

ROBERT M. WALLACE



Philosophical Mysticism
in Plato, Hegel, and the Present

BLOOMSBURY

PHILOSOPHICAL MYSTICISM IN PLATO, HEGEL, AND THE PRESENT

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM BLOOMSBURY

Plato and Plotinus on Mysticism, Epistemology, and Ethics, David J. Yount

Plato's Trial of Athens, Mark A. Ralkowski

Wittgenstein, Religion and Ethics: New Perspectives from Philosophy and Theology,

Mikel Burley

Hegel, Logic and Speculation, ed. by Paolo Diego Bubbio, Alessandro De Cesaris,

Maurizio Pagano, Hager Weslati

PHILOSOPHICAL MYSTICISM IN PLATO, HEGEL, AND THE PRESENT

Robert M. Wallace

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo are trademarks of
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain 2020
This paperback edition published in 2021

Copyright © Robert M. Wallace, 2020

Robert M. Wallace has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

For legal purposes the Acknowledgments on p. viii constitute an extension
of this copyright page.

Cover design by Maria Rajka
Cover image: Jerusalem, Plate 1, Frontispiece, William Blake (1757–1827)
© Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior
permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for,
any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given in this
book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher regret any
inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have ceased to exist,
but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

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

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3500-8286-1
PB: 978-1-3502-6738-1
ePDF: 978-1-3500-8287-8
eBook: 978-1-3500-8288-5

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com and
sign up for our newsletters.

This book is dedicated to my wife and muse,
Kathleen Ritger Kouzmanoff.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments viii

Preface x

Introduction 1

1 “A Worm! A God!” 9

2 “That Which Shows God in Me, Fortifies Me” 29

3 Freedom and Full Reality 67

4 Full Reality Is God 87

5 Plato’s Progress 105

6 Plato, Freedom, and Us 135

7 Plato on Reason, Love, and Inspiration 157

8 Plato on “Becoming Like God” 185

9 Ordinary and Extraordinary Experiences of God 205

Appendix: Comparisons Between the Plato/Hegel Argument for a
God Within Us, and Several Well-Known Arguments for God 213

Notes 218

Bibliography 251

Index 263

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My father introduced me to his favorite writers and philosophers, generously sharing his enthusiasms with the young me. My mother made sure that I had a constant stream of books to explore. Teachers, especially Alan Strain, fed my sense of what might be possible. My slowly growing understanding of Plato owes a great deal to Terence Irwin, Gail Fine, Lloyd Gerson, J. N. Findlay, Rosemary Desjardins, Francisco Gonzales, James Rhodes, H. J. Krämer, G. W. F. Hegel, and Jelaluddin Rumi. In German philosophy, Alan Montefiore, Hans Blumenberg, Karsten Harries, and Allen Wood got me started on my way. In transatlantic correspondence and phone calls, Blumenberg's nurturing spirit was an inspiration to me. I would also like to mention Darrel E. Christensen, who suggested to me some decades ago that "what we really need" is to understand what Hegel and Whitehead have in common—a comment whose wisdom I only came to understand and appreciate much later. In mysticism, I owe a great deal to Kathleen Kouzmanoff, Aldous Huxley (in his *The Perennial Philosophy* [1945]), Jonathan Shear, Jeffrey Kripal, George Herbert, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Rumi. In proper Platonic fashion, what I owe to Kathy is inseparably intellectual (see her *Lifewheel* [2005]), emotional, and spiritual. I am grateful to anonymous readers who have encouraged and challenged my manuscripts in various ways. Mehmet Tabak gave me very helpful written comments on part of this book. Friends with whom I've profited from discussing these issues include David Duveneck, Graham Andrews, Stephen Theron, Sebastian Job, Ishmael Wallace, Meg Wallace, Tom Bennigson, Barry Goldensohn, Ted Mazza, Ian Johnson, Will Altman, John Bardis, Paul de Angelis, David Brent, Josef Bieniek, Ben Campbell, Robert Stern, Jeff Edwards, Allegra de Laurentiis, Ken Westphal, Willem deVries, Karl Ameriks, Jim Wetzel, John Clark, John Placer, Tushar Irani, John Russell, Michael Wakoff, Giacomo Rinaldi, Marco DeAngelis, Gunter Scholtz, Lenny Moss, Wallace Pinfold, Harrison Fluss, Allen Mathews, Conrad Paul, Jane Paul, Elizabeth Reed, Jay Bregman, John Uebersax, Edward Butler, Thomas Burns, and Samantha Horst. As always, nobody other than me is responsible for what I've failed to learn from them!

I am also grateful to Bertrand Russell, Sir Isaiah Berlin, Charles Taylor, Gregory Vlastos, Martha Nussbaum, and R. C. Zaehner for posing issues forthrightly in

their influential writings, to which admirers of Plato and Hegel can benefit by articulating a detailed response. And of course I'm deeply grateful to my protagonists, Plato, Hegel, Emerson, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, Findlay, Murdoch, Sellars, McDowell, Rödl, and the poets.

My greatest personal debts are to my mother, Margaret Marston Wallace, my father, Robert S. Wallace Jr., and my incomparable wife, Kathleen Ritger Kouzmanoff. Thanks also to my children, Ishmael, Vita, Nina, and Meg, all "trailing clouds of glory," for all that they've taught me and the fun that we've shared.

I would also like to thank Liza Thompson at Bloomsbury for her support for this project, and Lucy Russell at Bloomsbury, Leeladevi Ulaganathan at Deanta, and Katharina Munk at Klarso GmbH for their help and their patience.

PREFACE

Philosophical mysticism is the doctrine that we sometimes have direct knowledge of a higher reality or God. Although present-day reference works in philosophy seldom mention philosophical mysticism, Plato, who founded academic philosophy, was widely and uncontroversially known for millennia as (among other things) a “mystic.” And versions of philosophical mysticism were still common in the early twentieth century, in Ludwig Wittgenstein, Alfred North Whitehead, and others. But since then, with the rise of logical positivism and other anti-metaphysical doctrines, philosophical mysticism has largely ceased to be taught in philosophy departments. My goal in this book is to revive it as a subject of serious study.

