



Reality and Mystical Experience

F. Samuel Brainard

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A philosophical inquiry that explores the role and limitations of discursive reason in understanding ultimate reality.

“Samuel Brainard develops a critical language based on a lucid and constructive definition of 'publicity' and 'presence.' He then uses these concepts to engage the Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian traditions in a manner that avoids undue generalizations while offering an original and challenging approach to comparative mysticism.” —Michael Sells, Haverford College

“Here are promising new pathways of philosophic dialogue across religious and cultural borders. Brainard has with chutzpah and creative insight invented a new terminology for comparing classical accounts of mystical experience, East and West. Close to Whitehead, and augmenting some of the efforts of Peirce, Polanyi, and Wittgenstein, he proposes a phenomenological scheme for philosophizing, once again, about the ALL, without doing violence to the plurality of particular linguistic practices in which encounters with the ALL are described. Brainard’s book is sure to awaken dormant debates on the relations among language, experience, and divinity.” —Peter Ochs, University of Virginia

Responding to our modern disillusionment with any claims to absolute truth regarding morality or reality, this book offers a conceptual approach for discussing absolutes without denying either the relevance of divergent religious and philosophical teachings or the evidence supporting postmodern and poststructuralist critiques.

Case studies of mysticism within Advaita-Vedanta Hinduism, Madhyamika Buddhism, and Nicene Christianity demonstrate the value of this approach and offer many fresh insights into the metaphysical presuppositions of these religions as well as into the nature and value of mystical experience.

Like Douglas Hofstadter’s *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, this book finds ultimate reality to be rationally graspable only as an eternal fugue of pattern and paradox. Yet it does not so much counter other philosophical views as provide a conceptual tool for understanding and classifying incommensurable

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Jose Brummitt:

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