often, providing justification will still be a helpful way to ascertain the truth of this or that particular belief. However, beliefs in the private experiences that one has are true if and only if one experiences them; and as such, they are only subjectively verifiable, and not within the proper domain of justification ("J"), the "democracy of knowing". The epistemological model of the JTB can function as a tyranny of the masses that reaches too far into what persons can ostensibly know on an individual basis. Therefore, and perhaps only for questions of the particular type I am considering in the scope of this work, it may be helpful to switch to the slightly unwieldy epistemological model of "TB, and, only when not discussing the contents of private experience, J".

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obtain their authorization for our beliefs, to fail to have the group approve of what we believe is true? What counts as justification here, it seems, can vary widely from context to context.

2.4: Problems with Verifiability; Return to Trust

Let us look at a historical case wherein trust in the word of an (in this case non-mystical) experient could have been verified, but only at some indeterminate time in the future. In this case, there was a publicly observable truth of the matter that could have been referred to through (ordinary) empirical investigation, but that was unfortunately unavailable at the precise moment when epistemic judgement in awarding trust was called for. I want to discuss the conclusion of the Battle of Marathon, and the runner who went to Athens afterwards, to announce its outcome, the defeat of the Persians. Upon his arrival, what if the citizens of Athens, after their having listened to the words of this messenger, had not trusted him? On what basis could their mistrust have been warranted? There was no indication that the message was a Persian ruse designed to lull the Athenians into a false sense of security, and thus unpreparedness for invasion. Unless the messenger was known to be epistemically unreliable (a liar, a madman, or a comedian, etc.) then everything in this case spoke for the Persians having been defeated, and nothing against it. The proper response of the Athenians here, intuitively, seems to be to show trust in the words of the runner. Certainly it would not seem to be an appropriate response, in this case, to have evacuated Athens to prevent the citizens from being massacred by the rampaging Persians—to assume, in effect, the exact opposite of what the messenger said was true.

And yet, analogously, this is just how the knowledge claims of the mystic messenger are treated: many hear of mystical experiences and immediately discount them as quickly as they would a ghost story, perhaps allocating malicious intent to the

mystic in the bargain. Ostensibly, this is because empirical verification that a mystical experience occurred can never be produced in the mystic's case, and will not be forthcoming no matter how much time elapses or how many miles we travel. But the explanation for why we mistrust the mystic cannot be that simple. Otherwise, we should doubt it when our neighbor tells us she experiences a pain in her arm, another claim for which no further evidence or verification can be produced in the future. There must, then, be other unexamined factors at work to make us suspect the mystic more than either the Marathon runner or our pain-experiencing neighbour.[96]

So why is it, then, that we trust our neighbour who has a toothache more readily than the reports of the self-professed mystic experient? Perhaps, we could argue, it is epistemically economical to give the benefit of the doubt to those who make knowledge claims, unless there is evidence to the contrary. We simply cannot doubt everyone's word all the time, as that would put an unbearable strain on our cognitive resources. That would explain why we blandly accept much of the news we read, the rumors we hear, and the advice we receive. But the mystic's claims are, perhaps, just strange enough to show up as blips on our epistemic radar and cause corresponding cognitive alarms to be sounded. If this is the case, then it seems we have our epistemic filters set not to distinguish between the truth and falsity of knowledge claims, but to detect their commonalities and incongruities with other knowledge claims that we have already accepted (in short, we check for the claim's overall epistemological coherence).

If a knowledge claim comes to our attention as potentially specious, and if the only evidence provided to us in that case is someone's word, then it is only our instinct to trust the person that can serve as the reason we have to do so. By the same token, it

[96] These reasons, I argue in the final chapter, are largely political, and not epistemic; put more plainly,

stands to reason that if the only evidence provided to us is someone's word, and if we have an instinct to withhold our trust from them, then that alone should provide us with sufficient grounds for doubt. Which of these instincts is stronger of course, will depend on the epistemic context.[97] Since the mystic cannot provide grounds, past her word, for the mystical knowledge she purports to have, she will always be in this epistemic position, where the social currency of her words will depend on how others instinctually respond to her. Her record of reliability will, in large measure, determine the level of epistemic charity others extend to her, and how plausible her claims appear to be on the surface level.

To stress verifiability and/or falsifiability thus brings an inappropriate standard to bear against the professed possessor of mystical knowledge, if, as it has been claimed, that mystical experience is ineffable. So long as we adhere to this picture of mystical experience, we can go no further, and must return to the subject of trust, which, as hinted at above, is context-dependant. Trust is both extendable and retractable, and according to our intuitions regarding the person we are considering lending trust to, or withdrawing trust from, and the context surrounding the knowledge claims we are being asked to believe in, our intuitions toward lending trust will wax and wane accordingly. We do not trust all persons to an equal extent, and rightly so: some agents (mystics included) are seemingly not as trustworthy as others are. The mechanisms by which individuals calculate whether other persons are trustworthy or not are, largely, a

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epistemic concerns largely serve (in this case) to cloak political motivations.

[97] My grandfather once told me that I am a descendant of Alexander Selkirk (the real historical figure who was the inspiration for the fictional story of Robinson Crusoe). He provided only his word by way of evidence. His claim has a hint of plausibility to it; it contradicts nothing that I already know, for example, and concords with certain facts I do claim to know already, such as "My mother's maiden name is Selkirk." However, although (to my knowledge) my grandfather is not in the habit of intentionally misleading me, my instinct (and my academic conscience) tells me in this case that I should research my

subject that lies more in the domain of sociology or psychology than philosophy. For our purposes, it will generally suffice to say here that the quality of trustworthiness in others is something we seem to grasp instinctively, from a very early age onwards.

Still, since trust is so central to our epistemic and political concerns with the figure of the mystic, we must give a crude sketch of it here. Provisionally, then, some factors that I take must go into determining whether we will, or will not, trust what someone says to be true are: (1) *agent reliability*—our recollections of the knowledge claimant's past utterances, behavior, and attitudes, and how these tracked to the way we apprehended the world (i.e., accurately or inaccurately) in their light; (2) *contextual gravity*—the practical importance of the subject matter under discussion with the knowledge claimant; and (3) *punitive liability*—what actual avenues of recourse we have against the knowledge claimant, should we catch them in telling a falsehood.

The mystic is usually subject to at least some of these three standards of assessing trustworthiness, albeit to varying degrees. For example, agent reliability as such comes into play only inasmuch as the mystic is either a public figure or a personal acquaintance; one with whom we share a history, or at least one whose reputation we have previous knowledge of. Otherwise, our approximation of agent reliability becomes simply a matter of gut feeling—the way someone's face looks to us; whether or not they seem friendly, or remind us of someone we already know. Contextual gravity, as the title implies, will also differ widely from situation to situation. If a mystic merely wants to claim that she had a mystical experience, then the political stakes are very low and we can afford to be epistemically generous to the mystic, and validate her claims with our interest. However, if the policies of a powerful, politically

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family's genealogy before I suspend all of my doubts and invest his statement with my belief. The

active mystagogue seem bound to affect our lives, then the stakes involved in trusting the mystagogue are pragmatically raised, and we must be more epistemically sparing with regard to what we will reasonably allow that mystagogue to claim. Punitive liability, another context-sensitive standard by which trustworthiness can be gauged, regards the potential avenues of recourse we have at our disposal for reprimanding liars, and is a more important consideration than it might seem on the surface. Individuals are *ceteris paribus* less likely to engage in the telling of falsehoods if, when they are caught, they are subject to some manner of punishment or admonition. The ability to dole out such punitive measures relies largely on one's social status in relation to the potential liar's. Generally, however, unless the mystic is either a fly-by-night occultist who never visits the same area twice for fear of reprisals for falsehoods told (i.e., of such low social status that she is virtually undetectable), or is a powerful and established authority of some kind (i.e., of such high social status that she is beyond the grasp of ordinary justice), then some sort of recourse—whether it is as severe as legal action, or as light as a public expression of our dissatisfaction—will nearly always be at our disposal. Withdrawing or withholding our trust from the mystic whenever one of these three factors is not met to our satisfaction may help prevent the mystic from making unwarranted claims, and thus contribute to shaping them into a (more) trustworthy figure. Of course, these three factors are only a rough guide: in the end, trustworthiness is like a virtue, something about an individual (or, perhaps, something about our unique

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context of the statement remains such that it does not favor my instinct towards unconditional trust.

relationship to that individual) that we can somehow detect (more or less accurately, from one case to another), but never fully formulate or codify.[98]

Therefore, political avenues of mystical knowledge transmission rely on this one element for their legitimization: trust in the words of mystics or *mystagogues*.[99] Nothing else but trust, it seems, will do. If mystical experience is by its very definition ineffable, it would be a category mistake to ask the mystic for "proof" of her knowledge gleaned through such experiences, just as it would be a category mistake to ask a scientist to justify her experimental results via a "sign" from a deity. Simply put, both of these demands put an onus on the claimants of knowledge to legitimate their claims in inappropriate ways. The only tests appropriate to this task are tests internal to their archetypes: scientific evidence and reasoning in the case of the scientist, and the word of the mystic on the other. But as we discussed above (following the last dialogue between Mr. A and Mr. B), the bald claim of the mystic tends to be met with confusion, disbelief, or derision. Thus, we might be tempted to forgive that political subjectivist, the mystagogue when she attempts to make her non-transferable knowledge objectively attractive—to attempt to vocalize the supposedly ineffable—through her appeals to irrationality, intuition, and other faculties that fail to find a role in the production or justification of objective knowledge. And now, we are coming much closer to a

[98] There is, in short, no precise recipe for being trustworthy, and no greater pyramid of the virtues that 'trustworthiness' finds its proper place within. Theoretically opposed to any strict codification of the virtues, Rosalind Hursthouse states that

> [t]he rejection of codification, I take it, involves not the blanket rejection of any absolute prohibitions, but the recognition that whatever they may be, they provide very little in the way of general action-guidance, certainly not a code in accordance with which one can live and act well.
> [Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 58.]

[99] Again, by mystagogues I mean those few mystics who actually attempt what should be impossible, if the mystical is ineffable—to teach their subjective, ineffable mystical knowledge to others, and to shape the world according to its dictates.

discussion of the political aspect of the mystic archetype; the unsettling archetypal mystagogue prominent in the work of T. W. Adorno.

2.5: The Private Becomes Public

It is evident from our discussion in the previous section that we can create rough standards for judging the trustworthiness of agents, which can function in lieu of justification for validating these agents' claims to of certain kinds of knowledge that remain, at their heart, publicly unverifiable. I see my criterion for trust, given above, as a guide for facilitating the public acknowledgement of the existence of private knowledge, and thus also as a potential dynamo for transforming (contingently) private knowledge into public knowledge. This is an important point, insofar as I want to claim that 'private' knowledge is actually epistemically prior to 'public' knowledge (what we often call 'common sense' in the vernacular, which serves to affirm the dogma of the superiority of collective knowledge over the knowledge of isolated individuals). If the possibility of private knowledge is not allowed for, and if it is not recognized as valuable—if it is not viewed as a potential epistemic resource—then clearly it cannot be a candidate for inclusion in the corpus of what is called 'public' knowledge.