Since it is philosophical, philosophical mysticism doesn’t neglect reason; nor is the direct knowledge that is its topic restricted to any small group of people. And the higher reality to which philosophical mysticism draws our attention has implications for numerous perennial problems besides that of God. Within the framework of this higher reality, the issues of science versus religion, fact versus value, rationality versus ethics, intellect versus emotions, mind versus body, and knowers versus the “external world” all become tractable. It turns out that nature, freedom, science, ethics, the arts, and a rational religion-in-the-making constitute an intelligible whole. This is very different from the muddle in which these issues tend to be left by such familiar agnostic doctrines as empiricism, materialism, naturalism, existentialism, and postmodernism.

This is why such major figures in philosophy, religion, and literature as Aristotle, Plotinus, St Augustine, Dante Alighieri, Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, William Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, Alfred North Whitehead, and Ludwig Wittgenstein have all been strongly attracted to Plato’s idea that we can and do know a higher reality. My goal in this book is to show how this attraction and this idea are fully justified and to explore their consequences.

Readers who don’t have an extensive knowledge of Western philosophy might like to begin by reading Chapters 1 and 9, which presuppose little specialized knowledge and provide an overview of what the book is about. I have tried to make the book as a whole clear enough to be accessible for any motivated reader.

INTRODUCTION

There if anywhere should a person live his life, beholding that Beauty.

PLATO, SYMPOSIUM 211D

The Platonic philosophical theology unifies us with ourselves, with each other, with the world, and with God, by explaining that a higher reality or God is present in this world and in us inasmuch as it inspires our efforts toward inner freedom, love, beauty, truth, and other ideals. These efforts give us a unity, as “ourselves,” that we can’t have insofar as we’re the slaves of our genes, hormones, opinions, self-importance, and so forth. For in contrast to our genes and so forth, which are implanted in us or are reactions to what surrounds us, efforts toward ideals like inner freedom, love, beauty, and truth are more likely to reflect our own choice. So that if anything reflects “us,” ourselves, and not just our surroundings, they do.

So through ideals like inner freedom, love, beauty, and truth, something that’s “higher,” because it’s free and fully “us,” is in us. Since we often fall short of it and lapse into merely reactive or merely bodily functioning, we can call this higher self-determination, by contrast, “divine.” And there’s nothing that we know better or more directly than we know this inner choice that we make, to be either automatic and reactive or free and self-determining. So we have every reason to regard the choice as real, and our awareness of it as knowledge. And since “mysticism” is the name for the doctrine that we have direct knowledge of a higher reality or God, and this Platonic train of thought shows how we have such knowledge through awareness of our inner choices, it shows how mysticism in this sense is entirely rational.¹

Since we often fall short of inner freedom, love, beauty, and truth, they have the “transcendence” that we expect of religion. They are inspiring as well as rational, “above” us as well as “in” us. But what’s remarkable is that because this transcendence is rational, it’s a feature not only of the higher reality that mysticism and religion celebrate but also of science. In fact, because science is one of the

ways in which we choose to pursue truth and thus transcend our genes, hormones, favorite opinions, and self-importance, science is a part or an aspect of the higher reality that mysticism and religion celebrate.

Of course when I say that religion celebrates a transcendence that's rational, I'm not referring to everything that we refer to as religion, but primarily to what Alfred North Whitehead called "religion in the making"—that is, the religion that has been in process of emergence for millennia and is probably not yet in its final form. But as we will see, this religion in the making incorporates everything that seems to be essential to traditional religions, including not only transcendence but also conceptions that are comparable to creation, sin, and salvation. It's probably intimations of the cogency of this religion in the making that have given traditional religions the longevity that they have had.

So rather than inherently conflicting with mysticism and religion, science is a part of the higher reality that mysticism and religion celebrate. Religion and science both transcend by seeking inner freedom and truth. It's just that science, being restricted to what we can know by scientific methods, is narrower. It's only one aspect of the transcendent freedom, love, beauty, and truth, the higher reality, that religion or religion in the making celebrates. This unusual way of understanding the relation between science and religion can free us from a good deal of mental fog and fruitless disputation.

But the relation of science to religion isn't the only familiar issue that the Platonic higher reality transforms. It's probably evident from what I've said that the Platonic higher reality reveals an intimate connection between "fact" and "value." A world in which there was no pursuit of values like love, beauty, and truth, or (as Plato puts it) "the Good," would not be self-determining or fully "itself." If being fully "itself" is the most intensive kind of reality, such a world would lack what's most real. By directing our attention to the role of value in what's most real, Platonism shows the limits of the "disenchanted" and "value-free" account of reality that we associate with scientific objectivity. Important though it is, the reality that science identifies is not the ultimate reality. The reality apart from itself that science in its normal activities identifies is not, in fact, the ultimate reality of which science itself, as a pursuit of truth and thus of self-determination, is an aspect. When science becomes aware of this ultimate reality to which it contributes, and which depends on values such as truth as well as freedom, love, and beauty, it becomes evident that the ultimate "fact" or reality is not actually independent of "value."

Next, there is the issue of our relations to each other. We usually assume that we're external to and separate from each other. But if I am to govern myself fully, and thus be fully "myself," I can't have things affecting me from outside, so I can't be external to others. So to be fully myself, I must go beyond selfishness or mutual "externality," and instead love everyone and treat everyone ethically. We are external to each other in reality as we ordinarily conceive it, but not in the higher reality in which, through freedom, love, beauty, and truth, we are fully ourselves.

From the ordinary point of view, the statement that we're most ourselves when we're not external to others probably seems like a paradox, but to lovers it's simply the truth.

From what I've just said, it's clear that the Platonic view will also bridge the gap that we often experience between intellect and love or intellect and emotions in general. Of course many of our feelings reflect genes, hormones, or experiences of which we may have little memory. But intellect, seeking freedom and wholeness, always asks, Does this feeling make sense, in the context of my other feelings and beliefs? And when the feeling doesn't seem to make sense in this way, intellect tries to help us to clarify the confusion, and thus to rise to feelings, such as those associated with ethics and love, that reflect greater freedom and wholeness. So rather than rejecting the body and its feelings (which would be a recipe for unfreedom), intellect helps it to be more free, self-governing, and real as an aspect of "oneself."

