

Science, Mysticism and Psychical Research

Science, Mysticism and Psychical Research:

*The Revolutionary Synthesis
of Michael Whiteman*

By

John Poynton

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-8019-1

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8019-0

For Sibyl

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FOREWORD: MICHAEL WHITEMAN, A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL

It is an honour for me to write this Foreword to Professor John Poynton's book *Science, Mysticism and Psychical Research: The Revolutionary Synthesis Of Michael Whiteman*.

This is because, besides Professor Poynton, I may be one of the few to have had significant contact with Professor Whiteman in the discipline of this book's focus, namely Psychical Research, or research into consciousness. This I was able to do, firstly, during the early 1980s as erstwhile President of the South African Society for Psychical Research (SASPR) and Editor of the *Parapsychological Journal of South Africa (PJSA)*. Secondly, after relocating to the United States in 1986, I would continue to visit Dr. Whiteman at his Cape Town home, and interchange ideas.

I can write objective information about the genius of Michael Whiteman, but John Poynton has documented that beautifully in this remarkable book. So, for example, Prof. Whiteman was the recipient of the Marius Valkhoff award for "exceptional contributions to psychical research"; this was a South African international award given occasionally (eleven recipients in 30 years).

Instead, I approach this Foreword more from a personal perspective.

I would be asked, who is this Michael Whiteman you're meeting with? I would usually reply:

"Michael represents the four Ms: Michael the mystic, mathematician, and musician. He is, in my opinion, the greatest genius living on the continent of Africa. His work is so esoteric few understand it, and I have the great honour of carrying through his great legacy for future generations."

That term "future" is important here. His contributions will endure like some of the great philosophers for centuries.

I remember him submitting a very lengthy esoteric article on his spiritual philosophy to me while I was editor of the *PJSA*. The referees had written that they "never understood a word, but knew it was critical to put into print". I recognized this specialness as editor. But there was a

problem: I wrote to Michael in Cape Town (I was in Johannesburg; and those were the days of long-hand writing) and indicated that we very much wanted to publish it but could he abbreviate it? His reply was typical. He wrote back and said every word was critical and he could not. So I published the article in toto and it took up half the journal. I knew it was not for people then, but his contributions would long endure into a time when mystics could better understand his world.

I remember spending what must have been three continuous hours in animated esoteric and complex discourse, inter alia, about dimensions of space and time. A cousin, with whom I was staying, had dropped me off, and sat all that time with us, never saying a word. After we left, my cousin said to me: "That was the most amazing intellectual experience of my life. I hardly understood a word but the concepts will remain. I realize I was witnessing a unique, great interchange that will stay with me forever."

This was Michael, a great man, who was a giant amongst giants.

I was always intrigued by Michael's theoretical and practical awarenesses of Out of Body Experience—what he preferred to call Separative Experience (SE)—and as per his wont, had phenomenologically classified SE into subtypes as Dr Poynton has pointed out. By the time I visited him two and a quarter years before he passed, he had had over ten thousand deliberately induced separative experiences. Like a true scientist each had been carefully documented—a massive contribution because no-one ever has had that amount of documented SEs.

I looked at this ostensibly middle-aged looking man who lived on his own in a two story home and would move with facility between floors and take a brisk walk for several hours per day before settling down to his avocation of writing. If I had not known differently, I would have regarded him as someone in his early seventies, but I knew it could not be. *Perhaps in his 80s but he must be older than that*, I thought.

"Michael, how old are you, exactly?" I asked.

"Next month, I will be 98", he replied.

I quipped there was a reason for his longevity: Time out of the body did not count!

He described to me his very regimented existence even at age 97. It went something like this:

Get up early, eat, do some reading for 2 hours, walking for 2 hours, meditating for 2 hours, writing for 2 hours, resting for 2 hours. His meditation often involved his deliberate out of body experiences, and in this he may have been assuming a different kind of experiential identity, neither male nor female or it was both, or reflecting the essence

of one of the sexes because he had a great interest in essence of self, in different kinds of souls, and like I did, felt that we were part of a complex multidimensional existence.

