

the book a disjointed feeling. The section on Troeltsch, while necessary to the study of these theologians, may have been better if integrated into other parts of the book. In short, *Niebuhr, Hromadka, Troeltsch, and Barth* is a thorough study of only Hromadka, Niebuhr and Barth.

While this book does contain several misspelled names, including one in the title, and this is hard to overlook, I would recommend this book as a resource, even if not as an addition to one's private collection. Nishitani does have a good grasp of the relevant issues and admirably weighs these three theologians.

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*Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness*. By Robert K. C. Forman. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999. ISBN 0-7914-4170-9. Pp.x+214.

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For those interested in the academic study of mysticism this is a significant book. It invites a re-examination of both the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the field, and this in at least five ways. Most importantly, it constitutes a rare attempt to challenge what has become the received view that mystical experience is necessarily "constructed" or "contextual" in nature. The author's aim is clear: "to finally close the door on the possibility that one can assume without further justification that mysticism is constructed and...open the door to much broader and more far-reaching debates on both the deeper character of mysticism, and on what mysticism has to show us about the nature of human consciousness and life" (ix-x). With this book Robert Forman makes a strong case against constructivism. Secondly, this book is also unusual in attempting to integrate both eastern and western philosophical approaches into the investigation of the nature of mystical experiences. In this Forman proves overly ambitious. More successfully, this book incorporates the author's first person testimony in tracing out the nature of mystical experience. Careful not to overstep the bounds of reason in citing his own experiences, the author effectively expands the boundaries of academic writing in this area. Equally bold, but inconclusive, is Forman's proposal for a new epistemological category which he calls "knowledge by identity," to account for the alleged noetic quality of mystical experience. Finally, with this book the author announces a new and useful twofold taxonomy of mystical experience: the "Pure Consciousness Event" and the "Dualistic Mystical State,"

Forman is at his strongest when comparing and analyzing the experiential accounts of diverse mystics. He begins by providing some persuasive parallel descriptions of experiences described in the *Upanishads*, the writings of Meister Eckhart, a Zen abbot, a young novice of Siddha yoga, and in his own personal history. All seem to have undergone a peculiar kind of transient event that is simultaneously without content and yet also wakeful or conscious. The subjects are unable to recall anything about the occurrence except, perhaps, that

they were “there,” present throughout. Thus on empirical grounds Forman establishes a *prima facie* case for the existence of a “Pure Consciousness Event,” a conscious occurrence said to be objectless and therefore non-constructed.

The author next goes on to tackle the arguments of Steven Katz, the most well-known proponent of the view that all mystical experience is constructed out of the learned beliefs and expectations of the mystic’s tradition. Forman’s arguments here are forceful, and in my view, decisive. Most importantly, he demonstrates the inappropriateness of assuming a model of sensory experience when analyzing experiences that are said to be without an object. If these mystical occurrences are indeed objectless, they would be significantly different in kind from sensory experiences. Constructivists provide no plausible account of how the constructive process is supposed to occur—which beliefs are involved in which kinds of experiences and so forth. In addition, Katz is found guilty of poor reasoning, in the form of the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Just because beliefs and expectations that roughly match the content of an experience precede the occurrence of that experience (which in any case is not granted with respect to a contentless experience), it does not follow that they cause it. Forman argues that Katz’s conception of mysticism is reductionistic. Constructivists claim that the cart of a mystic’s experience always follows the horse of her beliefs. But in certain mystical experiences it seems the “experience” is utterly unlike anything previously conceived and it is the beliefs that follow. These arguments demand a response from the constructivist camp.

Having forcefully dealt with Katz, Forman unfortunately goes on to attempt to defeat as many potential opponents as possible. Thus he devotes Chapter Four to the thought of Kant, Brentano, and Husserl, and Chapter Five to Paramārtha, whose views he takes to support his own. These chapters are the weakest in the book. Because they are so brief (fourteen and ten pages respectively) and clearly driven by his anti-constructivist agenda, they inevitably contain inaccuracies. What is interesting about them is that they constitute an attempt to incorporate both western and eastern philosophical argumentation into our understanding of mystical experience. Many other authors have compared descriptions of mystical experiences from diverse cultural traditions, but few have ventured as widely as Forman in trying to integrate the insights of philosophers into their interpretation. *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness* is sprinkled with references to philosophers like Hume, Moore, Ryle, Wittgenstein, John Searle and Terence Penelhum. The problem is that Forman too often puts his heart before the course of proper study and ends up doing an injustice to the thinker whose ideas he employs. In this review I will focus on Forman’s readings of Kant and Paramārtha, indicating the most obvious difficulty of each.

