

ARE YOU A MYSTIC BUT DON'T KNOW IT?

Have you ever wondered, “Am I a mystic?” Chances are probably not. Mysticism holds a very loose definition, which can often be complicated, confusing, and nearly impossible to express with mere words. In Mysticism, direct knowledge of spiritual truth or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience. Ultimate reality is something that is supreme, final, and the fundamental power in all reality. Unlike Christianity, Islam or Judaism, Mysticism is not rooted in faith, principle, dogma, or even belief. This is because you don't “believe” in Mysticism. Instead, Mystics are born through their own experiences.

For mystics, the world is expansive and magical yet also intricately and undoubtedly connected. Mystics must possess a certain frame of mind when viewing the world and have an understanding temperament.

So if there's no clear definition or outlined boundaries, how can you answer “Am I a Mystic?” Here are 10 subtle signs and by the end, you may know your answer.

1. You value experiences above all else

Mystics tend to steer clear of strict doctrines and principles. Because of their innate intuition, they have a high level of trust in their own morality and inner self. While they are driven to connect with the ultimate reality, they feel it must be on a deeply personal basis that can only be

achieved through their own experiences. Mystics still turn to others for perspective and opinions, however, these will not be their main and only source of truth.

2. You question existence

Why am I here? Why are we all here? These are common questions that haunt a Mystic's mind. While Mystics have the ability to see the connected strings behind every action, it does not mean that they are able to fully comprehend how the universe works and why. Because of their heightened senses, Mystics have a natural curiosity about the physical and spiritual world.

3. You are comfortable with uncertainty.

Mystics understand that there is a plan behind Every Action in The Universe, and therefore trust that every action has purpose, even if they don't know what the next moment will bring. Mystics also trust in themselves and their connection to the universe that they will be able to interpret any signs and act accordingly. While they are still naturally curious, Mystics have no driving desire to force their future.

4. You value intuition

Mystics rely on knowledge, language and physical senses the same as others do. However, their intuitive perceptions offer a deeper form of insight. Mystics trust in their own intuition and value similar intuitive traits in others.

5. You are uncomfortable with spiritual hierarchies

Tenuous rituals or traditions have no place in the the world of spirituality for Mystics. They do not believe that there is only one path or correct way to experience divinity. While not everyone can experience the ultimate reality, Mystics understand that every person has a unique and impenetrable perception of life, and therefore the ability to experience a unique divinity to some extent.

6. You have your own set of rules

Mystics feel a connection to every living thing and therefore are able to look beyond what may be socially accepted. Mystics have an innate trust in their own morality and intuition and are guided by their experience, rather than leaders or society. This can often make them spiritual or even political rebels.

7. You value internal growth

To Mystics, rituals and traditions are meant to trigger internal insight and transformation, not to appease a higher power. This is another reason why Mystics often feel uncomfortable with structured religions. Mystics feel that personal growth toward the universe's ultimate plan must come from within. It cannot be dictated or ordered. Mystics feel a responsibility to help others to find their way, however, they cannot tell them what is right and wrong.

8. You believe you are a conduit for power, not the source

Mystics possess an understanding that every living thing must come and go, and that in the grand scheme, they are simply one wave in an ocean. Because of their connection with everyone and everything, Mystics are often humble and more concerned with understanding and emotion than with power. They see their insights into the universe as a borrowed gift - bestowed upon them by something greater, but ultimately temporary.

9 You believe love is the source of life

Similar to Number 8, Mystics believe that love powers everything. The people and experiences that we love in our own lives are merely a small reflection of a larger, all-encompassing love. Love is not something that originates in you, rather it is something that flows through you and every other being.

1. You don't know everything

And you don't think you know everything. Mystics acknowledge that the universe is infinite and mysterious and is far too complex for the human mind to fully comprehend. They don't know everything and they know they don't know everything. Mystics enjoy reaching out, learning new things and hearing new perspectives. They trust in the universe's plan and see their journey as one of understanding, not preaching.

To help you further understand Mysticism, I will read my own precis of the Reverend R.M.Fewkes sermon, entitled "Are You a UU Mystic?" given June 6, 1999.

In the late 19th century, Francis Greenwood Peabody, who was on the faculty of the Harvard Divinity School, went abroad to study at the University of Halle in Germany. He was greeted by the then famous German Professor Tholuck, who when he learned that Peabody was Unitarian, and the son of a Unitarian minister, declared, "Ah, you are an American Unitarian. They are the true mystics."

Professor Tholuck, no doubt, was referring to the pervasive influence that New England Transcendentalism had upon Unitarian thought and leaders in America. Emerson, who had been hailed as the first true American philosopher, advocated a kind of nature mysticism based in part on the writings of Hindu and Buddhist mystics. His concept of the Oversoul is indistinguishable from the Hindu notion of the human soul, or Atman, being one with the divine soul of the universe, or Brahman. He talked about becoming "a transparent eyeball" to the currents of the Universal Being manifest in nature and in the human mind. Even Henry David Thoreau, a nature mystic in his own right, was enamored with Eastern thought. In his essay on Walden Pond he made the following notation:

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmological philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem

puny and trivial, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! There I meet the servant of Brahma come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.