One of the few times Michael made the news was apparently in a lengthy article in the local newspaper about this Mathematics Professor who turned a hundred. I did not see it but was told there was no parapsychological mentions and the layperson may not have realized what the titles of his books implied. As I recall, his amazing language versatility e.g. Sanskrit and many different related dialects through to Hebrew, may have been mentioned in that article.

In February 2007, on a group called SurvivalNet, we wrote about Michael for the last time in a thread started by someone else. Discussing Michael on this group was rare, and I had written about Michael last on 23 June 2003. My response content at that time (June 2003) is worth sharing briefly because it clarifies Michael and his role in the world a little more.

... You are referring to Professor J H Michael Whiteman, mathematician, musician and mystic. He was a professor of Applied Mathematics at the University of Cape Town. He was also a theoretical physicist, philosopher and metaphysician. A remarkable genius, Michael had developed the OBE state to a profound degree. He could actively, subjectively project himself out of his body at will. He developed the term "separative experience" (SE) for OBE, and described several levels of SE. His theoretical contributions are unfortunately seldom cited by parapsychologists today... He wrote several books. I have hard copies of some of his articles. ... Michael was certainly known amongst those that followed his work as a remarkable mystic but knowledge about his work outside South Africa seems to have been limited.

I hypothesize his lack of attention was threefold:

1. Lack of adequate publicist and his philosophy not of itself being newsworthy.

2. South Africa was not a fertile area for one's research or theory to be publicised elsewhere. He did not tend to publish much outside South Africa other than e.g. the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* at times. ... He contributed on several occasions to the *Parapsychological J. of South Africa*, which was abstracted by Psych Info during its tenure of existence, and one of these was a lengthy letter on OBEs. He also published in several issues of a journal called *Parapsychologica*, as well as John Poynton's book *Parapsychology in South Africa* in 1975 (at which point he was already Emeritus Faculty). Of course the Internet now has changed this, and we are all now part of this Global Internet Village.

3. His work was so complex it was understood by very few.

What John Poynton has done in this book is make the major unintelligible contribution of Michael Whiteman, intelligible. This is enormously important not only now, but for the future as Whiteman was a man for the ages. Here is Dr. Whiteman, a giant for all time, who died forgotten because others did not understand his contributions. And Dr Poynton has ensured that his 181 page book in five parts, thirty two chapters and two appendices can be understood, and interpreted for sheer mortals in a comprehensible manner. Moreover, there is no-one in the world who could do it better than John, having spent a very large amount of time studying Michael's contributions. Therefore, Poynton's *Science, Mysticism And Psychical Research* is a major and important work emphasizing the work of a great pioneer of Psychical Research and Mysticism.

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PREFACE

Many people see this century as bringing in a new Renaissance, the rediscovery and growth of what is now commonly called “spirituality”. This exploration of experience and states beyond physical sensing is pitched against an entrenched materialism (or matterism), which may be seen as an impoverishment of life and living, rife with false perceptions. The new renaissance aims at a “reconciliation of science and spirituality”, as portrayed by Kelly *et al.* in *Beyond Physicalism* (2015). It recognises “irreducible mind” (Kelly *et al.*, 2007) and has been called post-materialist science (Beauregard *et al.*, 2014). Yet it could easily go off the rails into a bog of its own false perceptions, so there is need for rigorous observation and thinking.

I hope even the first chapter of this book will suggest that rigour is available in the work of Michael Whiteman, late associate professor of applied mathematics at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The rigour in his work had a revolutionary purpose, melding mathematical physics and general science with Indian and Western mystical texts, clarified by a life-time of psychical and mystical experience, and coupled with an extensive knowledge of philosophy, psychology, and psychical research or parapsychology. His work is mind-stretching to the point that led one of my most able ex-students to write that every time she read Whiteman her brain hurt. I know the feeling. I would like to lessen the pain by laying a negotiable pathway through landscape that might seem impenetrably complex and unfamiliar.