Attempting to deduce the categories as the universal and necessary conditions of the possibility of human knowledge, Immanuel Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason famously defined the notion of “object” as “that in the concept of which the manifold of an intuition is united” (B137). Here the ontological status of the intentional object is not at issue, so whether the object is an empirical object of the senses or a merely subjective representation is irrelevant.

For Kant it is basic that not all objects are sensory: geometrical images known *a priori*, and dreams, for example, are both included in his notion of “object.” It is therefore misleading when Forman begins this chapter by suggesting that Kant is solely concerned with “experience of objects, indeed sensory objects” (57). Kant attempts to demonstrate that reference to *any* intentional object or objective state of affairs presupposes the application of the categories. Thus Forman is also mistaken when he implies that Kant’s thought leaves room for the possibility of a non-intentional form of “experience” not subject to the categories. Kant’s arguments, Forman writes, “do not apply to any experience whatsoever, but, as Kant himself clearly recognizes, concern our experiences of objects” (62). The problem with this is that Kant does not employ the term “experience” in any other manner. Kant states: “All synthesis...even that which renders perception possible, is subject to the categories; and since *experience is knowledge by means of connected perceptions, the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience*, and are therefore valid *a priori* for all objects of experience” (B161, my emphasis). Thus to suggest that an objectless consciousness might be called an “experience” is not possible in Kantian terms. It may be, however, that Forman simply wants to demonstrate that Kant’s philosophy admits the possibility of objectless consciousness, and then proceed to call this “experience” in a non-Kantian sense. If this is indeed what Forman intends, a far more detailed textual analysis would be needed to establish such an unlikely reading (beginning, perhaps, with Kant’s rare allusions to an “intellectual” or “non-sensible” intuition, at e.g., A250-251, B307). On the other hand again, if Forman wants to show that Kant is somehow wrong in holding non-categorical experience (or consciousness) to be impossible, it is incumbent upon him to show us where in Kant’s arguments the mistakes are made. Again a much deeper study would be called for.

Similar considerations apply to Forman’s brief discussion Paramārtha’s Chuan shih lun, a commentary on Vasubandhu’s *Trīṃśikā*. The author attempts to make the Buddhist meditative state of *nirodhasamāpatti* (attainment of cessation) do the work for his Pure Consciousness Event, in virtue of the fact that in it no object is present before the mind. He further implies that Paramārtha’s views of this attainment may be taken as representative of Mahāyāna Buddhism as a whole (53), never once mentioning the standard Buddhist understanding that “cessation” here means precisely the cessation of *consciousness*. Consciousness is thought to cease along with the cessation of even the subtlest mental activity. While it is true that in Yogācāra thought the concept of the *Ālayavijñāna* (store-consciousness) may allow some scope to argue for a special kind of “non-intentional consciousness,” by Forman’s own account this store-consciousness “temporarily ceases functioning” in this particular meditative attainment (91). How then can we move from assertions regarding it to assertions regarding the Pure Consciousness Event? Furthermore, to imply an equivalence of this unusual meditative state with mystical experience also seems misleading (90-92). In what sense is such a state an “experience”? These very problems have been sensitively explored by Paul Griffiths in “Pure Consciousness and Indian Buddhism,” an article that appeared in a col-

lection edited by Forman himself, *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (Oxford: OUP, 1990). It is not clear why Griffiths' arguments were not taken more deeply into consideration by Forman here.

To be fair, it seems that the difficulties faced by the author are in part terminological and that he is not unaware of them. After all, the Pure Consciousness Event is said to be an "event," not an "experience." But might not one equally well wonder in what sense it is a "consciousness" if one cannot recall anything about it? On the other hand, merely calling it a "pure event" would be so non descriptive as to be vacuous. Indeed, why not just call it an "event"? Thus the difficulties in discussing such occurrences are enormous. It seems insane to try to clarify their nature by parachuting Kant, Brentano, Husserl and Paramārtha into the discussion. A study of this kind would best examine only one philosophical system, providing clear definitions and explanations of key terminology before undertaking an examination of how "mystical experiences" might possibly fit in.

