

Mysticism

A. Central Doctrine

1. All the major religions have elements of mysticism.
2. The distinguishing feature is the “mystical experience”
 - a. Nirvana
 - b. Enlightenment
 - c. The experience of the Holy
 - d. Satori
 - e. Kensho

B. Distinguishing Features

Mystical experiences in all culture, times and religions share certain characteristics

1. **Ineffability:** Mystics claim their experience is impossible to describe with words.
2. **Universal Oneness:** The all-encompassing feeling that everything is interconnected and unified. This is meant in the most pervasive all-inclusive sense imaginable.
3. **Timelessness:** Time is experienced as “eternity in the Now”: not in the linear fashion of past, present, and future.
4. **Loss of Self:** Ego boundaries melt away and the sense of being distinct and separate disappears. The self and the world become one.
5. **Passivity:** One cannot decide to have a mystical experience; it floods over a person unexpectedly. Consequently, the individual is passive in experiencing this altered state of consciousness.
6. **Fragility:** The experience is extremely “delicate” - as soon as the individual tries to intellectually understand, conceptualize or describe it,
7. **Emotionally Flat:** There is neither depression nor euphoria present in the experience, it is emotionally neutral; however, the emotional response one has to the “insight” acquired can be overwhelming.
8. **Ah, ha!** Oftentimes there is a sudden “hyper Gestalt” of understanding such that things (e.g. the meaning of life) that seemed absolutely incomprehensible now seem crystal clear and simple .
9. **Tremendous Mystery:** Often the individual is utterly overwhelmed and terrified of the experience yet is nevertheless drawn to it.
10. **Fascinating Mystery:** There is an irresistible fascination with the experience despite the feeling of being overwhelmed