Thus the transformation of private knowledge into public knowledge would not be desirable, or perhaps even possible, without the former being acknowledged, and its value recognized. At the most basic level, to accept the possibility of private knowledge is to assume there exist other minds to contain that knowledge. To most this consideration will pose no difficulty; some may hesitate, however, to posit human minds wherever they see human bodies, because they worry that affirming the

existence of other minds too closely resembles the act of affirming 'essences' behind objects. But if we do not make at least this elementary step, and admit that the picture of a solipsistic, one-mind world is a very alien and disorienting—albeit novel—way of looking at things, then it seems that we cannot proceed any further, even towards our claims to the existence of 'public' knowledge.[100] So let us accept, for the moment, that there are other minds, and that the distinction between 'public' and 'private' knowledge would be senseless without both a public realm and a private realm, both of which we are all roughly familiar with.

If these premises are accepted, then clearly the epistemic primacy of private experience and knowledge makes good logical sense. Let us consider that there literally is no such thing as 'public experience' or 'public knowledge'. These terms simply stand for the conceptual agglomeration of knowledge accrued through the experience of private individuals, given to us through intersubjective discourse (and the recollecting and recording of such discourse). The primacy of private knowledge makes even more sense, when we consider the historical facts: that there was a time when the vast majority of people, with the exception of a few revolutionary thinkers, believed erroneously that the world was flat; and another time when it was generally supposed that the earth was the center of our solar system; and so on.[101]

[100] It would be vacuously true that the public and the private are interchangeable, in solipsistic world-pictures such as the one mentioned above, as the distinction between the public and the private would be meaningless.

[101] Certainly, one might say, that the kind of knowledge I speak of above (of the earth being round, and the sun being the center of the solar system), is at least conceptually possible to make publicly understood via scientific proofs, and thus cannot be regarded as truly private knowledge. To this I would answer, on a Russellian line, that most people accept these claims as true without having ever seen the relevant scientific proofs—and in this regard we may say that science takes on a quasi-religious aspect, in that faith plays a larger part than offering proof in having its tenets accepted. For instance, "[a] medical man who gives advice on diet should give it after full consideration of all that science has to say on the matter, but the man who follows his advice cannot stop to verify it, and is obliged to rely, therefore, not upon science, but upon his belief that his medical adviser is scientific." (Russell, *The Scientific Outlook*, pp. 14–5) Of course, it is always hypothetically possible to offer a scientific proof to the layman, but

There is a dogma, however, that makes it difficult for some to publicly acknowledge that there can exist such a thing as private knowledge. This dogma, set against the possibility of private knowledge, has half of its roots in philosophies that stress the publicity of language, and thus sociality's importance to the production of knowledge.[102] The other, more negative, half of the dogma has its source in the fear of the potential political instability that could arise from acknowledging that every individual is a potential site of epistemic authority, who is not required to justify the sources of her knowledge to her fellows. If this were epistemically permitted—if what every person said was, by definition, as valid and important as what any other person might say, regardless of the content of her statements—then no one could be in a position of ultimate epistemic or political authority (an unacceptable position from a scientific standpoint). Just as there is an economy of power (not everyone can be a ruler, in the true sense of the word, even in the most level and inclusive of democracies), there is also an economy of knowledge (not everyone can know everything, or even most things, even in the most well-educated social milieus).[103] To ignore the fact of this epistemic economy would be to allow all knowledge claims, regardless of their grounding, to be seen as equally valid. The result would be an extreme form of ethical

more often than not such a proof will appear to him to be a hyper-codified piece of nonsense. Scientific notation may only make sense, in the end, to scientists, just as scriptural esoterica is best left to religious clerics, who may have uses to put it to, or needs it fulfills for them.

[102] We have dealt with such philosophies, chiefly Wittgenstein's, in the first few sections of this work.

[103] Popper, in *Conjectures and Refutations*, pp. 28–9, reminds us that "knowledge can only be finite, while our ignorance must necessarily be infinite…while differing widely in the various little bits we know, in our infinite ignorance we are all equal." It should be noted that while his 'egalitarianism of the ignorant' outlined here has a certain amount of political promise to it, in that it stops individuals from claiming to have full knowledge (or at least a fuller knowledge than other individuals), generally it does not bode well for our epistemic chances of arriving at states of mystical (or other 'higher') modes of understanding or knowledge acquisition.

and juridical subjectivism, resulting in a strong propensity toward society's disintegration into a political state of anarchy.[104]

Thus, while I hope to show that the mystic can know whatever it is that she claims to, without our having to know it as well, I wish to do so without accepting responsibility for handing the mystagogue a *carte blanche* to make whatever bald claims she likes (and conceptually pre-empting any epistemically privileged perspective from which we could justifiably combat them). That one person can know something that is not, or cannot be, fully communicated to another is a proposition that I take to be true, for the reasons stated in previous sections, regarding knowledge about private experience not being the proper domain of the "democracy of knowing".[105] Thus I hope that my criteria for trustworthiness, discussed above, can give us the evaluative tools we need to both respect the mystic as an epistemic figure, and, conversely, to politically discredit and disempower mystagogues if and when they run amuck. By setting these criteria for awarding trust, we have also put in place the criteria for withholding or withdrawing it. Where the contextual stakes are high, or the knowledge claimant is known to be unreliable, or avenues to retribution are foreclosed, trust is not likely to be forthcoming. Still, it is important to award trust to the mystic when and where we can; after all, as far as we are liberals we must tolerate the mystic up to a certain point—up to the point that mystagoguery threatens to undermine the liberal, rational bases of our political institutions.

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[104] In acknowledging such potentialities, democratic theorists of late have gone to great trouble to flout the redemptive aspects of discourse, with the epistemic criterion that "the best reasons win" in such discourse. Jürgen Habermas is perhaps the most notable of these contemporary figures.

[105] Arguments against private languages to the contrary, even Wittgenstein admits that "[t]he essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have *this* or something else." (Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 272) Ostensibly, on this picture, each person knows that *they*, at least, have "this"—"this" here meaning what the self-reflective individual takes to be the contents of their own private knowledge.

Of course, these criteria of trust can be applied to the realm of ordinary, everyday experiences equally well as they can to the realm of extraordinary, mystical experiences. Earlier, I spoke of pain, for instance: there are aspects of it that resemble the mystic experience in that they are essentially ineffable, and can only be vouched for, and neither verified nor falsified. The same goes for the colors we see and the sounds we hear.[106] We award trust where stakes are low, reliability is high, or reprimand for lying is possible. If I tell you that I am sad, you will likely trust me (presumably because the contextual stakes are low, I am generally reliable about the reports I give about my emotional status, and you could bring social sanctions to bear against me—including not listening to my psychological complaints again in the future—if you found out I was lying to you). And you would probably award trust to my statement to this effect, although I cannot describe with complete accuracy, at this very moment, the precise character of my sadness—even if this moment of sadness is not in itself experientially extraordinary in any sense.[107] Given that so much of what we take to be ordinary experience is 'ineffable' in this way, to discount mystical experience as a source of knowledge is also to devalue private experience *tout court*, and any insights we may derive from the latter, as well as the former.[108] The epistemic rewards for extending

[106] See Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 110. It is interesting to note here that although these types of phenomena may be strictly ineffable, they are also types of phenomena that we generally do not have occasions to doubt either.

[107] Smart, p. 139, points out that that the ineffable is "rightly so-called in as much as it is (in the strict sense) indescribable; but it is not rightly so-called in that it may nevertheless be expressed, albeit inadequately…" I could say to you: "I'm so sad that it feels as if my heart's been cut out." That statement expresses something that can never be fully or perfectly expressed; and moreover it expresses something that would have been less adequately expressed had I said nothing, or simply, "I'm sad." Thus the conceptual borderline between 'ineffable' and 'sayable' subject matter is very blurry indeed.

[108] There are also some indications that some 'personal' mystical experiences are of a determinate type that are actually shared by many other people, for example the "oceanic feeling" described to Sigmund Freud by one of his friends (author Romain Rolland), and reported in his *Civilization and its Discontents* as "a feeling of something limitless, unbounded…a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole." [Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, James Strachey, trans., ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962), pp.11–2.] Kai Nielsen, in his discussion of

trust to others regarding their testimonials of private experiences often outweigh the potential abuses of our trust that could result in each instance of its extension.

Interestingly, it is also easier to award trust (on a non-rational, 'gut feeling' basis where the conditions for trust do not clearly lean towards either trust or doubt) when the knowledge claimant we are called upon to believe or disbelieve is somehow 'like' us. And this is so even though what qualifies as a similarity between experients is often arbitrarily chosen, and that this procedure for awarding trust is far from normatively desirable. In the case of the mystic experient, trust can be awarded on this basis if we conceptualize her experiences as being qualitatively different from our ordinary experiences only in terms of their intensity and frequency. This conceptualization should serve to mitigate the worries of some that the inner life of the mystic is somehow qualitatively different from the average human experient, due to the presumption that "the [mystical] experience involves some great transformation of character".[109] Presumably, the mystic at least *starts out* from a similar experiential

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mysticism, also explicates what he calls "extravertive" mystical experiences, "the consciousness of an undifferentiated unity…an exterior reality with which one is in an intimate and striking rapport…" (Nielsen, *Contemporary Critiques of Religion* p. 49), a consciousness which seems to very closely resemble the oceanic feeling. Ortega, too, describes a similar state of awareness:

> …in my radical solitude and in my childhood, I believed that the whole world was *I* or, what is the same thing, mine. Others were no more and no less *I* than *I* was; I considered them identical with myself and myself identical with them. Saying *I* signified no limitation or definition whatever. In infancy, my body itself seemed to me unbounded, seemed to extend to the horizon. I had to bump into the furniture—tables and bureaus—and bruise myself, in order to gradually discover where my body ended and other things began.
> [Ortega, *Man and People*, p. 162.]

This overwhelming similarity of the states described by these three authors seems to add credence to the theory that mystical experience is not *conceptually* ineffable, but rather merely *contingently* so. If two or more mystics arrive at the same description of mystical experience, independently of each other, this provides some evidence towards the theory that mystical experience is something that can be understood by others, and not merely a 'beetle in a box' that can never be seen.