Previously I have written on the relationship between Whiteman’s ideas and psychical research (Poynton 1994, 2001, 2011), to which several people responded by suggesting that I should write a larger study. But there are several difficulties in doing so. From the writer’s point of view one has to sift through Whiteman’s rather dense literary style to reveal his nuggets of wisdom. His writing guarded against ambiguity and criticism to the point of laborious reading. Also, despite painstaking revisions, he tended to race ahead of his readers and not introduce or express his complex ideas too clearly. The choice of a compiler of his work is either to pick out and copy slices of text, or to transcribe the text into his/her own words and understanding. I have chosen the former option, with a fair amount of the latter. Where he is clear he is very clear, and often he has a neat turn of phrase that is worth preserving.

Some editing is nevertheless required. The text is cluttered with quotation marks, which he inserted when a word is used in a technical mystical sense; these are deleted when they seem unnecessary. When technical words of this kind were used frequently he italicised them, but this again impairs reading and they are converted to Roman when italics do not seem needed. A few of his readers have found his inclusion of Pali, Sanskrit, Greek and Hebrew words distracting, breaking up the continuity of reading. Pali words are close to the language mainly used by Gotama Buddha, Whiteman's primary reference. He treated these as technical terms essential to mystical thinking, and they are mostly retained in textual extracts; words from other languages are usually deleted from passages in the interests of easier reading, unless thought to be of special importance. Hopefully this editing will give a smoother ride through his texts, and hurt the brain less.

Then there is the difficulty of parcelling his ideas coherently. His range of experience, insight, scholarship and understanding extended well beyond a usual range of experience and thought, so most readers will have only a relatively limited personal context in which to place the work. This makes it hard to grasp his meaning. Perhaps the only qualification I have for attempting to cover his thinking is that for the last thirty-five years of his life he treated me as his guinea-pig, as he often called it, for trying out drafts of his work. I am a biologist with academic background in philosophy and music, and long association with psychical research, but only minor academic acquaintance with most subjects covered in his work. Perhaps life as a biologist makes you more ready to deal with anything thrown your way, which is how Whiteman seemed to regard me.

Outside his personal correspondence, he did not comment at length on the work of other contemporary writers on mysticism and philosophy of science, nor did he engage in general reviews such as the chapters on mystical experience by Kelly (2007) and Marshall (2015). Virtually the only point he repeatedly made about the existing literature on mysticism was that authors rarely show signs of extensive personal mystical experience, and so are liable to misunderstand the basics of authentic reports. Consequently this book does not, to any length, compare and contrast his thinking with that of writers on mysticism in modern times, apart from the influential philosopher Immanuel Kant. The attention Whiteman gave to the scientist-turned-mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg, also needs exploring, not least because Swedenborg became the subject of Kant's confused criticism.

In writing about Whiteman's experience and ideas, one has to be aware of longstanding hostility in science and academia towards psychical and

mystical research. It is prone to be labelled “pseudoscience”, often by people who have no experience as research scientists themselves. Whiteman regarded the hostility to be based on outdated science and poor scholarship, combined with “cognitive pathology” discussed by Maslow (1966), who saw scientists out of their depth as “desperately and stubbornly hanging on to a generalization, in spite of new information that contradicts it.” Whiteman’s line of thinking was up against the pervading “iron rule of the mechanistic régime”, as his great countryman Jan Smuts called it in his seminal *Holism and Evolution* (1926). Therefore an enquiry into the philosophical status of this hostile fashion and its origin is required if science, mysticism and psychical research are to be seen as complementary rather than contradictory. This will be left to a concluding chapter of this book’s first Part.