Then there is "mind," in general. Since it's through mind that we achieve freedom, wholeness, and so forth, mind can't be a separate being that interacts with a "body" and with "other minds." Again, such exclusion would prevent the mind from being fully self-governing or free. To be fully self-governing and free, mind must be a higher degree of reality in which bodies cease to function merely as bodies and as separate from others. Mind as the organ of free thought transcends limits.

And this also resolves the modern "problem of knowledge." We wonder how a mind can know a world that is "external" to it. But this problem doesn't arise if in the fullest reality, in which we're fully self-governing and fully ourselves, nothing is separate from and consequently nothing is external to anything else. In that fullest reality, the "things" that we ordinarily think of as separate from us are either equally self-governing and real, in which case we aren't really separate from them or external to them and we know them all "from inside," or they are less self-governing, in which case they are less real and the knowledge that we have of them will be through whatever they contribute to what is self-governing and fully real.

The fundamental notion, in all of this, of a unifying rational activity, and thus a higher degree of freedom and reality "as oneself," which is sometimes achieved by what is otherwise less rational, less unified, less free, and less real as itself, is not as familiar as it may have been in the days of Plato and of Hegel. Most recent philosophy has assumed, by contrast, that reality isn't "more real" or "less real" but is simply a "yes" or "no" issue of existence or nonexistence; and that we are either rational or irrational, free or unfree, but not both. But Plato and his successors make a good case that we experience greater and lesser degrees of freedom and of reality as ourselves when we are more or less integrated, self-determining, or "in charge of our lives." So the notion of a higher degree of freedom and reality which is continuous with lower degrees of freedom and reality, need not be as exotic as it sounds.

The Platonic conceptions certainly contrast with “common sense,” which (today at least) leans more toward a reductive materialism or naturalism for which there may not be any freedom or, consequently, any reality that depends on it. But the Platonic conceptions become more plausible when we see how many aspects of our lives they clarify, including our personal functioning, mind, body, love, value, ethics, knowledge, science, and religion. Indeed, the comprehensiveness of the alternative to “common sense” that these conceptions present is one reason to take them seriously. Like powerful proposals in the physical sciences (Galileo, Newton, Einstein), they enable us to see unity in phenomena whose relationship to each other was previously unclear.

In Chapter 1 and in portions of later chapters, I unfold the Platonic view in more detail in my own voice. In the remainder of this Introduction I sum up how the book draws on and explains Plato and his successors, down to the present. To the best of my knowledge, my four chapters on Plato are the only treatment that explains how Plato solves the religion/science, value/fact, ethics/rationality, emotion/intellect, body/mind, and “external world”/knower problems in one swoop, through his conception of rational “ascent” in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Timaeus*, *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, and other dialogues. In doing this, the book presents replies to many of Plato’s influential critics, including David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Bertrand Russell, Walter Bröcker, Gregory Vlastos, Richard Rorty, Hans Blumenberg, and Martha Nussbaum. The many modern philosophers who have rejected what they think of as “Platonism” have failed to appreciate Plato’s most important discovery, which is the discovery of how we experience a higher reality in ourselves.

Aristotle, who criticizes Plato’s way of describing the higher reality, agrees with him about its existence and importance: “The best is . . . to understand what is fine and divine, by being itself either divine or the most divine element in us.”² Hegel has the same view, maintaining (for example) that “it is not the finite which is the real, but the infinite.”³ Aristotle and Hegel agree with Plato that through a kind of rational “ascent,” we experience something that’s self-governing and thus higher and essentially divine. In this way, contrary to what’s often suggested, Aristotle and Hegel are both entirely serious in what they say about God and the divine, and they both endorse a significant kind of “transcendence.” Indeed, and here I depart from the majority of recent commentators on Hegel, the transcendence that Hegel endorses is *more truly transcendent* than competing conceptions. So that describing Hegel as someone who advocates “naturalism” and rejects the “supernatural” is very misleading. What tempts people to call Hegel an advocate of “naturalism” is that he is not a dualist. But what Hegel (like Aristotle and much of Plato) aims to show us is precisely that a notion of rational “ascent” need not entail dualism. It needn’t entail dualism if we ourselves engage in and experience transcendence, so that the transcendent and the immanent are united in our experience.

So what Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel have in common, and what (as I will show) Emerson, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, John Niemeyer Findlay, Iris Murdoch, Sebastian Rödl, and others also describe in various ways, is the nexus of a transcendent (higher) freedom, love, and God. Which when it's well understood unites science and religion, fact and value, rational self-government and ethics, intellect and emotion, body and mind, and the "external world" and knowers in the ways that I've indicated.

I give details on how these views are expressed in post-Hegelian writers from Emerson to the present in Chapter 2. There I also discuss the influential recent and contemporary philosophers Wilfrid Sellars and John McDowell, who sympathize with Hegel in certain respects but don't appear to embrace the idea of a higher reality, as such. I give my own account of Hegel in Chapters 2–4 (referring readers to my book on Hegel for further details). Chapter 3 contains a general introduction to Hegel that aims to clear up a number of the issues that people commonly raise about him. And Chapters 5–8 deal with Plato.

I want to say a bit more, here, about the difficult relationship during the last hundred years between philosophy and "mysticism." Alfred North Whitehead and Ludwig Wittgenstein were among the participants in a broad philosophical discussion, which took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and also involved Francis Herbert Bradley, William James, Bertrand Russell, and Henri Bergson, and which dealt with what many of the participants called "mysticism." Bradley, Whitehead, and Wittgenstein were all inspired by Plato, either directly or through Hegel or Schopenhauer. But this discussion was broken off during most of the twentieth century because philosophers beginning with Russell weren't able to make sense of Bradley, of Whitehead, or of Wittgenstein's notion of "the mystical." And recent accounts of early twentieth-century philosophy, examining it from the point of view of what followed it, have paid little or no attention to its discussion of mysticism.