[109] Smart (p. 72), for instance, writes of the stereotypical 'otherworldliness' that many have come to associate with mystical experients: "…[I]t is hard to understand the saint. He has crossed to the other shore. The deep impressiveness of such a one is out of the common run of human character, and so it is difficult for the ordinary man to comprehend the saint's springs of conduct…"

framework as other persons, despite the potentially mysterious nature of their ultimate experiential destination. My argument would have run differently if I had to suppose that the mystic was more like an alien, or an animal, than either you or I: but this is not the case. The mystic is built like us, hardwired like us, has a similar command of language to us, and presumably experiences the world via the same mechanisms of perception as us (however strange to us her behaviour or reported experiences might sometimes seem). I would thus like to discredit the stereotype of the mystic as the possessor of a private species of esoteric knowledge that can never be made public, and who may therefore somehow constitute an anti-social threat to society at large, because she is considered to be "beyond good and evil".[110] The danger of stereotyping the mystic as such is that, even in cases where mystagoguery is wholly absent, and mysticism poses no political threat, superstition and inquisitorial zeal may nevertheless motivate the persecution of hermetic, quietistic mystics who crave only solitude.[111]

[110] Smart, p. 191.

[111] Harassment of the mystic may well occur, for example, in the name of science. Max Weber writes that science "means the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one *could* learn it at any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted." (Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, p. 298) Demystification is thus the advertised result of adopting the scientific outlook itself, and is not the objective outcome of some scientific investigation or calculation. It is simply a bedrock proposition of science that "the world is disenchanted", and thus any position—such as mysticism—which makes claims to the contrary of this, that the world is 'enchanted' or 'mystical', must be discredited. Therein the meaning of Wittgenstein's statement that "what is hidden…is of no interest to us" (Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 126) becomes clearer: it is the assumption that 'that which cannot be revealed is that which does not exist, and is thus not worth looking for in the first place.' This is, of course, the methodological assumption that Ortega criticizes in the epigraph at the beginning of Chapter Three—the attitude of the "fox" towards the "high-hung grapes", that knowledge that takes too much effort to obtain, or is too difficult to process, cannot count as knowledge at all. Because the proposition "the world is disenchanted" is generally accepted, for most scientists the battle with the mystic is over before it begins: there are no grapes for be reached for—nothing that is not plain to us (or at least hypothetically *could* be made plain to us) can exist. The mystic would hold that this reasoning, though common, is ultimately fallacious; clearly, for the mystic, there are things that we cannot see which can yet exist, private experience being but one of these, and that these constitute an important source of knowledge. The religion of science, *scientism*, denies this, however, and holds that everything that is anything can be revealed through science—and thus conflicts with the mystic and her 'ineffable' knowledge pose an irresistible target for the adherents of scientism.

Chapter 3

Political Concerns:

Discourse and Mystagoguery

> This violence, this turning the back on ultimate problems was called 'agnosticism.' Such an effort is neither justified nor plausible. That experimental science may be incapable of resolving those fundamental questions in its way is no reason why it should behave like the fox with the high-hung grapes, should call them 'myths' and invite us to abandon them. How can we live deaf to the last, dramatic questions?[112]
>
> - Jose Ortega y Gasset

> [A] mystic…may become transformed [by] an acute feeling of sacred possession by or possession of the god who is speaking in and through him. He will then wish to bring eternal salvation to men…this may have the practical consequence of the mystic's becoming a mystagogue, something which has actually happened very often.[113]
>
> - Max Weber

In this chapter we revisit a familiar theme: Ortega's high estimation of philosophical questions, contra Wittgenstein's flat denial that we can possibly have answers to them. Wittgenstein therefore advises terminating philosophical dialogue, while Ortega advocates extending it *ad infinitum*. A fundamental point can be made here, regarding the nature of discourse—one with significance for mysticism, yet whose importance goes beyond it. Weber, on a related note above, warns of the manner in which the mystic may become a kind of messianic politician, a potentially dangerous transformation should Ortega's romanticization of unbounded discourse find popular

[112] Ortega, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 66.
[113] Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, pp. 281–2.

support. In this chapter, I will analyze the political risks inherent to having faith in the unverifiable words of the mystic and/or mystagogue.

There is a contemporary theoretical emphasis, in areas such as deliberative democratic theory and discourse ethics, on the values of discursiveness and publicity. This emphasis establishes a context wherein discourse is often seen as a good in itself; and in such a context many tend to ignore the negative aspects of discourse, and are blinded to the value of non-discursive practices and institutions (i.e., monological action, and practices of secrecy and reticence).[114] Discourse has come to embody important philosophical and cultural values (often it is claimed, without serious objection on any front, that civilization—and even simple human coexistence—would not be possible without discourse), and (perhaps non-coincidentally) it is the mechanism by which the group asserts its claims to epistemic authority over the individual. Of course, it is beyond dispute that discursive practices are indispensable for many human purposes. But due to an exaggeration of the proper scope of this indispensability, many have come to see the act of refusing to engage in discourse as a

[114] Mary M. Nooter writes that when certain forms of knowledge are opposed by public opinion, "[s]ecrecy, in fact, must sometimes be credited with the very survival of esoteric forms of philosophy and religion." [Mary M. Nooter, "Introduction: The Aesthetics and Politics of Things Unseen", in *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*, Mary M. Nooter, ed. (New York: The Museum for African Art, 1993), p. 19.] Perhaps this is because the tension secrecy brings aids in the production and maintenance of memories. What is worth keeping secret is, usually, epistemically valued and therefore retained in memory longer than information that is made public through the act of writing. Emily Lyle discusses the phenomenon of "External Symbolic Storage" techniques (such as writing) and their tendency to produce forgetfulness, in her article, "Internal–External Memory" [See Emily Lyle, "Internal–External Memory", in *Mapping Invisible Worlds*, Gavin D. Flood, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993)]. The mystic may thus refuse to write down what she knows, either out of fear of social reprimand, or out for fear of forgetting, or perverting via codification, what she knows or has experienced, and not simply because her subject matter is 'ineffable'. [See also Kevin Hetherington's discussion of the epistemic and political significance of memory in Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (New York: Routledge, 1997); particularly the thread regarding the renewed interest in representations of Solomon's Temple during the Renaissance, due to the use of its architecture as a mnemonic device and as a potential key to unlocking secret, encoded knowledge; p. 73.]

reaction that is heretical or dogmatic.[115] On this basis (monologically gestated) heroism may be discouraged, and 'right action' supplanted by 'socially authorized action'. Individuals who refuse to participate in discourse may be portrayed as anti-egalitarians or deviants. And all of this may occur, it seems, without our balking at the discursive process itself, which *prima facie* privileges the powerful over the weak, the rich over the poor, and the educated over the uneducated, as these voices typically have the most sway over the *demos*. I return to this point below.

Jürgen Habermas provides a possible counter against the march of such a hegemonic discourse: he holds that the role of civil society is to mobilize counterknowledge against the powerful, to balance the discourse between ruler and ruled.[116] This asks much of civil society—that its epistemic resources be comparable to those of the hegemonic powers, and that they be marshalled as effectively. But the epistemic contest between ruler and ruled is not a fair one, as a political ruler has generally superior access to sources of knowledge, and certainly superior access to material resources, which can be converted into knowledge via the employment of experts. Indeed, public discourse, despite its initial appearance of egalitarianism, is in fact a kind of meritocracy (in that the best and strongest arguments ideally prevail); and (definitionally) a meritocracy favors the merited (in this case those having access to the premium sources of information and the means to convincingly organize that information). Attempting to mobilize that which does not even socially count as

[115] This quasi-religious belief in the value of discourse stems in no small part from a preoccupation with science and its insistence on an 'objective', 'public' truth. Anything that stands in opposition to such discourse, then, is seen as 'subjective', 'private', and therefore also false, because not demonstrable. This obviously has political as well as epistemic consequences. But the supreme valuement of discourse is not testable or falsifiable itself—it stands as an epistemic framework, beyond the possibility of proof or disproof. (I am indebted to this point to Popper, who raises a similar objection against Hegelian dialectics in his *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 334, n. 13.)

knowledge (the mystical experience) against a hegemonic system via engagement in public discourse will only render mystics more exposed, and thus vulnerable to ridicule and persecution. It is a politically advisable option for the mystic, in this context, to remain silent.

The practice of public discourse is itself threatened by the possibility of mystical (non-dialogical/non-democratic) knowledge, or secret knowledge, because mention of the mystical brings discourse to a grinding halt—in that mystical knowledge defies translation (codification in language). If 'private' or 'secret' mystical knowledge can be exposed, however, and made intelligible, then it could join and enrich the pool of public knowledge without threatening discursive practices. The growth of this 'pool' of knowledge, and its utilization to improve the lot of humankind, is also ostensibly the ultimate goal of (scientific) discourse. The reticence of the mystic—the inability or refusal to speak clearly and precisely, to reveal the contents of her experience to others—is thus seen as a selfish, malignant stance. The mystic maintains an enigmatic silence that stubbornly refuses to disperse even when the sound of a question is echoed through it. On the basis of this non-disclosure the mystic may be politically despised, as she purportedly retains secret knowledge and does not (or cannot) share this private knowledge with others. She keeps secrets, and seemingly holds them over everyone else in the guise of 'superior wisdom' from a 'higher source'. This is the germ of the political motivation to draw the mystic into discourse, to turn her monologue into a

[116] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, W. Rehg trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p. 194.

dialogue, and break the power of her secret.[117] It is a political response to an epistemic impediment.

To all these negative characterizations, I object that before we judge the mystic as epistemically or politically condemnable, simply on the basis of her seeming inability or unwillingness to produce justifications to back up her claims to extraordinary experiences (or, in the case of the mystagogue, heaven-sent prognostications and dictates), we must also give a socio-political account of what it is to be pressed to offer such proof in the first place, and then what it is to refuse, or be unable, to offer that proof when it is demanded. In some cases, at least, to demand a justification is simply to employ a form of intimidation, to use political power of a slightly milder kind than that employed to secure confessions for crimes committed (or

[117] Gary van Wyk rightly points out that in that "[s]ecrecy divides those who know from those who do not. Because knowledge and power directly imply one another, the broaching of secrecy enters a politico-epistemological domain." [Gary van Wyk, "Through the Cosmic Flower: Secret Resistance in the Mural Art of Sotho-Tswana Women", in *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*, Mary M. Nooter, ed. (New York: The Museum for African Art, 1993), p. 81] Along a similar vein, Simmel remarks that although "[t]he secret puts a barrier between men" (Simmel, p. 334), and "the purpose of secrecy is, above all, *protection*." (Simmel, p. 345) In the case of mystics, the mystical experience may function to create a division between those who have experienced it and those who have not: a kind of 'us' and 'them' schism familiar to us from the political theory of Carl Schmitt. Kwame Anthony Appiah mirrors this Schmittian point, writing that "secrets matter because they mark the boundary between those outside and those within." [Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Art and Secrecy", in *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*. Mary M. Nooter, ed. (New York: The Museum for African Art, 1993), p. 16.] That is, if mystical experiences (like the 'oceanic feeling' described by Freud) are identified as being experienced by a certain class of persons, then we can consider mystics as constituting an 'us' and non-mystics as constituting a 'them' (and vice versa). But if all mystics each have their own unique set of revelations, then there can be no solidarity between mystics, and the schism becomes much more radical and severe: the mystic becomes an 'I' to be distinguished from all others, and so stands alone. Here I refer to a Japanese proverb to the effect that "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down": it means, in short, that social retribution can be expected by the one who puts herself above others. The mystic is like the conspicuous nail in the proverb—by dint of their mystical experience, mystics set themselves apart from the rest of humanity—and are thus in socio-political peril. The protection of secrecy is thus clearly desirable for the mystic who wants to avoid being 'hammered down'. But the political choice of secrecy, hidden behind the myth of 'ineffability', only preempts the possible discovery of common mystical experiences, also sealing the mystic off from the understanding and protection that others might offer—into a perpetual epistemic and political hermitage. So it appears that it simultaneously is, and is not, in the mystic's interest to enter into discursive practices witnessed or conducted by hegemonic powers.