It is also said that psychic phenomena “undermine” science. Whiteman constantly made the point that only pre-twentieth century “classical” science is incompatible with psychic and mystic phenomena. The subsequent revolutionary scientific world-view, to which he himself contributed, provides a unified basis for psychical, spiritual and physical understanding, as this book aims to show. The conventional opposing stance gives the impression of unwillingness to enquire open-mindedly and thoroughly into the methods and data of current physics, psychical and mystical research, and of people’s raw experience. Whiteman’s ideal for science in all these areas was for it to be “open-minded, rigorously tested, rationally coherent, and illuminating.” There is rapidly growing criticism of the conventional hostile attitude, strongly shown in the developing post-materialist “paradigm for science, spirituality, and society” (Beauregard *et al.*, 2014). This study of Whiteman is intended to add to that development in the spirit of Smuts, who advocated an open-minded study of “the psychical or spiritual order”.

I have written four novels, but I would never attempt to portray Michael Whiteman. Behind the affable and generous male persona lay depths that were the well-spring of his genius. I have tried to draw what is fairly easily digested from these depths. The first eleven chapters, grouped as Basics of Whiteman’s Thinking, are designed to give some insight into core ideas and method. They develop a conceptual framework for mysticism and for psychical research, the latter often taken to task for lacking such a framework. There follow his explorations into personality structure and psychology, sexuality, survival of death and reincarnation, and, finally, Eastern and Western mysticism, spirituality and religion in a broad sense. After a brief account of his own spiritual development there

is a return to the relationship between science, mysticism and psychical research.

Even though pared down, the coverage attempted in this book might feel tough going; but a true science of mysticism and psi should never seem an easy ride. Yet Whiteman recognised that his “mystical derivation of quantum theory and physical laws in general” lay well beyond most readers; it was relegated to a supplement in his last book (2006), published a few months before he died. The mathematics of the derivation are accordingly placed in an appendix in this book. Also included as an appendix is a brief biographical sketch. The stages of his mystical development are covered in Chapter 31, but a full “life and works”, which would have to include the rich musical career that ran alongside his scientific career, is not attempted here.

Literature citations in this book consist mostly of selected references to Whiteman’s publications. To avoid cluttering the text, it seems useful to code them as superscripts rather than give full references each time. The publication date followed by the page number at the beginning of a passage seems the most handy code, omitting the century, so that 1986a page 40 becomes ^{86a,40}; 2006 page 22 becomes ^{06,22}. For quick reference the codes are set out below. Hopefully the reader will soon associate date with publication; most of them refer to his last four books. Several papers published in scientific journals were reprinted or rewritten in the last two volumes of *Old and New Evidence on the Meaning of Life*, 2000 and 2006. References to both are usually included. Full references are given at the end of the book.

61 *The Mystical Life*

67 *Philosophy of Space and Time*

73 Quantum theory and parapsychology

75a Parapsychology as an analytic-deductive science

75b The scientific evaluation of out-of-the-body experience

75c A three-tier ontology for parapsychology and modern physics

77a Parapsychology and physics

77b The convergence of physics and psychology

79 An introduction to the mystical model for psychopathology

85 Scientific mysticism and altered states

86a *An Introduction to Scientific Mysticism*

86b The mystical way and habitualization of mystical states

93 *Aphorisms on Spiritual Method; the “Yoga Sutras of Patanjali”*

94 Cognitive pathologies and the new paradigm in physics

00 *The Dynamics of Spiritual Development*

03a The problem of discarnate survival

03b On the scientific validation and reality rating of reports of non-physical experience

06 *Universal Theology and Life in Other Worlds*

Citations from his correspondence carry the date of the letter. All letters and documents pertaining to Professor Whiteman are held in the archives of the Society for Psychical Research, housed in the Cambridge University Library. Enquiries should be directed to the SPR Secretary: secretary@spr.ac.uk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first met Michael Whiteman at a 1966 meeting of the South African Society for Psychical Research in Johannesburg, whose formative role I gratefully acknowledge. There followed an exchange of letters and faxes with Professor Whiteman that fill a 12 cm wide box. In his books he warmly acknowledged the forty years of our fruitful contact; it is in sadness for a lost teacher and friend that I reciprocate.