My own account explains how Bradley, Whitehead, and Wittgenstein were all trying in various ways to articulate the same notion that's central for Plato and for Hegel, which is the notion of ascent to a more self-governing and thus higher reality. Hegel's central operation of "sublation" or *Aufhebung* ascends to a higher reality, as do Whitehead's "victory of persuasion over force"⁴ and Wittgenstein's "ladder," in the *Tractatus*. The goal that Wittgenstein described there as "value," "God," and "the mystical," he described in a Platonic image in his notebooks as "the true world among shadows."⁵

This notion of ascent to the true world was inspired, in all of these thinkers, by the observation that we seem to be able to question what our appetites, our opinions, and our self-importance urge us to do and believe. Questioning them, we seek a higher source of guidance—what Plato refers to as the "Good," Hegel calls the "Idea" or "Spirit," and Whitehead and Wittgenstein call "value" and "God."

They all regard this higher source of guidance not only as more authoritative but also (as Plato and Hegel put it) as more "real" in that it's a self-governing or

self-determining whole, and thus real “as itself” and not merely as a product of an endless series of external causes. Wittgenstein conveys this thought in his *Notebooks* (which are in some respects more Platonic, and less unfortunately dualistic, than his *Tractatus*) by comparing the higher reality, as the “good life,” to a work of art: “The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*.”⁶ The good life is *the world* seen in the way in which we are able to see a mere “object” as (actually) a work of art, governed by its own internal logic rather than by external causes, and thus real, as I say, “as itself.” To see the world and life in it in this way is to ascend to a reality that’s more real in that it’s more self-governing and more “itself” than we often take the world and life to be. It’s to ascend to “the true world among shadows.”

So this more real reality is what the whole early-twentieth-century group composed of Bradley the “Hegelian,” Whitehead the “Platonist,” and Wittgenstein who had initially been inspired by Schopenhauer were trying to get into focus. And when we understand this interest that they shared, we can resume the investigation that was abandoned for more than half a century by analytic philosophers including Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, W. V. O. Quine, and their successors, who had no notion of what Bradley, Whitehead, and Wittgenstein had been looking for.

Relatively recent writers who do have an idea of what the early-twentieth-century philosophical “mystics” were after include Michael Polanyi in his *Personal Knowledge* (1958), J. N. Findlay in his *Discipline of the Cave and Transcendence of the Cave* (1966–67), Iris Murdoch in her *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1993), Sebastian Rödl in his *Self-Consciousness* (2007) and other works, and Wolfram Gobsch in his 2012 dissertation, “Bedingungen des Unbedingten.”

Findlay and Murdoch both have a strong affinity for Plato, and like Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus*, both of them are unfortunately somewhat prone to a dualism which renders their overall view questionable and incomplete. Findlay contrasts “this world” and “another world or worlds” in a way that unintentionally casts doubt on the unity of human experience and reason.⁷ And Murdoch’s focus is so exclusively on art, ethics, and religion that she gives no idea how we might relate her very interesting results in those fields to the view of reality that we’re likely to find in the natural sciences.

Fortunately Plato in most of his work, and Aristotle, Hegel, Whitehead, Polanyi, Rödl, and Gobsch avoid Findlay’s dualism of “this world” and “another world” by understanding what Findlay calls the “other world” as an aspect of this world and of our experience in it. And they avoid Murdoch’s implicit dualism of the humanities versus the natural sciences by pointing out how by aiming at truth as such, as opposed to whatever our genes, hormones, self-importance, and so forth, direct us toward, science itself elevates us above “nature” understood as a realm of genes, hormones, self-importance, and so forth. Thus science embodies the same “ascent” toward greater self-government that all Platonists identify in art, ethics,

and God. So insofar as it's aware of the nature of its own activity, science can't deny the reality of the Platonic "ascent."

So we see that, so far from being "optional," Platonic ascent and the higher and most real domain of the "mystical" are woven into every aspect of our lives, including science itself. Insofar as we succeed, in science, art, love, ethics, or religion, in being rationally self-governing, we participate in the most real reality, by which we are all irresistibly inspired. Each of these domains has its own internal logic, which when we understand it as such can't be opposed to the others (since that would make it no longer self-governing), but must be a part of the all-subsuming process of rational self-government as such.

As a result of common misunderstandings of Hegel, neither Whitehead nor Polanyi read much of what Hegel wrote, so their broad agreement with him is a result not of direct influence but of the fact that all three of them drew on the broadly Platonic tradition. Findlay wrote a book about Hegel, but he doesn't seem to have understood Hegel's critique of dualism. Whitehead and Polanyi in effect rediscovered a great deal of what Hegel had discovered with the help of Plato and of writers influenced by Plato. And Whitehead and Polanyi themselves have not been as widely read or understood as they deserve to be. The dominant materialism or "naturalism" of our age makes it difficult for people to envision the possibility of a coherent alternative view, such as the Platonic tradition presents. Despite the work of thinkers like Hegel, Whitehead, and Polanyi, many writers still suppose that the only likely alternative to materialism or naturalism is a dualism such as we see in Kant, in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, in Findlay, or (implicitly) in Iris Murdoch—which, insofar as it doesn't clarify the relation between its two domains, can't be fully satisfying to the intellect.

Some critics of the currently dominant materialism or naturalism, such as Thomas Nagel (*Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* [2012]), nevertheless do indicate sympathy for the alternative that Plato and Hegel outline.⁸ And a group of philosophers including John McDowell and Michael Thompson at Pittsburgh, Sebastian Rödl, Andrea Kern, and Wolfram Gobsch at Leipzig, and Irad Kimhi at Chicago have recently been developing a metaphysics and an account of knowledge and action that chime well with what I find in Plato, Hegel, Whitehead, and Polanyi.⁹

These recent writers focus in various ways on the dimension of "ascent," of what's "higher" in reality, which Plato, Hegel, Whitehead, and Polanyi elaborate and on which I focus in this book. They all address the apparent conflict between the third-person, "scientific" account of what we are and the first-person, "humanistic" view which is presupposed by much of our practical thinking. When Plato, Hegel, and their successors point out that science itself is an attempt to rise above merely reactive functioning and to be led instead by truth, so that science's objective, external, third-person gaze is in fact a means to our inner, first-person goal of being self-governing by pursuing truth, they show how science and the

humanistic view, external and internal, body and mind, nature and freedom, and “lower” and “higher” are ultimately one. Since the higher pole that is internal, mind, and freedom is self-governing and real as itself, in a way that the lower pole that is external, body, and nature is not, the higher can be seen as subsuming the lower as an aspect of itself.¹⁰ In which case science is an aspect of the humanistic view, the external is an aspect of the internal, and nature is an aspect of boundless, undivided, self-governing freedom.