not committed, as the case may be).[118] The ultimatum meant to produce the forced explanation runs roughly, with slight variations from case to case, as follows: "Talk willingly, or we will take steps that will make you wish you had talked." The real punishments at the disposal of the initiator of discourse will vary according to the socio-political position of the agent who wishes to know something, relative to the individual from, or about which, knowledge is to be extracted, and dialogue forced upon. Sometimes (as in Bentham's Panopticon schema) the threat of punishment alone will suffice to secure submission. What is intended to be coerced from the subject of inquisition can vary: from concealed facts about the world, to the reasons for certain actions performed or statements made, to the existence or non-existence of heretical feelings.[119]

Of course, the days of the religious inquisitions have (largely) passed in the Western world: the time of our governments is now spent interrogating different types

[118] In the case of a criminal investigation and prosecution, the confessor confesses not only to a particular act, but to being a certain kind of person: she not only accepts responsibility for a crime, but also accepts the appellation 'criminal', and thus also the reframing of the entirety of her actions in a sinister light. The initial confession of the 'criminal' justifies the investigation to continue on, indefinitely, into the rest of her activities for the rest of her life. As Simmel points out, "what is known always offers points of attack for further penetration" (Simmel, p. 346), and thus the initiation of discourse, once accepted, may lead to the full exposure and systemic debasement of the mystic. The point of questioning the mystic may not be precisely for the purpose of understanding the mystical experience, or gleaning a particular piece of mystical knowledge, but rather as an opportunity to dissect and understand 'the mystic' as a character, generally, and have her assent to a role that is epistemically and politically marginal.

[119] Popper recognizes the authoritarian nature of the act of demanding that the sources of knowledge be yielded up to a questioner. He writes that "[t]he question of the sources of our knowledge, like so many authoritarian questions, is a *genetic* one. It asks for the origin of our knowledge, in the belief that knowledge may legitimize itself by its pedigree." (Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 25) His response to the 'genetic' question is to soften his knowledge claims: "So my answer to the questions 'How do you know? What is the source or the basis of your assertion? What observations have led you to it?' would be: 'I do *not* know: my assertion was merely a guess. Never mind the source, or the sources, from which it may spring—there are many possible sources, and I may not be aware of half of them; and origins or pedigrees have in any case little bearing upon truth…'" (Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 27) This, in turn, suggests a strategy against authoritarian discourse: namely, the Socratic strategy. After all, mightn't the mystic have an easier time in discourse if she played Socrates, and claimed to know only that she knows nothing? But it would seem that perhaps this option is not open to the mystic. After all, to pretend to know nothing, when she believes that she has experienced a 'truer truth' than others, would be to intolerably devalue and denigrate both herself and the intrinsic value of the mystical

of internees for different types of information and confessions. In our era, dominated largely by nationalistic concerns and driven by an ethos of scientism, the price paid by the mystic for not talking is usually political irrelevance (much as Arendt predicted) rather than physical internment and intimidation. But, in other, not so distant, eras, torture and death would have been likely penalties for many self-professed mystics and prejudice against mystical ideologies is still very much in evidence. On the other hand, discursiveness, when taken as an intrinsic good, or even as an instrumental good in ensuring epistemically superior political results, can soon take on the diabolic character of a system that is blind to its own effects and proper limits—a discourse factory wherein the greatest crime is silence. However, as stated above, silence, construed as the refusal to partake in said discourse, may be the only appropriate response available to the mystic, and a sensible strategy for those who wish to protest the direction that discourse takes.[120]

Even when the intention behind the initiation of the status of discourse is not malicious or unduly intrusive, it can nonetheless have a truly degenerative effect on the status of discussants whose power level is lower than their fellow co-discussants. Thomas Nagel, for one, explains that certain types of discourse inherently function as intrusions into one's personal life, count as attempts to coerce one's opinions to fit with the larger social group's, and ought to be prevented through the promotion of general practices of reticence and respect for the privacy of others.[121] Nagel goes so far as to say that "[t]he boundary between what we reveal and what we do not, and some control

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experience. In this way, the mystic may well be damned if she engages in discourse, and damned if she refuses the same.

[120] This strategy of political quietism (whether it is pursued consciously or not) may partially explain the overwhelming phenomenon of what has been dubbed 'voter apathy' in the West (although voter apathy might be more accurately redescribed as 'voter despondency', 'voter skepticism', or 'voter reluctance').

over that boundary, is among the most important attributes of our humanity…concealment [is] a condition of civilization…and civilization would be impossible if we could all read each other's minds."[122] The counter, then, to the argument that discourse is a precondition for civilization, is that unbounded discourse may be a precondition for its dissolution. If telepathy were possible, it might thus lead to anarchy, as Nagel suggests, but regardless, the crusade for an ever-greater depth of inter-subjective penetration and understanding may persist in the guise of benign discourse.[123] Such an unregulated system of discourse, on Nagel's account, may serve as the Trojan horse that brings an end to valuable practices of social civility, rather than functioning as the pillar of civilization it is sometimes touted as.

All discourse, and especially discourse between agents of different social standings, has an aspect of power struggle to it. Even to gain access to the debate, the weaker party in such a parlay must implicitly forfeit (part of) her way of seeing the world, in the face of superior knowledge, or political power, or both. Eric Berne gives us a graphic example of how power functions within discourse to subtly act as an effective tool of indoctrination from a very early age:

> A little boy sees and hears birds with delight. Then the "good father" comes along and feels he should "share" the experience and help his son "develop." He says "That's a jay, and this is a sparrow." The moment the little boy is concerned with which is a jay and which is a sparrow, he can no longer see the birds or hear them sing. He has to see and hear them the way his father wants him to.[124]

In learning the jay/sparrow language-game from his father, several things have happened to the little boy in Berne's story, and accordingly several different

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[121] In Thomas Nagel, *Concealment and Exposure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[122] Nagel, p. 4. See also Simmel, p. 347 n. 7: "If human sociation is *conditioned* by the capacity to speak, it is *shaped* by the capacity to be silent, although this becomes obvious only upon occasion."
[123] This can be seen as a microcosm of the ethical and economic problems facing globalization; of forcing the dominant epistemic discourse still further into all possible venues, where it helps pave the way for subsequent ideological, and eventually material, colonizations.

interpretations are possible. On the surface, it seems that the process of learning what things are called is a natural part of growing up, of acculturation and maturation within any social framework (especially a scientific one, wherein the ability to sort and classify types of things is an important trait to possess). On this interpretation, the father should be thanked for his service to the child, who will surely benefit in the future from his familiarity with this way of interpreting the world. Nevertheless, it is also evident that there is at least some potential element of coercion inherent to such discourses, despite their pedagogical value. The boy learns the jay/sparrow language-game, but this is largely done to please his (more wise and powerful) father, at the cost of his own innocent pleasure of simply being in (or, alternately, being at one with) the world.[125] One can easily see how this kind of paternalistic influence, if exerted by a figure with powerful socio-political influence over an audience much larger than one boy, could easily set up what Michel Foucault calls a "'regime' of truth".[126]

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[124] Eric Berne, *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), p.178.

[125] One can imagine the intensified level of the boy's alienation (from his experiences) that would result if his father were a philosopher, as Smart observes: "[t]he philosopher is not worried as to whether the birds are singing [or what they are called], but what sort of statement 'The birds are singing' may be." (Smart, p. 2) In the case of Smart's philosopher, the depth of abstraction from one's own experiences reaches a new extreme.

[126] This 'regime' is a (set of) social institution(s) which is concerned with the generating and maintaining of a set of propositions that it counts as 'true'; it manufactures truth. As Foucault puts it, "'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth." [Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power", in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 74.] Foucault's 'regime' of truth is paralleled very closely by what Hans Albert refers to as a "monopoly of interpretation" [Hans Albert, *Treatise on Critical Reason*. Mary Varney Rorty, trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 24]. Ostensibly, such a social institution could just as easily be built up around mysticism as indeed it is around science, with all of the accompanying

3.1: Codifying Experience, Decoding Mysticism

The building up of linguistic code over objects of 'pure' (read non-theoretical, pre-linguistic) experience does serve to potentially obscure the objects themselves, in return for the ability to transmit the contents of one's experience to others, on an abstract level, through the use of language. In Berne's example above, it is when the boy learns the particular names of the birds that he somewhat loses touch with what the birds phenomenally, pre-linguistically, and 'essentially' are. The actual birds, with all the raw sensations that seeing them is capable of evoking in the boy, are largely replaced by the terms 'sparrow' and 'jay'. A robust, albeit undifferentiated, type of understanding has been exchanged for a brittle technique of denotation; the epistemic tragedy of the situation is apparent. Thus the ability to transfer knowledge to others comes at an apparent cost to our private sensory perspicuity, a side effect of channelling information through the restrictive and abstract medium of language. In a similar vein, Roy Woods writes of maps that "they can distract us from experiencing the real world…[r]ather than providing help on the journey, they can become substitutes for it",[127] for to create a map is to proffer a representative analogue (or allegory) of an actual or ideal 'landscape' (whether physical, mental, or psychic). Maps codify information about these landscapes, usually for the purpose of rendering them intelligible to the self and others, and constitute a form of language in and of

benefits and dangers that are involved in such an endeavour. Thus the rivalry between scientism and mysticism as competing politico-epistemological frameworks is correspondingly bitter.