With deep pleasure I acknowledge the friendship and ready help of his daughter Sibyl. As the holder of copyright to her father's books she has made the style and content of this book possible by granting unreserved permission. She also supplied the portrait of her father. My thanks go also to the publisher of Whiteman's last four books, Colin Smythe, for discussion and advice in the preparation of this book. The production of these four major works are much to his credit.

It is a privilege to thank Stanley Krippner for his recommendation, and for granting permission to quote from *Future Science* (1977), which he co-edited. Likewise I thank Vernon Neppe for his generous Foreword. I also thank Bernard Carr, Edward Kelly and Paul Marshall for their recommendations.

I have had valuable discussions and received help from Caroline Watt, Debra Roberts, Paul Marshall, Edward Kelly, Catherine Osborn, Velta Snikere, David Ellis, and Robert McLuhan.

I am grateful to Prometheus Books for permission to include passages from *Materialism: An Affirmative History and Definition* by R.C. Vitzthum (1995), and to the Swedenborg Foundation Press for permission to quote passages from *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings*, edited by Gregory R. Johnson (2002).

Last but by no means least I acknowledge the speedy and professional work carried out by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in the preparation of this book.

PART I

BASICS OF WHITEMAN'S THINKING

CHAPTER ONE

A DISCORDANT TRIO?

In Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of being Earnest* we hear that in married life three is company, two is none. But can science, mysticism, and psychical research bed down as a threesome? Conventional thinking would rate even a pair of them to be appalling bedfellows. Science is supposed to explore the real world around us, while mysticism occupies itself with some other-worldliness that people may talk about but which reveals little beyond proneness to fantasy. In psychical research, ESP merely stands for Error Some Place (Honorton, 1975); the claimed data from psychical research cannot be made to fit the real world of science. And parapsychologists generally shy away from mysticism.

Mysticism might seem the worst misfit, the unwanted remains of medievalism. We are required by materialism to recognise the merits of “the Enlightenment and its rejection of mysticism in favour of reason.” (Vitzthum, 1995, p. 9). Even from parapsychology comes a view that “A mystic is a person who tries to bypass the evidence of the senses and reasoning in search of deeper truths—just the opposite of a scientist.” (Gebelein, 2013, p. 160). Yet one of the books by Michael Whiteman has the subtitle, *An Introduction to Scientific Mysticism*.^{86a} He aimed to bring mysticism into the field of science as “open-minded, rigorously tested, rationally coherent, and illuminating.”^{86a,vii} His approach was empirical: mysticism was taken to be “the study of everything non-physical, including the other worlds and their archetypal governance, as well as our spiritual bodies, the facts and their relationship being known by the self-evidence of direct observation and not by reasoning or speculation.”^{61,1}

There are several points to note in this definition. It views mysticism as a fact-finding study, and so should be treated as a branch of science, based on direct observation and experience. Speculation and theory-spinning is put out of court; this is radical empiricism.

In the definition there is no mention of formal religious practice or a particular deity. Whiteman was critical of religious beliefs and terms that are not directly warranted by experience. Nevertheless the phrase “archetypal governance” points to experience of what he termed “Ultimate Wisdom” or “Source of Right and Good”,^{86a,20} transcending usual

physically-based experience. A scientific mysticism will have to throw light on this experience.

Another point about the definition is that it explicitly refers to the non-physical, to “other worlds” of conscious existence, not the physical world generally thought to be the only “reality”. To conventional thinking, anything beyond the physical tends to be inconceivable, not open to scientific study. It must be the task of scientific mysticism to make the idea of “beyond the physical” not only conceivable but unavoidable in the face of evidence.

Lastly, if mysticism is the study of “everything non-physical”, then it could be said to include the subject matter of psychical research, which also deals with phenomena not open to physical explanation. Marshall (2011, 2015) has recently emphasised the close relationship between the psychical and the mystical. Demarcation between the two is nevertheless needed. Whiteman saw mysticism to go further than a study of telepathy, clairvoyance and other psychic (or psi) phenomena; mysticism was seen to involve a “sense of ultimates”, “openness to guidance”, and “transformed being”^{86a,42} as underlying principles, discussed in Chapter Six.