This view is a version of “idealism” insofar as it makes ideas or thought, by which we are self-governing, essential to full reality. But it differs importantly from George Berkeley’s and Immanuel Kant’s versions of idealism in that it focuses, precisely, on the difference between what I’m calling full reality or reality “as oneself” and ordinary reality. Rather than being mere “appearance,” as Berkeley and Kant say or imply, ordinary reality as Plato says “is and is not” (*Republic* 477a): it is in one respect perfectly real (it “is”) while in regard to self-government and reality “as oneself,” it “is not.” Sticks and stones and remote galaxies certainly *exist* apart from us and our minds. It’s only in regard to self-government and the reality “as oneself” that it creates, that sticks, stones, and galaxies have less of something of which animals that are capable of rational self-government have more.

I’ll say more about this kind of “idealism” in Chapters 1 and 2. The notion of a higher degree of reality, reality as oneself, changes the entire landscape of philosophical issues. Since the question of whether one is governing oneself and thus is fully oneself underlies all of our issues about “inner” and “outer,” mind and body, freedom and nature, emotion and intellect, values and facts, ethics and rationality, and religion and science, it’s only by understanding it that we can avoid ongoing confusion about these issues.

This changed philosophical landscape also makes it clear how much our culture in general needs a certain kind of philosophy. For rather than an exploration of abstruse issues that are of interest primarily to specialists, the Plato/Hegel kind of philosophy is a systematic effort to clarify issues—freedom, mind, value, love, ethics, science, religion—with which every one of us is involved in one way or another. I am eager for the clarity and the increased freedom which we will enjoy when the Plato/Hegel philosophical landscape is more widely understood and appreciated.

Chapter 1 gives a second introduction to the book, in my own voice and with little reference to previous writers, and follows that with a more detailed overview of what the book finds in Plato and Hegel, in particular.

1 “A WORM! A GOD!”

*Helpless immortal! insect infinite!
A worm! a god!—I tremble at myself,
And in myself am lost.*

EDWARD YOUNG, *NIGHT THOUGHTS*

How could we “know God,” whether directly or indirectly? What would that even mean? Are there real values, or does it all boil down to what we’re programmed to want? Is there a sense in which we actually are “one” with each other? What do my inner life and my freedom, as I experience them, have to do with my body, my neurons, and the natural world, which I and others can observe?

To explore these questions, I begin by asking another question: Who are we, really? Most of us, I suggest, are in an ongoing identity crisis.¹ A higher reality of inner freedom (which means making up our own minds) and truth and love and beauty is in this world and us, and we experience it directly when we remember it and try to live up to it.² This higher reality of inner freedom, truth, love, and beauty inspires us, while lower goals merely attract us. But of course we also have a huge capacity for temporarily forgetting the higher reality, and pursuing lower goals without regard to inner freedom and the rest.

We usually assume that this familiar conflict of goals has nothing to do with who someone is. We suppose that someone is the same person regardless of whether the goals that she pursues are, in anyone’s opinion, “higher” or “lower.” But a contrasting view is in fact influential in the philosophical tradition beginning with Socrates and Plato. This tradition argues that pursuing inner freedom and truth makes a person more real, more herself, and more of a person, in a way that (say) simply pursuing money or fame does not.

The examined life

Plato suggests that this is why Socrates promoted the “examined life.” Someone who examines her life, Plato suggests, by thinking about what’s really worth doing and what’s really true rather than just doing whatever she initially feels drawn to, is more fully herself.³ If, in the example that I mentioned, I lost my desire for money or my desire for fame, I myself would presumably still be all there. I would still be the same person. But if, on the other hand, I lost my thinking and was left with nothing but unexamined desires and opinions, I would be, in effect, an automaton rather than a person. So at least part of what makes me a person, and thus makes me fully myself, is my examining or thinking about what’s really worth doing and what’s really true: my “making up my own mind.”

This is why rather than just attracting us, inner freedom or making up our own minds, and truth, love, and beauty (insofar as love and beauty embody inner freedom and truth) *inspire* us. They represent our full presence, our being fully ourselves. This also explains the fact that having to choose between the higher and the lower, between what inspires us and what merely attracts us, is a “crisis” rather than just an ordinary decision. In choosing between the higher and the lower, we decide what kind of being we are going to be.

Higher and lower identities

This notion of a crisis in which we have to choose between higher and lower identities may remind us of traditional religious themes having to do with higher and lower: the sacred and the profane, God and our sinful nature, conversion from the lower and salvation by the higher. It also pervades the writing of philosophers and poets who don’t appear to be motivated by (at least) conventional forms of religion. Philosophers from Plato to Rödl explain how through inner freedom, truth, love, and beauty we experience something higher in the world and in ourselves. Poets and creative writers such as Edward Young, Jelaluddin Rumi, Walt Whitman, Rainer Maria Rilke, Virginia Woolf, and Mary Oliver conjure up this same experience.

Much of Asian thought, likewise, speaks of something higher which we can experience in ourselves and in the world, whether it’s the “Tao that cannot be named,” or “Brahman” that’s identical to our soul, or the “Buddha nature” that’s in everything but at the same time is truer and thus higher than what it’s in. There is more overlap between Asian and Western thought on these issues than we generally realize.⁴

Both Asian teachers and the Plato/Hegel tradition tell us that the central issue is not, as we in the West often suppose, about a separate “supreme being” that a person may or may not “believe in.” Rather, the central issue is the nature of the

world of which we're a part. Is it, as we tend to assume, essentially "all on one level," or does it have a "vertical" dimension by which some aspects of it really are "higher," through inner freedom, truth, love, and beauty?

The higher as the divine

If some aspects of the world really are higher, one might well think that these are the core of truth in the traditional notions of the sacred, God, conversion, salvation, and worship. In that case, the higher authority of inner freedom, truth, love, and beauty might be the reality that believers in a separate "supreme being" are trying, with only partial success, to get into focus.