[127] Roy Woods, "Against Mapping Invisible Worlds in Rilke's *Duino Elegies*", in *Mapping Invisible Worlds*, Gavin D. Flood, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 139.

themselves.[128] However, in the process of rendering raw perceptual information (or an idealized conceptual schema of relationships, such as those found in utopian blueprints) available for intellectual consumption, maps function as a distancing medium between the mind and the objects of mental experience.[129] Thus an epistemic divide between a

[128] Karl Popper notes that "…there exist languages, such as maps, which are descriptive but not argumentative." (Popper, *Unended Quest*, p. 77) On this account, it might initially seem that maps provide a possible avenue for attempting to express mystical experience, as mystical experience is certainly non-dialogical, and thus non-argumentative. However, if we take this tack we are still left with the problem of how to describe the (strictly) indescribable. Smart offers another solution: that 'ontological words' such as 'pure', 'real', 'ultimate', and 'illusory' are better candidates for expressing the mystical experience than our ordinary language, "for ontological words are without descriptive content on the one hand, and on the other they have a valuational use." (Smart, p. 139) For Smart,

> utterances about [mystical experiences] are expressive rather than descriptive: we can know but cannot say what such a feeling feels like. Perhaps this philosophical point is the one which is being made when it is said that the mystical experience is indescribable, unspeakable, ineffable, etc…[h]owever, such an interpretation is a little unrealistic when we consider function of such sentences as…'The pain is indescribable'. To use such sentences is not to state that one is having a sort of experience which cannot (in principle) be described. Rather, it is only of a certain degree of pain that we say it is indescribable, namely a terrible pain, an intolerable one, an unspeakable one. Such a one is not spoken of thus because it cannot be described (since this is true in a sense of all pains). Nor even because in some way it cannot be expressed. But somehow *words* cannot sufficiently express it. Even piling intensifiers upon intensifiers and saying 'It is a very, very, very intense pain' hardly helps: for the expressiveness depends not so much on the words used as on the way they are used and the behaviour in which they are embedded…[t]hus to say that something is indescribably painful is to give a particularly strong expression of agony; and to say 'I can't tell you how terrible it is' both concedes and yet mitigates the failure of expression. For, though it superficially admits that the agony cannot be conveyed, it helps towards conveying it. Thus 'indescribable', 'ineffable', etc., are a special sort of intensifier.
> [Smart, pp. 69–70]

What would it be, then, for a pain to be expressed but not described in the manner that Smart describes? To bring us back to our earlier point, what indeed would an *expressive map* of a painful experience look like? If the deployment of certain images in constellation with one another can be interpreted as 'intensifiers' of a certain kind, then we can suggest that perhaps art constitutes a kind of attempt to convey that which (strictly speaking) cannot be conveyed—the agonies and ecstasies of another's mind, here the artist's—in the form of paintings, sculptures, performances, and so forth. The recognition of this parallel is not meant to suggest that we ought pigeonhole or relocate the mystical within the realm of the aesthetic, but rather to assert that there is a significant theoretical overlap in these two very distinct efforts to transmit their own unique, non-rational forms of *weltanschauungen*.

[129] Indeed, maps even become a sort of authority *over* the senses. However, as Russell notes, we must be careful of attributing authority to received wisdom, as

> often authority has proved mistaken. It is true that most of us must inevitably depend upon it for most of our knowledge. I accept on authority the existence of Cape Horn, and it is clearly impossible that each of us should verify all the facts of geography; but it is important that the opportunity for verification should exist, and that its occasional necessity should be recognized.
> [Russell, *The Scientific Outlook*, p. 71]

landscape and our pre-linguistic (instinctual or mystical) understanding of it is created.[130] Modern practices of long-range physical and mental navigation (brought on, again, by advances on the scientific front) immerse us daily in practices of mapping, ironically vouchsafing humanity's alienation from the world, a world that (in itself) remains too complex for us to fully and accurately codify.[131] Where world-complexity reaches a level high enough (or low enough) that mapping becomes impossible—where language fails in its tireless task of description—is, to revisit a thread, where Wittgenstein posits "the mystical"; the realm of unmediated experience that escapes articulation.[132] Thus the world, itself, is in some sense 'mystical': the facts themselves

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When a map is claimed to be a representation of the mystical experience, it is doubly objectionable—in that it both separates the mystic from the world of that experience itself, and also provides no possible opportunity for verification of the same to others.

[130] And even after this division is executed, it is apparent that the abstraction from experience in no way guarantees conceptual clarity. Below, J. L. Austin gives us a description of how mapped, or codified, information is as slippery in its own way as 'raw', uncodified experience:

> Suppose that we confront 'France is hexagonal' with the facts, in the case, I suppose, with France, is it true or false? Well, if you like, up to a point; of course I can see what you mean by saying that it is true for certain interests and purposes. It is good enough for a top-ranking general, perhaps, but not for a cartographer…How can one answer this question, whether it is true or false that France is hexagonal? It is just rough, and that is the right and final answer to this question…It is a rough description; it is not a true or false one.
> [J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 2nd edition, J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p.143.]

Following Smart's extended quote in footnote 128, which bears significant resemblance to Austin's words above, we should like to say that this is so with the mystical experience as well—that it can, paradoxically, be described, but not adequately—it can be 'roughly' described, but not with any degree of exactitude.

[131] The patent folly of attempting a fully accurate codification of the world is aptly illustrated in Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno*, wherein the character Mein Herr

> argued that since a map is better the larger the scale, the best map must be one drawn on the scale of a mile to the mile. His countrymen actually produced such a map, but they were unable to unfold it for fear of shutting out the sunlight; so they had to be content to use the country itself as its own map.
> [Passage and example quoted from George Pitcher, "Wittgenstein, Nonsense, and Lewis Carroll", in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and His Philosophy*, K. T. Fann, ed. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1967), p. 324.]

[132] The mystical experience, like the world itself, resists strict codification. Moreover, the failure of codification in this area may also be normatively desirable, for the preservation of the uniqueness of human experience. Thus Popper says "the unique individual and his unique actions and relations to other

are enigmatic, and not just "the 'fact' that there are facts".[133] The world, contra Weber, is thus 'enchanted', as much by language as that which resists codification by it.

Recent analyses of mapping have emphasized the creative (over the mimetic) aspect of mapping.[134] Thus the concept of mapping imaginary worlds, 'mapping the invisible', and so forth, have gained theoretical credibility as important means of self-expression, by which valuable sources of information are (at least partially) codified and so brought from the private into the public realm. But insofar as the map acts as a means of external memory storage,[135] it also betrays the confidence of its creator, as it is an object that can be judged and criticized by others, both on its own merits and as a lasting reflection of its creator's private experiential world.[136] An idea of what the mystical experience may be like might prove itself to be prone to rough articulation via 'expressive mapping', but it would lose its status as a contingently private experience. Thus the creative act of mapping (and perhaps any creative act, including, but by no means limited to, those labelled 'artistic') simultaneously empowers and disempowers the mystic, in that the mystic as cartographer simultaneously comes closer to actualizing a community of sympathetic fellow-experients through the production of her experiential map, but also reveals

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individuals can never be fully rationalized. And it appears to be just this irrational realm of unique individuality which…makes our lives worth living…" (Popper, *Open Society*, p. 430) If codifying the mystical experience—and thus demystifying it—robs a species of human experience of its meaning and importance, then perhaps it would be wise to exempt the mystic from socio-political demands to engage in discourse about her experiences.

[133] See Zemach, p. 366.

[134] See James Corner, "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention", in *Mappings*, Denis Cosgrove, ed. (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2002); and David Maclagan, "Inner and Outer Space: Mapping the Psyche" in *Mapping Invisible Worlds*, Gavin D. Flood, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

[135] See Emily Lyle, "Internal–External Memory".

[136] As Simmel observes, the written word as a physical trace carries with it the perpetual possibility of betrayal (even if it is not published or otherwise distributed): "Writing, thus, possesses an objective existence which renounces all guarantees of remaining secret." (Simmel, p. 352)

herself to be different from those other experients, and thus makes herself prone to potential discrimination and socio-political reprisals.[137]

Crucially, we remain confronted here with a tension between the codification generated by mapping and other forms of language on the one hand, and the mystical, that which seems to defy codification by its very definition, on the other.[138] Recalling Berne's description of the boy and his father, it almost seems as if, in offering our codified ideas to others, in an attempt to build a bridge of mutual understanding between ourselves and them, we necessarily 'corrupt' (demystify, disenchant, or otherwise alter) the other's views of the world, as *das Dinge an sich*, through our powers of persuasion or suggestion. Or, conversely, it may be *we* that are doomed to have our own views perverted by theirs.[139] Language can thus be seen to obfuscate the contents of others' experiences, as well as our own (via the initial abstraction of our experiences through codification in words, whether those words are our own or

[137] Differences in experiential content, when expressed aesthetically, may become the site of political differences. This is especially true in the case of an experiential map, wherein experience may become normatively charged, and thus threaten viewers with a value system or mode of description opposed to those of their own.

[138] Traditionally, mystics have often sought to completely empty their minds of thought—to engage in a non-linguistic, or *anti-codified* state of being—so that they could more readily receive mystical experiences and/or revelations. Paradoxically, however, it seems that it might also be possible to approach the mystical through *hyper-codification*—the laying on of meaning-over-meaning and code-over-code—by interlacing multiple intelligible languages together to produce a message of unutterable complexity that nonetheless claims to be a supra-rational vehicle of understanding. Filling the mind with codes and thus overwhelming one's cognitive capacity could be as effective as emptying one's mind in preparing oneself to receive the mystical experience. Thus here revelation would still come from the senses, but would be facilitated by language itself. We can see in this model traces of Arendt's scientist who loses herself in esoteric codes, becoming a new kind of mystic, one who Adorno would describe as a "magus of the rationalized world whose authority has to be accepted unquestioningly without violating the taboo set upon blind authority." (Adorno, *The Stars Down To Earth*, p. 109) Communication between agents via this hyper-codified language might not even be possible (language would, in this case, simply be used as a kind of decoration), and political and epistemic affairs would need to be resolved through appeals to extra-linguistic measures. This is one representation of a possible marriage of the mystical and the scientistic politico-epistemic frameworks.

[139] The only defense against such 'corruption' of our beliefs might be what C. S. Pierce called "the method of tenacity" in belief fixation, or in other words sticking to one's dogmatic viewpoint (no matter how privately compelling one finds the arguments of others). This epistemic strategy has several deficiencies, the most glaring of which is that it makes one's body of knowledge into a closed system into

someone else's). Again, it seems as if formulating our ideas in language distances us from the contents of our experiences, and that sharing those ideas with others via discourse alienates them from their own unique experiences; or results in our alienation from our own; or both (in the case that we and the others arrive at a compromise position, which none of us can claim authorship of).

In some instances alterations of our views will prove beneficial to us—in many instances, however, any change in our views will have been pre-tailored to generate strategic advantage on the side of our co-discussants. But the aspect of discourse that is most disturbing (where discourse is promoted as intrinsically valuable) is the transgressive fashion in which it forces its homogenizing vision into our everyday practices, in the name of greater clarity. Ortega describes speech as "the action of making or rendering something manifest, of bringing it out from concealment."[140] The function of speech, then, is to epistemically 'pry open' the private worlds of our co-discussants. That is why concealment has a crucial protective socio-political function. To iterate an earlier point: if concealment, as Nagel claims, is a condition of civilization, then the slavish worship of discourse may result in a barbaric state where full disclosure is consistently demanded, or enforced.