He recognised that finding these principles can be done effectively only by taking adequate account of general science, from the quantum level to the affairs of ordinary living. At the same time his personal experience and wide knowledge of psi phenomena led him to see these phenomena as integral to mystical experience, as well as being an inseparable part of science. His syncretic view was of a broad science that included psi and mysticism without being self-contradictory, and the aim of the present book is to outline this *scientia*.

It could be said that one of Whiteman’s failings was his use of the word “mysticism”, with all its confused meanings. Yet he saw his usage to be in accordance with long-established Eastern and Western tradition, grounded in “the self-evidence of direct observation,” as stated in his definition. His own grounding spanned mathematical physics across to psychology, psychical research, the wisdom traditions, and was informed by his own psychic and mystical experience. His notebooks describe over 7000 of his own experiences. The breadth and style of coverage was revolutionary.

His first book, *The Mystical Life*⁶¹, has the subtitle, *An outline of its nature and teachings from the evidence of direct experience*. The word “evidence” also appears in the title of his three-volume series, *Old and New Evidence on the Meaning of Life*.^{86a,00,06} His methods rested on observation and conceptual analysis of what he termed “the inner constitution of nature”. This is a phrase from the title of his book,

Philosophy of Space and Time and the Inner Constitution of Nature,⁶⁷ which was subtitled *A Phenomenological Study*..

Phenomenology was understood in Edmund Husserl's (1931) sense to be the rare gaining of "face-to-face self-evidence and detailed precision", shedding the usual "cloak of ideas" that covers perceptiveness. Science in this context is not the conventional exercise of trying out theories (guesses) about how things work, but in discerning the logic in experience and in the inner constitution of nature. Scientific mysticism tries to apply consistent face-to-face phenomenological analysis, as discussed in Chapter Eight. Evidence is gathered from claimed observation and direct experience of states perceived to be not ordinarily physical or worldly. The evidence may be taken together with evidence from psi research, also not dealing with "normal physical" happenings. This requires an open-minded examination of experiences that have a sense of phenomenological reality, yet cannot be referred to what the bodily senses detect, either directly or indirectly, and cannot be attributed to aberration or pathology. Whiteman used the term "non-physical" for such experiences, and for states and observed objects that are "not locatable in physical space".^{94,84} A scientific task, then, is to clarify what is meant by "not locatable in physical space", and to discover principles underlying non-physical experience.

A prime underlying principle is Whiteman's many-layered conception of space and of time. In correspondence with Ian Stevenson, a psychiatrist deeply involved in the study of reincarnation, Stevenson wrote of becoming "more and more convinced that a further understanding of the existence of two spaces, or perhaps multiple spaces, is necessary for our understanding of the relationship between minds and brains and also for the solution of many problems in parapsychology." (10/12/1986). Whiteman's reply (12/1/1987) was that "everything hinges for me on the admission of 'other spaces'." Given the difficulty most people have with the idea of experiencing a non-physical space, a study of mysticism and psi has to dig into what can be understood by "other spaces" and what led Whiteman to his understanding. This involves dismantling what he termed "one-level naturalism", the idea that all things, events and their causation happen only at the level of a physical world that we sense with our bodies. Without correcting this notion, an effective scientific mysticism and a theory of psi was held not to be possible.

Essential to the mystical and psychical tasks are skills of freeing the individual's mind from normal physical life and entering states of awareness different from the physical, advocated by Husserl and discussed from Chapter Four onwards. This line of thought is foreign to standard Western ideas, and needs close examination if it is to be accepted into

scientific study. At a deeper level this reaches the matter of religion. To prepare himself for this investigation, Whiteman became fluent in classical Greek, Biblical Hebrew, Vedic, Sanskrit and Pali, the latter being the language of Buddhist canonical writings. He made a close study of thinking from Minoan, Vedic and early Hebrew times up to the initial period of early Christianity, after which he saw religious thinking corrupted by dogma and theorising in both Western and Indian texts. In his analysis, “nothing is presupposed,” and theology simply meant “the application of the phenomenological method to our awareness of the Divine.”^{06,vii} So, “the word ‘God’ (*Theos*) must be taken to stand for the Archetypal Reason in all.”^{06,64} This empirical approach to religious thinking is a basic requirement of scientific mysticism.