We do usually imagine God as a being that's separate from the world. But there may be a surprise in store here, for someone who considers the question carefully. It turns out that a God who's separate from the world can't really transcend (go beyond) the world. This is because a God who's separate from the world would be, as the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner put it, "a member of the larger household of all reality," which would be composed of these two separate objects, God and the world.⁵ But a God who had the same kind of reality as the other members of a larger household wouldn't be truly "higher" than them, or transcendent. However much more "powerful" than the world this "God" might be, it would still be, in an important way, the same kind of thing as the world, and to that extent it wouldn't transcend the world—or deserve to have authority over it.

Transcendence through innerness

How can God transcend the world and deserve to have authority over it, if not by being a separate and very powerful being? The answer that's suggested by Plato and a long line of religious thinkers is that a God who's not a separate being can be distinguished from the world and higher than it by being more "inner" than it, more free, self-governing, loving, and beautiful. God could be the "inside" of the world.⁶ Since such a God isn't alongside the world as its equal in a larger household of all reality, such a God can truly go beyond the world (transcend it). Rather than failing to transcend, by being separate and alongside, it transcends by being more inner, free, self-governing, loving, and beautiful.

In which case, it's clear how God has a kind of authority that's entirely distinct from "power" as we usually conceive of it. And it's through this authority, and only through it, that God transcends everything. In our earliest encounters with something radically different and awe-inspiring, we might not have come up with a better word than "power." But sheer physical power, which isn't oriented to any conception of the good, integrates nothing and thus achieves nothing that's

“itself,” fully real, or (indeed) truly different. By contrast, selfhood, freedom, love, beauty, and rational authority integrate to a maximum degree and thus make it clear how rather than being something merely to fear and placate, God deserves worship (that is, reverence and devotion) as something that’s truly *higher* (more authoritative) than us.

We are conditioned to think of the “creator” as distinguished primarily by the sheer “power” that the act of creation implies, while we bow occasionally toward the notion that this power is somehow mysteriously combined with love and other admirable qualities. In doing this we fail to give this creator any authority over its creation beyond the authority of its power to “punish and reward.” We forget that a power of that kind deserves no reverence or devotion, being no different in principle from the power of a tyrant.

Whereas the ability to integrate, to be whole through freedom, love, and beauty, gives its possessor a kind of reality, through self-integration, that tyrants don’t begin to possess. The possessor of this integration deserves authority over the world that seeks integration and only intermittently achieves it. But it’s precisely not “separate” from that world, because what’s separate is in a crucial way the same as what it’s separate from; it exists “alongside,” belongs to the same “household” as the world. Whereas integration, by going “within,” truly achieves something that the world, regarded merely as such, as “external” and “side-by-side,” does not achieve.

Although conceptions of God as in some way “internal” rather than “separate” don’t play much of a role in public discussion today, they have in fact been quite common in Western religious thought. Figures like St Paul (in God “we live and move and have our being”), St Athanasius (God “became man that we might become God”), and St Augustine (“You were more inward [to me] than my most inward part”) can be cited in early Christianity. In modern times, Hegel, Alfred North Whitehead, Paul Tillich, and Karl Rahner likewise speak of God in ways that aren’t consistent with God’s being a separate being.⁷ Because they don’t identify God with the world but retain a distinction between them, these views are not “pantheistic.” Distinct and higher but not separate and not “a being,” their God may “create” the world by making it self-determined and fully real, rather than by existing before the world in time and “deciding” to create it.

An objection to this conception

Could it be that since many people do think of God as a separate being, someone who describes God as “distinct but not separate” is really just changing the subject, by not discussing what many people call “God”?

What’s important for my purposes is simply that what we’re talking about is truly transcendent, deserves to have authority, and is free, loving, beautiful, and

accessible to us. The conception of “God” as a separate being, on the other hand, resembles the earlier habits of thinking of God as like a human being or like an animal, in that it makes God resemble something that we’re familiar with. These conceptions prevent God from really transcending, really going beyond the ordinary world, and from having the authority that such transcendence would carry with it. So anyone who wants their God to transcend the world and have the authority that goes with that will want to consider the Plato/Hegel God seriously.

Here’s a comparison. In recent times we have learned something new about the substance that we call “water,” which for a long time we described as a simple “element.” Water, it turns out, is actually a composite, made up of atoms of hydrogen and oxygen. Similarly, we may learn something new about the “God” whom many of us habitually describe as a separate being. We may learn that this “God” is actually distinct but not separate from the “lower” beings that make up the world. We wouldn’t learn this by empirical investigation, as we did in the case of water, but we would learn it. These stories show how we are able to talk about the same thing, essentially, while our conception of what that thing is, is undergoing change.

Just as we were correct in thinking that water flows, is capable of freezing and boiling, is transparent, and so forth, so we have also been correct in thinking that “God” transcends ordinary beings like us and has great authority as a result of that transcendence. In both cases, we have also been mistaken about significant features of what we’re talking about, but that doesn’t prevent us from talking, throughout our learning process, of what is essentially the same thing. In this way, it should be possible to compare differing conceptions of “God” without throwing up our hands and saying that we’re just not discussing the same subject.

This is my reply to critics of the “philosophers’ God” who assert, like Henri Bergson, that “religion . . . regards [God], above all, as a Being who can hold communication with us,” so that philosophers like Plato and Aristotle “are speaking to us of something else” (Bergson [1935], p. 241). Bergson doesn’t address the question of how God can deserve to have authority over us, nor does he perceive how the Plato/Aristotle/Hegel God is free, loving, beautiful, and deeply involved in our lives at every point.

We have certainly learned in the course of time that our “communication” with this “Being” (to use these terms for a moment) is different from our communication with each other. If it weren’t different, the “Being” wouldn’t be infinite and wouldn’t have the authority that it does. This would likewise be my reply to objections that the Plato/Aristotle/Hegel God doesn’t seem like a “person.” (I’ll say some more about this issue in Chapter 2.) Regarding the notion of God as “an existing thing” (or “a Being,” as Bergson puts it), Iris Murdoch says, “No existing thing could be what we have meant by God. Any existing God would be less than God. . . . But what led us to conceive of [God] does exist and is *constantly* experienced and pictured” (Murdoch [1993], p. 508).