This is the "wishbone", or zero-sum game model of discourse, where no mutually enriching or epistemically egalitarian outcome is possible: one person gets her 'wish' (retains her privacy and unique understanding of the world) at the expense of the

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which no new insights can penetrate. [See Charles S. Pierce, "The Fixation of Belief" in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, Buchler, Justus, ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955).]

[140] Ortega, *What is Knowledge?*, p.107. Ortega also discusses the non-social (thus non-corruptive) clarifying aspects of speech here as well, in that "To think is to speak to oneself." Discourse can be more clearly conceptualized as a transgression if we acknowledge that it is inevitably an interruption (albeit an occasionally welcome one) of one's discussions with oneself.

other—it is impossible for both to simultaneously 'win' together.[141] Each conversation, under this schema, takes on a combative aspect, and the prize for winning such a contest is being the person whose picture of the world will dominate the other disputant's cognitive outlook at the end of the discussion.[142] Since the mystic has famously poor powers of rationally persuading others (given the purportedly ineffable 'foundation' of her knowledge, and the fact that she inhabits a scientistic social milieu wherein so-called 'mystical knowledge' counts for nothing), we can expect that she will lose most linguistic contests against agents of scientism, who will set the parameters of discourse to value 'proof' over 'conviction'. Given that the mystic is bound to lose more often than not in these discussions, and given that she values her mystical experiences (i.e., that she desires that nothing is mediate between herself and her 'pure' experiences), we can therefore expect that she will be reluctant to attempt to linguistically codify (and thereby taint) the contents of her mystical experience, or willingly engage in discourse with others regarding them, even if such codification were achieved.

[141] Compare this to the standard depiction of discourse as a mutually-engrossing generative process, wherein both parties arrive at a hybridized understanding of the world, a new, 'third way' of seeing things. Although this may, in fact, occasionally be the result of actual discourse, more often, I would claim, it is not. Such a depiction of discourse is overly idealistic, as it ignores the important effects of political and epistemic hegemony on the direction and outcome of discourse. Additionally, in non-ideal speech situations, discussants frequently employ the tenacious method of belief fixation, consciously or unconsciously, and are thus irrationally attached to their set of beliefs, which they will not willingly surrender unless socially or politically pressured (i.e., unless a stronger irrational force is exercised upon them). All of this may occur, of course, under the guise of a neutral or positively-valued discursive process.

[142] An analogous phenomenon takes place in the common social game wherein two people, who each speak each other's native tongue as a second language, first meet (i.e., a Spanish-speaking Russian and a Russian-speaking Spaniard). They will usually both attempt to speak the language of the other, until it is established who is the strongest speaker of the language which is foreign to them. After this matter is settled, in the fashion of a verbal arm-wrestling contest, the conversation then proceeds in the native tongue of the weakest speaker of foreign languages, the 'loser' of the game, whose lack of linguistic ability is courteously indulged and perpetuated via the exercise of the victor's language skills.

The demand for epistemic disclosure, seen as part of a socio-psychological game,[143] can take the form of a taunt, or a dare, of the type: "If you're so smart, then go ahead and tell us what you know." Thus knowledge is encouraged to leave the realm of the private and become, if you will, a 'public resource'. This game is played out materially in the form of conspicuous consumption ("If you're so rich, then go ahead and show us how rich you are by spending your money on something impressive."). And just as conspicuous consumption leaves the conspicuous consumer worse off (i.e., poorer and more conspicuous) in the end, disclosure of knowledge also initiates an epistemic potlatch in which the possessor of knowledge loses her exclusive rights to it, and thus knowledge is often debased or devalued (certainly demystified) in the process. Through the critiques and antitheses that are sure to follow the disclosure of a new bit of knowledge, the claimant of 'mystical knowledge' may eventually come to doubt her very own epistemic authority, as such beliefs cannot stand up under the (arguably unfair, in this case) siege of demands for justification.[144] This is, perhaps, the prime impulse behind pushes for the public disclosure of mystical knowledge: the strategic undermining of the epistemic position of the holder of mystical secrets (with little or

[143] It is no secret that people play such socio-psychological games with each other frequently, in bids to gain positions of relative advantage to one another. See Berne, *Games People Play*, p. 163: "…since by definition all [socio-psychological] games are based on ulterior transactions, they must all have some element of exploitation."

[144] As T. O. Beidelman writes, "[e]xposure of secrets, both those truly unknown and those aspects of privacy that are conventionally respected or denied recognition, leads to a loss of the autonomy and esteem of the person or group whose secrets are revealed." [T. O. Beidelman, "Secrecy and Society: The Paradox of Knowing and the Knowing of Paradox", in *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*, Mary M. Nooter, ed. (New York: The Museum for African Art, 1993), p. 44.] Discourse may progress from the collapse of monological forms of knowledge, but the price is paid by individuals whose secrets are revealed—like mystics, who are called upon to demystify their own mystical experiences for the sake of justifying their claims to knowledge.

nothing to be given in return, except perhaps the temporary lifting of social pressure or sanctions).[145]

Again, all of this is not to deny the social necessity of discourse. It is, rather, to point out that there are obvious strategic reasons not to be strictly Kantian about honesty, to not always share what one knows in a discourse, regardless of context. It is also important to note that there are genuine obstacles that prevent us from sharing information with others, even when we might want to. There is the definitional, or conceptual constraint to description: strictly speaking, attempts to codify the mystical (read ineffable) ought to (theoretically) result in either (i) involuntary silence, or (ii) nonsensical gibberish; e.g. 'speaking in tongues'. This constraint can be sidestepped, however, if we allow that in actual linguistic practices the mystical can be expressed, although in an imperfect, imprecise manner; that the mystic admits of limited expressive, quasi-descriptive, or evaluative expression (i.e., the mystical experience could be described as 'good' and/or 'blissful'). By this means we may hope to make some inroads towards a broad, general understanding of the mystical experience. I have also mentioned, at some length, the political constraint: that it is sometimes unwise or disadvantageous to share what one knows or believes with one's socio-political group, for fear of being reprimanded and discriminated against. This constraint will clearly ease and tighten with the political ebb and flow of one's social milieu. There is, as well, a psychological constraint on effability: where intense experience incurs mental trauma, or shock, we can expect psychological blocks to be erected within the mind of the

[145] To make the game analogy clearer, the demand for epistemic justification is akin to being 'called' in the game of poker. The mystic either cannot, or refuses to, ever show her cards...thus to call her is to inevitably win. The scientist, conversely, may have a poor hand, but always has, at least, something concrete to reveal. The only way the mystic can win against such an opponent is to refuse to play the justification-game in the first place.

experient, to protect themselves against further mental distress. War, bereavement, and extreme ecstasy—each of these experiences may be too intense to allow for lucid recollection, or to be related to others. Given time (and in some cases, treatment), however, we can hope that the psychologically unretrievable experience can, at some unspecified future date, become accessible. Finally, I briefly mention here another constraint on communicability: an educational one. Put simply, if one does not know certain terms or concepts, then tasks of description are made much more difficult, if not impossible. Imagine that I ask someone who doesn't know the words 'round' or 'spherical' to describe the shape of an eyeball.[146] Obviously, the task of description would be much more onerous and cumbersome for a person who was not educated about the existence or common usage of these terms, than it would be for someone who knew these words and how to properly employ them. And so it is with describing mystical experience: we may lack the crucial terms and concepts that are required to give a satisfactory account of our stock of internal experience. Perhaps a lexicon of such terms has not yet been compiled, and so we are temporarily consigned to a kind of mystical illiteracy. But this constraint, like each of the others, is a state that can be improved upon.[147] However, these non-volitional, non-discursive elements of the mystic archetype are often conflated with the volitional keeping of non-mystical secrets, which are quite capable of being transmitted via language to another user of that same language, and thus pressure on the mystic to disclose mystical knowledge may nevertheless persist.

[146] Disallowing, of course, the use of tautological terms like 'eye-shaped': just as, if I asked someone to describe the rough shape of France, I would not accept 'France-shaped' as an informative response.
[147] In the terms of John Turk Saunders and Donald F. Henze, in *The Private-Language Problem: A Philosophical Dialogue*, I believe that mystical experiences constitute 'factually' (contingently) private

But what, if anything, could be done politically to force the mystic to justify their knowledge claims? While torturing (or heavily penalizing) a political insurgent may yield important information to her interrogators,[148] harassing a mystic cannot be expected to produce sensible results for her interrogators, as *the source of her purported knowledge is generally taken to be ineffable*.[149] This definitional constraint on mystical knowledge is seen by many to be insurmountable. If this line is taken, then all that can be learned from the mystic must be learned from careful study of the theoretical issues surrounding the site of what she claims to be ineffable. And even if mystical experience is taken to be contingently ineffable, at most assistance and support can be offered to the mystic to help work through the factual constraints on describing her mystical experience. The only scenario wherein coercion could be thought to be an effective strategy is in the case of knowledge which was being withheld through reticence only. Hence, we can see the practical senselessness of the numerous instances of inquisitions and witch-hunts that history offers up to its students, which serve only to highlight humanity's poor track record of tolerating unpopular, or otherwise marginal, beliefs.[150]

All of this is not to deny that there is some political power and danger in secrecy, even the involuntary secrecy necessitated by factual (contingent) ineffability. It is simply to claim (contra Adorno, whose work I take up in the next section) that the

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sensation-languages, not 'logically' private ones. [See John Turk Saunders and Donald F. Henze, *The Private-Language Problem: A Philosophical Dialogue* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 5–7.]

[148] Torture has often been used (as a primitive surrogate for telepathy) in order to circumvent, or at least mitigate, the epistemic obstacles posed by the 'problem of other minds'. The inquisitor hopes that with each turn of the thumbscrew, their victim comes that much closer to full epistemic disclosure.

[149] Even a bona fide mind reader should, theoretically, find nothing regarding the mystical experience that was explainable to his fellows upon peering into the mystic's brain, if the experience were truly ineffable. The mind reader, too, ought to be struck dumb if the mind-reading procedure were a success.