The idea of “the Archetypal Reason in all” is a cornerstone in Whiteman’s scientific treatment of mysticism. Quantum theory provides an essential element. It is held that an individual’s observations are underlain by causal substructures that are not physically located, discussed in Chapter Two. An individual’s own potential for observation combines with more universal potentialities to deliver an actualisation on an occasion of observation. What the individual observes will depend on his/her state and abilities. Put the other way, the state and ability of an individual will determine what is observed. What is manifested to an individual in a dissociated or non-physical state will differ from what is seen by someone in a “normal physical” state.

If the causes of what we observe physically are not locatable in physical space, then the observed world is not the primary “reality” we unthinkingly take it to be. It is a product of underlying realities, which are not physical. This is a core understanding in mysticism, and indeed in what is now known as post-materialist science (Beauregard *et al.* 2014). In this mode of science there is a need to examine the causal background of what is delivered as physical and as non-physical experience. A hierarchical view of causality reaches back nearly three millennia to the Upanishads, and is a basic ingredient of Whiteman’s scientific mysticism. Timeless elements of causation, of *essence*, were contrasted with elements of *existence*, the actualisation in time of timeless potentiality, discussed from Chapter Eight onwards. Any event or idea needs to have these causal constituents recognised before it can become intelligible at the level of discerning “the archetypal reason in all”. The relationship between potentiality/essence and actualisation/existence is central to Whiteman’s analysis of “the inner constitution of nature.”

He saw the need for a scientific mysticism to penetrate even further along lines started in the Upanishads. There, a sixteen-fold cycle of

conscious functions was recognised, the *kalās*, “operational parts in creation”.^{86a,201} He recognised that these “subjective” functions match a sixteen-fold “objective” cycle of elementary particle physics, quantum field theory, and a sixteen-fold universal system based on three space and three time dimensions. This matching gave his scientific mysticism the power to integrate physics with psychology, studied from Chapter Nine onwards.

Whiteman’s analytic psychology had roots in early Buddhism and the Yoga Sutras, particularly with the concept of what he developed as a “corporate structure of personality”. Through his own experience and various Eastern and Western sources he recognised an enduring core to an individual, which was accompanied during physical life by a fluctuating population of “contributory minds”. A task of the individual was to recognise the core which transcends physical life, and to deflect influences especially of undeveloped co-minds crowding around in the physical life. Failure to do this can lead to catastrophic events which Whiteman closely examined (Chapter Twelve onwards). Understanding spiritual development was seen by him to hinge on understanding the causal structure behind the individual; in fact without taking into account a corporate structure of personality, an effective science of mysticism and psi seems hardly possible, as later chapters will repeatedly show.

Taking all this into account, from the individual to the universal, what may be expected from an integration of mysticism and psi, bedded down in science, is a journey through some of the deepest layers of thought. It calls for an open mind and willingness to engage with ideas that may at first seem inconceivable to westernised conventional thinking. This style of thinking should be accounted for in a scientific treatment of mysticism and psi. Conventional westernised thinking along materialist lines may be seen to be aberrant in the context of world history. A product of a peculiarly Western development, it became entrenched during the period of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, founded on the one-level naturalism noted earlier. As discussed in Chapter Eleven, it had a fragmenting effect. Following Whiteman’s revolutionary synthesis, the success of this book may be measured by the depth of insight it is able to bring to the relationship between science, mysticism, and psychical research as complementary rather than contradictory. It is an insight that annuls a one-level mode of thinking.

