

A post-Kantian perspective on recent debates about mystical experience.

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Abstract

Academic discussion of mystical experience has tended to presuppose a model of experience that is broadly Kantian in character, and this is so in

two regards. First of all it has adopted Kant's division between intuition and understanding - in the form of a distinction drawn between "experience" and "interpretation". Through the former of each of these pairs, an object is said to be given; through the latter, it is said to be conceptualized. Second, many thinkers have presupposed the Kantian distinction of "noumenon" and "phenomenon".

This article questions the appropriateness of both these presuppositions. Situating my arguments in the context of the recent constructivist-essentialist debate, I suggest that thinkers on both sides have not been sufficiently critical in their employment of Kantian terminology. I argue that there exists an important subcategory of mystical experience that does not fit comfortably into the Kantian conceptual framework.

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