[150] Which, in turn, reminds us of Wittgenstein's puzzling, and somewhat self-defeating, intolerance regarding metaphysics.

mystic is not necessarily an authoritarian figure (though, of course, she is capable of being one), and indeed may often find herself on the wrong end of authoritarian practices. Hannah Arendt reminds us that

> speech is what makes man a political being…whatever men do or know or experience can make sense only to the extent that it can be spoken about. There may be truths beyond speech, and they may be of great relevance to man in the singular, that is, to man in so far as he is not a political being, whatever else he may be.[151]

Thus the singular possessor of (conceptually or contingently) ineffable knowledge, the mystic as epistemic hermit—is on Arendt's account an apolitical being, and not in any position to exercise authoritarian control (except over herself, perhaps, in the sense that she may attempt to achieve some modicum of self-mastery). Jan Patocka, too, sees the mystic, insofar as she is immersed in her mystical experiences, as unconcerned with power, and instead a willing subject to be ruled by the contents of her experiences: "…we experience the world not only as the region of what is in our power but also as what opens itself to us *of itself* and, as experience…is then capable of penetrating and transforming our life."[152] Of course, if the mystic always sought only to rule herself, or to be ruled by her own experiences, then mysticism would not, properly understood, be a valid subject for political philosophy. However it is, and this is largely due to the efforts of mystagogues to politicize the mystical.[153]

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[151] Arendt, pp. 3–4.

[152] Jan Patocka, "Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?", in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Erazim Kohak, trans., James Dodd, ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), p. 99.

[153] Adorno has done important philosophical work on the authoritarian character of political mystagoguery. However, before I open my explication of his work, I must note here that some think that Adorno has mistaken his favorite targets of criticism—all astrologists, and the fascist that most piqued him, Hitler—for mystics, when they are perhaps not rightly described as such. Ninian Smart warns us that

> a mystical experience is one which is reported by a class of persons generally referred to as 'mystics'—such men as Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, Plotinus, the Buddha, Sankara, and so on. Such men are characterized by spirituality and asceticism and pursue a certain method. Thus we do not wish to call Hitler or astrologers mystics in this sense nor their doctrines mystical. [Smart, p. 55]

3.2: Politicizing the Mystical

We turn now to the subject hinted at in the epigraph by Weber at the beginning of this chapter: how the mystic may become a mystagogue, and how that potentiality raises political concerns surrounding mysticism generally. First, however, we will look at the archetypal mystagogue (the politically active mystic) more closely, and examine how she has been an equally suspect figure for both political philosophers and epistemologists. Epistemologists distrust the authority of the mystagogue because she is unable to offer evidence (or other forms of justification) for her claims to knowledge, and political philosophers distrust the mystagogue because she answers to no other human: the wellspring of her political legitimacy is an otherworldly source, inaccessible to the vast majority of her fellows. The mystic gathers her knowledge from a complete surrender to a particular kind of extraordinary experience, presumably delivered from divine or transcendental sources, in the form of a revelation which remains unmediated by reason. In her incarnation as mystagogue, the mystic attempts to find a political or pedagogical correlate to her personal act of surrender to experience, in the form of her audience's irrational surrender to her mystical authority. Thus, the figure of the mystagogue can be theoretically linked to all manner of undemocratic and

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Adorno has thus erred, by Smart's lights, in designating mysticism as a heading under which all varieties of irrationalism can be listed. But who is Smart to deny that Hitler might have had mystical experiences, or any astrologers for that matter? I believe that we should allow Adorno his designation of Hitler and astrologers as mystics; assuming that he is using the term 'mystic' in a similar manner to the way I employ it throughout this work—as a philosophical archetype, and not as a theistic one; i.e., that it does not necessarily accurately track to the practices of any particular 'real' mystics, and is 'religiously and theologically neutral' in Nielsen's sense.

authoritarian systems of government.[154] The portrayal most frequently sketched of the mystagogue is less than flattering: she is generally seen as one part charlatan (because she cannot justify her knowledge to others), one part demagogue (because in the absence of sound justification for her beliefs, she must resort to extra-rational techniques of persuading the masses, such as charisma and propaganda, to gain a following).

Adorno, who makes explicit links between occultism and fascism in his essay "Theses Against Occultism", bluntly states that "Occultism is the metaphysic of dunces."[155] Presumably, what Adorno means here is that while intelligent people can be seduced by an empty philosophy, such as a gaudy and cluttered metaphysical system, only someone truly unintelligent would be seduced by straight-faced tales of the supernatural, which the mystical experience is often categorized as.[156] Adorno thus begs the question with regard to his appraisal of the possibility of mystical knowledge: to him, it is a confidence game, and a facile one, at that; one which only those possessed of the lowest sensibilities could succumb to. It should not, then, be surprising to learn that Adorno believes that "astrologists and spiritualists do not so much solve problems as remove them by crude premisses from all possibility of solution."[157] Adorno's spiritualist, presumably a type of mystic who claims knowledge from beyond, can seemingly only tack on a mythology to explain how it is that she 'knows' certain

[154] This stereotyping might have to do with the Western liberal tradition of maintaining a separation between church and state (although, as mentioned previously, there can be mystagogues of non-religious varieties). It is more likely, though, that the word 'mystagogue' is being associated with the fascist political leaders of the mid-twentieth century, along with their racial mythologies. As noted above, Ninian Smart has argued against designating such figures as mystics, as they fail to embody his criteria to be considered as such (see Smart, p. 55). However, this has not prevented the association from often being made.

[155] Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth*, p. 130.

[156] Of course, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, the distinction between the mystical and the metaphysical is sometimes not so easy to draw—the two are, in some cases, identical.

things—say, about how the heavenly bodies dictate the fates of men, or how the dead can communicate with the living—and cannot decisively resolve issues scientifically. In other words, the mystic must use metaphor to explain certain concepts or phenomena, those which she presumably takes to be outside the proper domain of science (with the arguable exception of the discipline of parapsychology, whose status as a valid scientific pursuit is contested). But to relocate certain issues from the domain of science into the domain of the mystical, in itself, should not be seen as objectionable: let us remember that Wittgenstein's dissolution of philosophical problems through reclassifying them as misuses of language constituted a very similar type of move. Sometimes, it is appropriate and productive to change the framework of analysis. Admittedly, the kinds of problems that astrology columns address are the kinds of personal or existential crises that science purportedly cannot help us with—problems such as how to prepare for a big meeting, or when it is the right time to ask someone out on a date. Popper admits that "[n]o amount of physics will tell a scientist that it is the right thing for him to construct a plough, or an aeroplane, or an atomic bomb. Ends must be adopted by him; and what he does *qua* scientist is only to construct means by which these ends can be realized."[158] Even scientists, presumably, need ethical guidance and political leadership in their lives. And where should these come from, if science is no guide? Mightn't the scientist, in his private hours, also find some plausibility in the metaphysics of the occult and in the words of the mystagogue?[159]

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[157] Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth*, p. 131.
[158] Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 359.
[159] Popper rightly observes that "…there is no rational method for determining the ultimate aim, but, if anything, some kind of intuition." (Popper, *Open Society*, p. 158) Surely this holds equally for the overarching goals that guide peoples lives, as well as the overarching goals that give society a unified

3.3: The Mystagogue as Authoritarian

It is when a contemplative mystic (who may nonetheless possess political ambitions) senses that her audience finds her claims to be plausible and/or trustworthy, and are greatly influenced by her, that the temptation to mystagoguery arises. If this temptation is strong enough, or if the mystic's mission is felt to be important enough (by herself and/or others), then the mystic turns from a largely epistemic figure into a largely political figure, the mystagogue.[160] Indeed, with the mystagogue's speech couched in vague evaluative terms, or image-laden metaphor, and with the justificatory bases of her beliefs necessarily obscured (or easily falsified, in the case of a faker), the mystagogue's conclusions may seem unassailable by rational means, and cloaked in supernatural authority (and this may, in fact, be exactly the intended effect). Listeners may perhaps be charmed or intimidated by the mystagogue, and in this way, conversing with mystagogues might lead to instances of the "bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" that Wittgenstein spoke of.[161]

The mystagogue is one who, like the utopian (whom she is sometimes confused with), hopes to create a better world (where "better" in this case may simply mean more accepting of her mystical knowledge or more respectful of mystical practices generally).

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paradigm to strive towards. One would hope that in both cases, the violence that Popper fears will be forthcoming from that lack of rational method can be avoided, or at least mitigated.

[160] Max Weber writes of the charismatic authority:

> If they recognize him, he is their master—so long as he knows how to maintain recognition through 'proving' himself. But he does not derive his 'right' from their will, in the manner of an election. Rather, the reverse holds: it is the *duty* of those to whom he addresses his mission to recognize him as their charismatically qualified leader.
> [Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, p. 20]

This is very nearly identical to the picture of the mystagogue that has been painted by many theorists—an irrational political figure whose conduct and level of success is not rationally, but rather charismatically, determined.

As noted above, when the mystagogue addresses her students or disciples, she can only refer to the extraordinary or supernatural nature of her mystical experience and (possibly) resultant knowledge as the basis of her political authority, and thus her recommendations or commands ostensibly issue from a dimension, state, or entity that is transcendent in some regard. Audiences may surrender to such "dictates from beyond" primarily as the result of extending blind trust to the mystagogue, and dogmatically ignoring all epistemic instincts that tend towards doubt.

The most certain route to the suppression of doubt is a rigorous program of indoctrination, wherein the "basic assumption[s] ha[ve] already been established" by a system of propaganda.[162] Adorno, for one, sees such a system of propaganda at work in the seemingly innocuous act of reading one's horoscope in the newspaper. He claims that "such messages combine irrationality (in as much as they aim at blind acceptance and presuppose unconscious anger in the consumers) and rationality (in as much as they deal with more or less practical everyday problems for which they pretend to offer the most helpful answer)" into a kind of "…'pseudo-rationality,' [a] twilight zone between reason and unconscious urges".[163] Reading one's horoscope, (or having one's palm read, etc.), is seen as a primer for irrational modes of thought because one disengages one's critical faculties during such activities, and trusts that the mystical diviner is doing all the esoteric "work" for oneself. Adorno complains that because "the mechanics of the astrological system are never divulged and the readers are presented with only the alleged results of astrological reasoning in which the reader does not

[161] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 109.
[162] Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Montréal: CBC Enterprises, 1989), p. 48.
[163] Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth*, pp. 38–39.

participate",[164] the reader has no choice but to either passively accept the astrologer's advice, or to disregard it entirely. This breeds a "with me or against me" attitude which is the beginning of a break with rational political attitudes, and a towards a social milieu wherein intellectual sloth is rewarded by incrementally increasing degrees of irrational reinforcement.

Like a contemporary Wizard of Oz, Adorno's astrologer-authoritarian (surely an exaggerated bogeyman, but nonetheless troubling) cannot afford to let her reader in on her techniques of divination, for fear of showing how subjective and threadbare the grounds of her knowledge actually are, and thus politically disempowering herself. "Pulling back the curtain", so to speak, and permitting frank discourse with her adherents, could lead only to their utter disenchantment with her methods. Ironically enough, the promise of eventually being "let in" to the source of mystical knowledge is one of the most potent sources of the mystagogue's appeal to her followers, who aspire to be "treated as one of the elite who deserve to know the lurid mysteries hidden from outsiders."[165] The mystagogue, then, can only maintain her hold on an audience insofar as she can keep them interested in what she says, but not so interested that she is pressed to reveal any of her secrets.