CHAPTER TWO

POTENTIALITY AND ACTUALISATION

It seldom occurs to us that every viewing of the world is a remarkable, unique event. In a room we see a chair in front of a table. Move round the room and we see the table in front of the chair, a completely different scene. What makes us think the chair and table are “the same” from either view? We realise that we are not faced just with a random assemblage of different appearances; the different perspectives seem intelligible, and what makes them so is that behind them all must be a continuing logical and creative structure which is the origin of all appearances from all viewpoints. But, Whiteman argued, this logical structure cannot be contained in physical space in the way a single appearance seems to be. The behind-the-scene substructure must continue to exist while we view different perspectives, otherwise we should have no ground for calling the furniture “the same”. Yet it must belong to a sphere of potentialities that are not a part of the physical universe of appearances, of actualisation.

The idea of substructure, of potentiality and actualisation, is a key to understanding Whiteman’s thinking. The idea had been worked over by the physicist Werner Heisenberg in his *Physics and Philosophy* (1959). He saw that a physical “happening” is an occasion of observation, open to physical description. But the possibilities or tendencies governing the happening are not observable in the same way; they are not physically locatable, at best handled as mathematical constructs. So lying behind a physical event, behind any viewing of the world, one has to recognise what Heisenberg (p. 56) called “an objective tendency or possibility, a ‘potentia’ in the sense of Aristotelian philosophy.” And the governing potentia, the “reason” for something to happen, is abstract in a physical sense: you can’t put reason in a test tube or find it sitting on one of the chairs.

For Whiteman the term “reality” could apply only to this underlying reason, potentiality, not to appearances, to actualisations. Appearances are manifested only on an occasion of observation. The demand of quantum theory, as he saw it, is that “the ‘purely physical’ is incomplete, and manifestation requires that the circumstances and mental powers of an

individual observer can be given before anything definite can be manifested.^{200,132}

The idea of an observer-dependent world might seem ridiculous, as it did to Samuel Johnson when he kicked a large stone, saying of the idea, “I refute it *thus*.” (Boswell 1791, p. 471) He was in fact actualising the stone in a very drastic way. Does the stone exist when no-one is seeing or kicking it? The *potential* for it to appear physically does, yes; but does the physical actuality? Literally, no; there are only general and highly complex non-physical potentialities,^{75a,195} which will be actualised differently for different people seeing or kicking the stone from different angles. The potentialities will exist whether or not they happen to be actualised by any individual, provided they remain undisturbed, yet we are apt to think of actualised, tangible objects as themselves being self-existent and placed permanently external to us. Whiteman saw this as an error that was pointed out long ago in the ancient Indian doctrine of *māyā*, the “trick” of creation^{67,148}.

Māyā has two powers or functions, he noted. By the power of projection, potential relations become presented as things, actualised in the observer’s world. The observer is in a sense a creator of what he sees, and what he perceives can be said to be a product of his observational status. A drunk will see different things from one who is sober; even more radically, an observer who is freed from the mode of physical perception will actualise for himself things that are beyond the reach of ordinary physical vision. This is the beginning of psychical and mystical perception.

The second power of *māyā* is enclosure. The perceiving self becomes closed off, giving things a false, out-there, non-mental quality, which leads to a supposed separation of mind from non-mind and to the problem of how mind can somehow connect with supposedly non-mental things. Yet as Heisenberg pointed out (p. 75), the interplay between nature and ourselves “makes the sharp separation between the world and the I impossible.” The idea in quantum theory of the indivisibility of the phenomenon of viewer and viewed is evident here; as Whiteman put it, “nothing specific can be actualised without the integration of ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ factors, not in succession, but on the instant of actualisation.”^{86a,240} There is joint actualisation of the “impersonal” potentialities of the event and the “personal” potentialities of the observer. The resulting interplay between physics and psychology is a major theme in Whiteman’s work, to be discussed in Chapter Nine.

The power of enclosure gives rise to the philosophical tangle of dualism, of mind and matter, but here we are concerned with the duality of potentiality and actualisation. It holds that when an observation is made,