I am also impressed, of course, by the fact that central thinkers in Christianity and in other religious traditions have taught a concept of God which does not make God a separate being. For all of these reasons, I propose to use the term “God” for something that transcends by being more inner, free, and loving rather than by being separate. If you prefer to use the word “God” for something else, that’s fine. We just need to be clear about what each of us is talking about, at any point in our discussion.

A God whom we can know

Besides being free, loving, the source of all full reality, and truly transcendent because it doesn’t fall like us into the category of a separate being, a God who is distinct but not separate is accessible to us; it’s a God whom we can know. If this God is distinct from the world by being more “inner” than it, more free, true, loving, and beautiful, but isn’t a separate being, then this God’s innerness, its freedom, truth, and so forth, can’t be separate from ours. So we can know this God by knowing our own inwardness, our own freedom, truth, and so forth. No special faculty, no “*sensus divinitatis*,” and no apparatus of “proofs” are required.⁸

That we can know God does not bring God down to “our” ordinary level. For our inwardness or God continue to be higher than much of the world inasmuch as, in our ongoing “identity crisis,” our freedom, truth, love, and beauty continue to be higher than much of what we’re composed of.

If we can know God as our own freedom, truth, love, beauty, and (in general) inwardness, then what people call “faith” turns out to be our loyalty to this inwardness or this higher reality, in the face of the attractions of lower or more external desires and projects. Which is a loyalty that can be difficult enough to maintain, even though we sometimes experience the higher reality as our own freedom, truth, love, and beauty. For a part of us is often eager to suggest cynically that there is no real freedom, truth, love, or beauty—that our “higher interests” are merely fantasies, because nothing is really “higher.” Instincts like fear, anger, and self-protection and ideologies like materialism and naturalism can promote such a view very effectively.

“Nihilism” is one of the common names for this view, whose power most of us have felt.⁹ It has also been called the “dark night of the soul,” depression, despair, and so forth. Being driven by instinct, these states of mind are very natural. One result that they can have, when we’re accustomed to them, is that because a breakthrough of love and freedom is so different from what we’re used to thinking that we have inside us, it will often seem to come from “outside” us. The truth is that the freedom and love that are outside us can only affect us because we have the potential for them inside us. But the downward forces that we also have within us can be very persuasive in their denial that there is any such positive potential there (or anywhere at all).¹⁰

“Mysticism”

The claim that in spite of all of this, we do have freedom and love and thus God and the ultimate reality within us, and that consequently we can know God directly, is the characteristic doctrine of “mysticism.” Because this doctrine is often not explained clearly, “mysticism” has acquired additional connotations, such as that the mystical knowledge of God “goes beyond reason,” that it’s “other-worldly,” and that it’s experienced only by a select few, on extraordinary occasions.

But I follow common dictionary definitions of the primary sense of “mysticism” as simply “immediate consciousness of (or union with) the transcendent or ultimate reality or God.” So I ask readers to set aside other suggestions that may be commonly associated with “mysticism” but are not part of what I mean by the word. In particular, (1) there is no suggestion here that this consciousness or union goes beyond “reason,” except insofar as people often define “reason” in dogmatic ways that put unreasonable limits on its method or its realm of application. (2) Nor is there a claim of a peculiar “faculty” that makes this consciousness or union possible. No “*sensus divinitatis*.” (3) Nor is there a suggestion that the mystical consciousness or unity is “ineffable” (though it may certainly be difficult to express).

(4) Nor is there a suggestion that mysticism puts us in touch with “another world”—except in the not particularly controversial sense that it makes us aware of aspects of our everyday world which are in important ways “higher” and which aren’t studied by, for example, present-day physics, chemistry, or biology. So “mysticism” as I understand it is not accurately described as “other-worldly.” What it makes us conscious of is transcendent or ultimate in the sense that it’s *higher*, but not in the sense that it’s *separate*. (In keeping with my objection to the notion that God is “separate” from us, I regard the notion of “union with God” as a metaphor for what is actually the discovery of a way in which we have in fact all along *been* God.)

Furthermore, (5) I think it’s a mistake to assume, as writers about mysticism generally do, that any person who is conscious of God will *know* that she’s conscious of God. If mysticism is immediate consciousness of the transcendent or ultimate reality or God, I suggest that this consciousness is in fact present in our experience of trying to have an open mind, or inner freedom, or love, or forgiveness, or other similar states. In a way that I’ll explain in subsequent chapters, true open-mindedness (or inner freedom, and so forth) is the ultimate reality or God, so when we’re conscious of our own open-mindedness or our effort to be open-minded, we’re conscious of God. But it’s easy for a person to be conscious of open-mindedness, inner freedom, love, or forgiveness, and not realize that, as I’m going to argue in this book, these are what the ultimate reality or God is composed of. So in being conscious of them, she’s conscious of the ultimate reality or God without knowing that this is what she’s conscious of.

We might call such a person a “mystic,” even though she doesn’t entirely know what she’s conscious of. Or we might coin a special term for this intermediate state between unconsciousness of the ultimate reality or God and consciousness of the ultimate reality or God combined with full knowledge about what the consciousness is of. However we choose to designate it, this intermediate state is extremely important, because it means that something that we might call “mysticism” is much more widespread than we generally recognize. Practically everyone experiences open-mindedness, inner freedom, love, or forgiveness, at one time or another. So practically everyone experiences what I will argue is the ultimate reality or God, though most often without knowing that this is what they’re experiencing. When we realize this, our attitude toward what we call “mysticism” may change significantly, because an important kind of “mysticism” then turns out to be an almost universal human possession.

Thus, (6) contrary to a widespread assumption, practically all of us are “mystics,” in the sense that practically all of us sometimes are immediately conscious of the ultimate reality or God, though often without knowing that this is what we’re conscious of. Individuals like Rumi, Whitman, Plato, or Hegel, on the other hand, who know what it is that they’re conscious of, and who may be able to evoke this kind of knowledge for others, are “mystics” in a stronger and more familiar sense of the word. Both groups show us something very important, and something that’s generally ignored, about human beings. But this very important thing is not the extraordinary “mystical experiences” that we hear so much about. Rather, it’s the transcendence that we experience in many much more familiar ways, in everyday life, but which we often don’t appreciate as transcendence. I’ll say more about this issue throughout the book and especially in Chapter 9.