The mystagogue, because her knowledge is beyond the reach of epistemic verifiability or falsifiability, lacks a system of epistemic accountability and moderation outside of the trust of others. Because of this fact, theoretically there is nothing that can function to keep her knowledge from transmuting into authoritarian claims, except her audience's withdrawal of their trust and support. The politics of the mystagogue are all or nothing—either we believe her claims or we do not…in the absence of proof we

[164] Ibid, p. 36.

must take them, or leave them, on the criteria of trust discussed previously, or in the absence of clear indication from these, little more than our gut feelings. Thus politically, the mystagogue either succeeds completely, or fails completely, in winning the faith of her audience—there is rarely a middle ground to retreat to. The binary political destiny of the mystagogue is either full concealment (mystification; political success), or full exposure (demystification; political failure). All of this political potential stands or falls on whether her audience generally trusts or distrusts her words.

[165] Ibid, p. 164.

Conclusion

The End of Intellectual Heroism:

Saying the Ineffable

Wittgenstein writes of private language that "[w]e as it were turned a knob which looked as if it could be used to turn on some part of the machine; but it was a mere ornament, not connected with the mechanism at all."[166] I have tried to argue throughout this work that the 'knob' of private language should be reattached to the conceptual mechanisms of philosophy; for it is obvious that political and metaphilosophical machinery are already being moved by the practical application of so-called 'ineffable' knowledge in the form of political mystagoguery. If we refuse to acknowledge its connection to our language-games, we cannot come to terms with it conceptually, nor expect to exert any control over it.

Although the mystic is allegedly unable to directly describe the source of her knowledge, she can (at least) express it indirectly in metaphorical terms—that is to say, she may express her mystical experiences in terms of other, more easily accessible, experiences that others can relate to. For an example of how metaphor may be typically deployed in a conversation between a mystic and a non-mystic, let us pick up Mr. B's conversation with Mr. A where it left off (in Chapter 2):

[166] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, § 270. In § 271, Wittgenstein continues: "Here I should like to say: a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism."

A: I had a mystical experience, wherein I saw the face of God.
B: Did he have a moustache?

Here Mr. B has made the mistake of taking Mr. A too literally, and (perhaps he has done so because) Mr. A has made the mistake of making his metaphor too concrete. The success of our coming to understand what the mystic has to tell us relies on giving her a charitable and open ear, plus a fair bit of interpretive luck, and an appropriate choice of metaphor on the mystic's part. Let us presume that the false start here did not ruffle either Mr. A or Mr. B, and that their conversation carried on in the following amicable fashion:

A: Well, there was no actual face *per se*. But it was *like* staring God in the face, if you can imagine such a thing. I felt a presence, and then it was like a bright light was turned on in my mind.

The mystic now makes his description less abstract, and so his listener is less prone to take him wrongly. Let us continue…

B: Was it like the sensation you get when you arrive at a state of greater mental clarity, or have a good idea?
A: No, it was more like when you stare at the sun and then, when you close your eyes, there is an equally bright afterimage that you can't ignore, try as you might. But I *felt* it more than saw it, or I "saw" it *by feeling it.*

This is perhaps the only instance of our being engaged in a productive discourse with Mr. A so far. He is groping here, trying the best he can to describe something that is, at its root, purportedly ineffable. A genuine effort is being made, for the first time, to describe the experience itself in good faith. This is Ortegean intellectual heroism at its finest. It is because there is no perfect language; no language that is capable of capturing the world in all of its nuances and ambiguity (and perhaps no persons capable of mastering such a language, were it conceptually possible for it to exist) that intellectual heroism is necessitated in this case. Lack of clarity is a regrettable feature of language use, but it is something that we can at least attempt to ameliorate.

And here we come to a most important point. Perhaps the reader has, throughout this work, noticed my lack of commitment to the concept of the ineffable. This is because I believe that the 'strictly ineffable' is a red herring—that there is nothing that is epistemically, conceptually, *a priori*, ineffable. Wittgenstein needs the ineffable to round out his ontology, the mystic needs the ineffable to evade unwanted socio-political scrutiny, and the mystagogue needs the ineffable to sustain her political influence. But what actually is non-contingently, conceptually ineffable? Here I would say nothing is. There are some things that are more difficult to say than others—the taste of a lemon, for example, is clearly more difficult to describe than the amount of money in a bank account—but *there is nothing that conceptually prevents us from attempting to describe what is difficult to describe*.[167] We are, perhaps, just being obscurantist when we call upon the ineffable to end a conversation that we believe will take too much effort to properly resolve. The mystical experience is, perhaps, the closest we can come to the descriptive limits of language. But this does not mean that the borders of what we currently take to be ineffable cannot be pushed back, over time, through the inventive employment of language. The mystic, here, serves the important function of challenging language to develop, to change, to adapt to novel human

[167] Here, Smart and I again part ways. He claims that:

> In saying that bliss or rapture is indescribable, it is not being claimed that it is very curious and unfamiliar, in the sense that it is very very *hard* to describe it, so hard that one cannot, as a matter of fact, succeed…[i]t would only be like this if there were some mental image which one had in attaining such a feeling of bliss. But…typically the mystic not only does not perceive his surroundings (does not, that is, have any 'external' perceptions), but does not have any mental images, and is not engaged in working out a problem, etc…
> [Smart, pp. 70–1]

To this I would respond that the mystical experience presumably 'starts off' in ordinary empirical experience—and so, there must be something comprehendible and describable in the process that leads to the blissful state…one must remember part of the journey to 'becoming blissful'. This, at least, can be recorded and analyzed. The same, presumably, is roughly possible for the blissful experience itself, and

experiences that need to be linguistically accounted for, if language is to satisfactorily serve its social function for which we use it.

The trick here is not to overly fetishize the intellectual heroism of the mystic experient, while at the same time retaining an appreciation of her unique and disadvantageous epistemic and socio-political predicament, which we may seek to improve. My aim is to avoid both extremes: to neither pauperize nor panegyrize the mystic, but to seek a middle road, one that retains respect for the mystic but refrains from her lionization. A remark by B. F. Skinner poignantly captures my sentiment: "We may mourn the passing of heroes but not the conditions which make for heroism. We can spare the self-made saint or sage as we spare the laundress on the river's bank struggling against fearful odds to achieve cleanliness."[168] Skinner is here talking about attempts to set up improved social conditions, not the dilemma of the mystic, nor the differing metaphilosophical approaches we considered earlier on in this work, although his words ring equally true for both of these as well. They reflect the manner in which I hope to dispose of our extremist stereotypes of the mystic. They also reveal that Ortega's picture of philosophy as "intellectual heroism", as well as the Wittgenstein-inspired picture of philosophy as "cleaning-lady" of the sciences, are ultimately disposable metaphilosophical paradigms generated by the limitations of language, breaths to be expelled from the lungs of philosophy once they have served their purpose. The limits of language can themselves be analyzed and stretched further and further into the realm of what was once considered "mystical" and ineffable. Intellectual barriers, and the heroism required to overcome them, are symptoms of

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the inevitable transitioning from the blissful experience back to the realm of ordinary empirical experience that must follow, as well.

epistemic inefficiency and wasted effort; not something, in the end, to be glorified.[169] Heroism, thus understood, is a simply a necessary step towards a post-heroic world wherein heroism is no longer required.

Additionally, political benefits may redound to us when human experiences (of which mystical experiences are presumably a subset) are described in a satisfactory manner. Others can relate to the well-described experience, and say "Yes, just so!" or "I felt like that once, too." This is, in a roundabout way, indirect proof of other minds: that an experience that I once thought to be unique to myself alone, turns out to actually also partially constitute someone else's experiential life as well; and thus we two are akin in an important regard. The opposite can occur, too, of course—others may find our experiences to be alienating, threatening, or nauseating to themselves, in which case we may have made a political enemy by sharing our experiences with them. Both of these reactions—attraction and repulsion—are, however, preferable to a political or epistemic solipsism wherein a monologic experient puts sole value on her personal experiences and worldviews, remaining unmoved by those of others. The mystic, to avoid the charge of solipsism, must at least attempt to give an account of the exotic experiential states she encounters, so that others can weigh the plausibility of their accounts. Again, we can see the role of the mystic as experiential pioneer in a positive light, and not as a threat to be preemptively discredited. In turn, we must not

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[168] B. F. Skinner, "Freedom and the Control of Men", in *Utopia*. George Kateb, ed. (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), p. 73.

[169] Skinner, "Freedom and the Control of Men", p. 70: "We might say that the child whose education has been skillfully planned has been deprived of the right to intellectual heroism." On the face of it, such complaints are unjustified, unless we wish to argue that additional obstacles and impediments to education are good in and of themselves (and perhaps these might be seen by some radical anti-Skinnerians as more important than the content of the education itself). But, as Skinner rhetorically puts it, can we reasonably "reject such a system on the grounds that in making all students excellent it has made them alike?" (Skinner, "Freedom and the Control of Men", p. 69)

unnecessarily foist discourse upon the mystic, thus disadvantaging her or encroaching upon her sphere of privacy.

We may respectfully attempt to invite the mystic to dialogue, in order to come closer to understanding the supra-linguistic basis of her purported knowledge, and even make some progress in this direction, though we may never arrive at the ideal destination of full mystical understanding. In this way, we may come to eventually normalize what we now take to be 'supra-normal' human experience without maligning its disciples. Again, we must consider the possibility that the mystic might not actually want to be understood. This is acceptable, as long as the mystic does not claim that mystical knowledge counts for more than other types of knowledge do.[170]

What must, crucially, be remembered, is that no archetype of knowledge acquisition is *a priori* 'better' than any other.[171] Popper concurs here, that "there are all kinds of sources of our knowledge; but *none has authority.*"[172] This dictum applies equally to scientific knowledge, and its supposed superiority to mystical knowledge on the grounds of its purported objectivity.

[170] Smart calls it "jumping scales" when one technique of knowledge acquisition is claimed to be superior to all others—lending extra weight to the knowledge claims generated within its specialized framework, wherein these takes on an exaggerated significance, and then treating them as if they were of universal value—even in contexts wherein such knowledge claims may be inapplicable or regarded as nonsense (Smart, p. 134).

[171] Mysticism might thus fruitfully coexist alongside of scientism and utopianism, so long as none of these were held to be a universally applicable epistemological or political system, with their knowledge claims ranged hierarchically over all others; so long as no 'scale-jumping' is attempted, in other words. Occasional crossovers between the various archetypes of knowledge acquisition might even be expected under such circumstances, and I see no reason to dismiss out of hand the notion that novel types of knowledge might emerge from such hybridizations. For example, a utopic-scientistic blend of politico-epistemic approach seems like a fruitful combination that would not be theoretically inconsistent. Ideal thinking sets the goal, in this case, and practical technology delivers us there. (This seems to be instantiated, for example, in the Skinnerian line of theorizing.)

[172] Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 24.

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