“Ah, you are an American Unitarian. They are the true mystics.” What would you think if someone said that to you today? Would you be comfortable owning the label of a true mystic? Can An Unitarian Universalist today be a mystic? Can a mystic be an Unitarian Universalist? I certainly hope so because I have considered myself a UU mystic throughout the more than 30 years of my ministry. Yes, but aren’t Unitarians, at least, the old Universalists may be an exception, too wedded to a rational approach to religion to be take in by the nonrational unproved claims of the mystics? Not necessarily, because, you see, there are many types of mysticism. By no means are they all contrary to a rational understanding of the world.

There is virtually no religious system that does not include a mystical tradition --the Kabbalah in Judaism, Sufism in Islam, Hindu yoga, Buddhist meditation, Gregorian chant Quaker silence, shamanic journeying, native vision quests, and U.U. Transcendentalist philosophy. Mysticism takes many forms and expressions - nature mysticism, soul-mysticism, ethical-mysticism. God-mysticism, the mysticism of love and service, knowledge and understanding. Most mystics speak a common language of personal experience and union with the divine, the all, or the holy.

....Mystical experience is often associated in the popular mind with the irrational or fanciful, and not connected with the real world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mystical experience has to do with a sense of unity and connection with reality--with nature, with people, with the web of life, with the soul, and with God. Nothing could be more natural than the experience of oneness with all that is. Science tells us we are part and parcel of nature through an evolutionary process manifest in natural law. Mysticism tells us that we are one with the whole of being and that our separateness is a transitory illusion. Science uncovers the truth of our connection with the natural world through reason and analysis. Mysticism comes to the truth of our interconnectedness through intuition and experience. They are two sides of the one coin of reality --the outer and the inner. The mystical and the rational are one. Reason, we should remember is both analytical and synthetic. We analyze, decipher and test the reality we encounter in order to figure out how it all hangs together. It's like drawing a picture by first deciphering the dots of reality, and then we take the next step by connecting the dots. Both scientist and the mystic are engaged in the business of trying to connect the dots of reality, the first from within, the latter from without.

Lawrence LeShan, a contemporary psychologist, wrote a book a number of years ago, on "The Medium, Mystic and the Physicist". What LeShan set out to do, he thought, was to debunk the former and enhance the latter. What he found instead was that mediums and psychics and physi-

cists (at least the so-called new physicists) speak a common language when it comes to describing the connections between human consciousness and the ultimate field reality or ground of being that links each to all. In fact, he collected statements from mediums, mystics and physicists and asked them to describe reality as they felt, and intuited it to be. What he found was that they speak a common language of unity and connection between human subjects and the world at large.

Human beings, LeShan says, are capable of functioning in three modes or systems of reality:

Sensory Reality, Clairvoyant Reality, and Transpsychic Reality. Sensory Reality is the world of discrete entities and the separation of subject and object. We are all distinct from one another and never the twain shall meet. In the Clairvoyant Reality we intuit and sense our connection to one another and can feel the life force, the prana, the Tao, the chi or ki, that flows within us and between us. It can be used and channeled to foster healing and to restore balance and harmony to body and soul. In the Transpsychic Reality all distinctions cease and we are one with one another and all that is

Years ago, Harvard Professor, William James, wrote a classic study on the "Varieties of Religious Experience", in which he stated that the deeper levels of human consciousness made manifest in mystical and telepathic states "forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality. No account of the universe in its totality", he concludes. "can be final which leaves these other forms of

consciousness disregarded” . James’ insights are being claimed anew by those who seek to link the notion of an Unified Field Theory of reality, put forward by modern physicists, with the concept of Cosmic Consciousness described in varying ways by the mystics of the world. Cosmic Consciousness is the apprehension through intuition of the entire universe as one elemental field of Being, from which all things derive and are interconnected. Or as Emerson put it, we are part and parcel of God, though we do not always know it or sense it.

...Unitarian Universalism is grounded in a mystical sense of connection of each to all, and all to each. Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes refers to “the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part”, and then goes on to talk about the “direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.” If that is not a mystical statement then I do not know what is. The old German Professor Tholuck was right. We are the true mystics. It is time for us to reclaim and own our Transcendentalist mystical heritage. It is both the source of our sense of connection to the whole of being, and of our social conscience that recognizes our connection to one another in justice and love, and our responsibility to the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.”

That ends my precis of the reverend Fewkes’ talk. I hope it helped clarify some of the aspects of mysticism.

The mystic, William Blake wrote, “ To see a world in a grain of sand and Heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand and Eternity in an hour.”

So are you a Mystic and didn't know it?