Plato and Hegel explain the direct knowledge of God in a way that makes it clear that it doesn’t have to have any of these other features that are often associated with “mysticism.” Part of the purpose of this book is to lay out Plato’s and Hegel’s explanations so that you can see how mysticism can be perfectly rational and confirmed by your own experience.¹¹ And, indeed, so that you can see how the knowledge of God, which mysticism shows that we possess, is the fulfillment that’s described by traditional religions as salvation or awakening.

I should probably note here that some recent commentators have gone so far as to maintain that Plato himself wasn’t actually a “mystic,” so that the long tradition of interpreting him as a mystic is based on a mistake. These commentators describe “mysticism” as “other-worldly” (Terence Irwin [1989], p. 114; Peter Adamson [2014], p. 159), and they point out Plato’s evident ongoing interest in the ordinary world of nature, politics, and so on. There are also commentators who raise similar objections to describing Hegel as a “mystic.” I think these objections are based on a misconception of what mysticism is.¹² The primary meaning of the term is the doctrine that we can have direct knowledge of God or the ultimate reality. But if this God or ultimate reality is “in” the everyday world, as both Plato and Hegel

suggest, there's no reason why knowledge of God or the ultimate reality should reduce the mystic's interest in the everyday world—though certainly he or she will see that world in a different light.¹³

A God who, in one way, we are

Let us return, then, to the knowledge of God that mysticism shows that we possess, and the consequent salvation or awakening. We possess this knowledge, salvation, or awakening already, because we already have the freedom, truth, love, and beauty that we dream of—if only in the form of our ideals. Inasmuch as we appreciate what freedom, truth, love, and beauty would be, we possess them, to some degree.¹⁴ So the part of us that has this dream, already is what it dreams of.

And since this inspired part of us is free, which means self-determining, it's fully itself in a way that our other parts, which are determined by what's around them, are not. Indeed, since bounds or limits would involve constraining relations to what's around it, and thus prevent it from being fully self-determined, this "part" must be unbounded, infinite. Through it, then, we are fully ourselves and infinite. Difficult though it is to believe, we are, through this "part" of us, God right now. Bearing in mind, of course, that this "God" that we are is the truly transcendent, free, and loving reality that isn't a separate being from the world.

If the notion that we are (in any respect) "God" sounds grandiose or insane, remember that we are this God only by being loving and fully free, which means precisely not being driven by our separateness from other beings and our self-importance. So Heinrich Heine misunderstood Hegel when he wrote in a much-quoted humorous recollection that "I was young and proud, and it gratified my self-esteem to learn from Hegel that, contrary to what my grandmother thought, it wasn't the Lord in heaven, but I myself here on earth who was God."¹⁵ Pride has to do with one's relations to others, and thus is a feature of a finite and non-self-determining being. So to the extent that Heine was proud, he wasn't God. Whether Heine failed to understand this or, for the sake of his joke, chose not to understand it is hard to determine.

So it's not by accident that when I mention freedom it's always in tandem with love and ethics. People who seek inner freedom sooner or later find out that insisting on our own needs over other people's needs (or on others' needs over our own) prevents us from being fully free, because it means that we're constantly determined by something that isn't us. We're constantly determined, in these cases, by the dividing line between us and the others.

This is why we always exhibit a certain compulsiveness or lack of vision, that is, a lack of freedom, when we're preoccupied with the separation between ourselves and others. For whatever reason, we haven't discovered or we've forgotten what full freedom is like.

So, as I said, the “part” of us that dreams of freedom, truth, love, and beauty, and by appreciating them is them, is God by being fully itself and infinite. I put “part” in scare quotes, here—we are God through this “part” of us—because since it’s infinite, this “part” can’t really be a mere “part” of anything. It must be the whole.

But you certainly know why I nevertheless want to call it only a “part” of us: because we aren’t aware of being God! Ordinarily, we feel like we’re anything but God. We feel (at best) limited, imperfect, not fully free, not fully ourselves, and separate from others. So that when Eckhart Tolle asks, “How can you find that which was never lost, the very life that you are? . . . God-realization is the most natural thing there is,”¹⁶ we may be inclined to reply, If it’s so natural, why hasn’t “God-realization” happened to *us*?

Why we often don’t know this

We aren’t usually aware of being God because as human beings we’re anything but God. Being human carries with it a lot of blindness. But when that blindness is lifted, we discover to our great surprise that we aren’t *only* human beings. Insofar as we care about inner freedom, love, and related ideals, we *are* inner freedom, love, and the rest, and thus we’re infinite, and we’re God. This is the sense in which we really are “one” with each other.

If we are inner freedom and God, and in that sense “one” with each other, why are we, in other respects, so imperfect, so ignorant of who we are, and so “separate”? This is because a truly infinite God can’t exclude anything, including what’s imperfect, “separate,” and ignorant. So there must be imperfect, separate, and ignorant things such as we are in our capacity as human beings, and such as rocks and trees are in their capacity as rocks and trees. True infinity includes every variety of finitude. This is why we must be imperfect, not fully free, not fully ourselves, and largely blind—as well as, through our dreams and ideals, perfect, free, fully ourselves, enlightened, and “one.” It’s why we must be the ongoing identity crisis—“helpless immortal! insect infinite!”—that we are.

Our ongoing identity crisis between finite and infinite, human and divine, ignorant and knowing is what “humanism” in its various forms overlooks, and what traditional religions through their various mythologies bring to our attention.¹⁷ But within this crisis, clearly our dreams and ideals are the main thing: that we love and admire and sometimes try to emulate the divine freedom, truth, love, and beauty. These are always in us, and however dismal our failures are, however much we fail to realize, our essential divinity outweighs our failures because it’s infinite and fully itself—that is, divine.

When we appear not to love, but rather to be hateful or indifferent to our fellow humans, it’s because we’re preoccupied with the effort to defend merely