

The Mystic - What Is S/he Like?

View of God, Scripture and the Church of the Mystic group

There are two general types of Mystic. There are those who do participate in traditional organized religion, and those who do not. (We will refer to those who do not as "secular mystics.")

But when this person does choose a church or a religion, s/he does so in a way very different from that of the Faithful. The Faithful will not see joining a church as any type of choice at all. Rather it will seem to the Faithful that he has suddenly seen the real truth and he will feel more or less compelled to follow that path from that point forward.

The Mystic however will be able to see that any given church or religious group is just one way among many to accomplish his aims. And generally the aim in joining a church for the Mystic is either a way to approach "god" or a way of finding community.

Whether the Mystic participates in a traditional religion or not, it can be very difficult to distinguish him from a member of the Faithful - as they sound very much the same. Both will use the word "god" and "faith," etc.

Although you cannot easily hear the difference as you listen to them speak, the main thing that distinguishes the Mystic from the Faithful is that the Mystic understands all the religious concepts in a metaphorical, versus a literal sense.

"God" for this group is not literally a separate bearded old guy in the sky who judges our every move. Undoubtedly, there are about as many different definitions of the word "god" as there are Mystics. This is because reportedly god for these people is either a personal entity, part of their own being, or perhaps something of which they themselves are a part - or else god is something less personal - and somehow tied up with the the incomprehensible mystery of the universe. Either way, it would still be something of which the he himself is a part, so I guess it amounts to the same thing.

In any case, the "god" of the Mystic is not judgmental, does not get angry or need to punish him for wrongdoing. S/he or it does not demand worship, does not impose rules and in short, does not require any particular type of behavior from humans. This type of god does not have traits we typically attribute to humans: is not anthropomorphic.

A Mystic may say God is good or God wants them to do this or that - but s/he would not be referring literally to a being that is separate from themselves and separate from the universe.

The same idea would apply to scripture. The Mystic may read scripture, quote from it, live by it. But still he is not speaking literally.

If the theorists who support the religious stages are to be believed, before reaching this stage a person must have already passed through the Faithful stage and spent some time in the rational stage. This is hard to prove based on the stories I am collecting for my book. These people may make some mention of a period of being separated somehow from whichever church at some point in their lives, but they never seem to have as well-developed and definite a "rational" stage to report as those who could be considered Rationals.

For the Mystic, a good part of the beauty of their faith is in the search. S/he wants to approach the Mystery is not so big on having final definitive answers. For this reason, a person at this stage is not prone to evangelizing: s/he would not want to impose a partial answer from any given point in time upon anyone else because s/he is never finished contemplating.

One of the biggest points to understand about the Mystic is that s/he is not in need of certainty - is not afraid of the unknown.

Locus of Authority of the Mystic Group

While the Faithful will cling literally to the rules of his church because he fears without them all hell would break loose, the Mystic has no such fears.

If there are rules that do not seem to apply in a given situation, the s/he will feel free to go against them. M. Scott Peck* used the term "letter of the law" to describe the way a Faithful person will follow rules. Even if the rule does not fit well in a given instance, the Faithful person will still follow it almost mindlessly.

In contrast, the Mystic will follow the "spirit of the law." If the rule does not fit a given situation, she will feel free to amend or ignore it, depending upon the individual circumstance.

While the Rational will look to themselves as the source of authority and will tend to take personal responsibility for everything themselves, the Mystic will share responsibility. The Mystic will tend to be aware of some inexplicit order of the universe - the way things are supposed to be - and will seek to follow that. He will "allow" and follow what is supposed to happen rather than attempt to fight it.

And how does the s/he learn what is supposed to happen? Well, not by listening to any preacher or outside authority. Rather it is something s/he feels within him or herself - something s/he just knows somehow from within his own being.

In this sense, a metaphorical one of course, it can be said that in making personal decisions, the Mystic seeks to align himself with the will of God. Or the Secular Mystic will say he wants to respect some unknown order of the universe. Because both are speaking metaphorically, they are saying the same thing.

Needs of the Mystic Group

A major characterizing trait of this group is that he does not need certainty. Unlike the Faithful who does want to be given firm answers about what to believe, or the Rational who wants to be free to find his own answers but still indeed does want answers, the Mystic would prefer to keep searching. In fact, for this group, the beauty is in the search.

The Mystic does seek unity though. S/he wants to see all people as one, or the universe as one, all part of the same thing.

What is not clear is when you hear the Mystic say "we all are One" whether he means it literally (how *could* this be??) or figuratively. The figurative sense is easy to understand if you interpret that as meaning that what is done against anyone in the universe hurts us all and what is done to help anyone helps us all.

As for the meaning of any possible literal interpretation of this Oneness, I would be delighted to have anyone from this group write in and clarify what is meant by that, or how it is possible!

In his search for Unity, the Mystic will approach other humans in search of a feeling of community. S/he will want to be part of what is going on; S/he will want to feel connected. This desire for connection may be a stronger reason for joining a church than the beliefs. But then again, if s/he believes everything in the universe is connected, then connecting with humans is part of his beliefs.

Worldview of the Mystic Group = Universal

If people in the Rational Group are *worldcentric*, the Mystics hold an even broader worldview. They can be said to be *universal* or perhaps, as Ken Wilber says *kosmocentric*. (I am not at all sure why he spells that with a "k.")

But in general Mystics will feel that harming animals is detrimental to our own existence (*of course* it is!) And harming the environment is detrimental. (*of course*, again!) In the feeling that everyone and everything is connected s/he will include everyone and everything in his concern. And everyone and everything gets equal consideration, not just *my group* like the Faithful or *just me!* like the Lawless.