Other instances of hasty and agenda-driven interpretation regularly appear in this book. When discussing Hume's famous introspective search for the self, for example, Forman has it that Hume is searching for "consciousness itself" rather than the self (112-113). This misreading is particularly revealing of Forman's own Advaita Vedāntin bias: the term "self" is simply assumed to be equivalent to "consciousness," for example (153). Despite these difficulties this work contains much of interest. I mentioned above that Forman offers readers a new epistemological category to consider i.e. "knowledge by identity, which he contrasts with the more familiar and dualistic categories of "knowledge about" and "knowledge by acquaintance." Forman's "knowledge by identity" deserves serious discussion. One of the ways this form of knowledge is said to be distinguishable from knowledge by acquaintance is its alleged non-intentionality. One knows X by virtue of *being* X. I know I am conscious because I am conscious. Knowledge by acquaintance, on the other hand, is knowledge of an object that I have, but which is directly experienced without labelling. Thus the unarticulated presence of a particular colour sensation and fragrance might be thought to be indubitable in a way that knowing "a fragrant red rose" is not. But one may wonder whether knowledge by identity is truly distinguishable from knowledge by acquaintance or whether it is, rather, a special self-reflexive instance of it. Some sensory atomists (e.g. Condillac, Kant?) have considered basic sensations of this kind to actually be modifications of one's mind and thus in an important sense identical to the experiencer. One might also note that sensations thus conceived were considered to not refer to any object beyond themselves. Thus in a philosophically important sense, they might be said to be "non-intentional." This could be a promising angle to take in future discussions concerning mysticism and epistemology.

Forman closes with a discussion of what he calls "the Dualistic Mystical State, a state of mind wherein the mystic operates on two spiritual levels at once, in the world but not of it. The fascination of this state lies in its apparent permanence. Once "awakening" has occurred the mystic inwardly and continuously abides in this awakened awareness, even while outwardly carrying

on with daily life. To make his case he interestingly compares the experiences of the modern mystic Bernadette Roberts, Hui Neng, himself and Meister Eckhart, discussing all in light of Sartre's theory of consciousness and the notion of *wu-nien* (non-thought) as found in the Hui Neng's *Platform Sutra*. As before, while the descriptions of the mystical experiences are deeply suggestive, the treatment of the philosophical ideas involved in explaining them proves far too cursory to provide intellectual satisfaction.

Nevertheless, *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness* may well turn out to be a work of enduring importance. Of particular value are the author's arguments against constructivism and his two-fold typology of Pure Consciousness Events and Dualistic Mystical States. Like mystical experience itself, this book is in many ways an anomaly. It is sure to generate discussion.

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*Once and Future Myths: the Power of Ancient Stories in Modern Times*. By Phil Cousineau. Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 2001. ISBN 1-5732-4146-6 Pp. xvi+342.

Phil Cousineau, long-time student of the famous mythologist Joseph Campbell, has written a book about the power mythology has in the modern world.

The book opens with a rather lovely introduction to the concept of myth and the place myth has always held in day to day lives. Cousineau magically interweaves stories from his own childhood with the novels of James Joyce and the music of Miles Davis. He brings the heroes of modern day culture to life as he passionately weaves their tales into a larger tapestry of an all-encompassing mythology. He makes mythology relevant, something for which Joseph Campbell was famous, and he points to how mythology is a constantly evolving experience. The mythology of ancient Greece need not be our only reference to great stories. Mythology is constantly being recreated, in our own times just as in times past. He is therefore not only arguing that ancient mythology continues to be relevant, but that mythology is not always ancient. The book therefore opens with a hopeful and exciting new look at the way we tell stories.

The problem however, is that beyond the introduction, there really is not much substance to the book. What could have developed into a fascinating comparison of modern myths with ancient ones, really turned into an excuse to write an autobiography. Most of the book consists of descriptions of important events in Cousineau's life, be it touching moments with his father, wise words from Joseph Campbell, or insights from his relationship with his son. Of course, there is nothing wrong with autobiographical writing, but if Cousineau's intention was to write his autobiography, he simply should have done so. Instead, what we are presented with is a book that does not really have the courage to be what it is, and thus is not really anything at all. It does