Towards a Renewed Mysticism: Epistemic Standards in Theory and Practice

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TOWARDS A RENEWED MYSTICISM: EPISTEMIC STANDARDS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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“Attached to each [doxastic] practice is an ‘overrider system’ of beliefs and procedures that the subject can use in subjecting prima facie justified beliefs to further tests when that is called for.”

--Alston, *Perceiving God*, 159
“The experiences in question are of such a nature that I do not require any criterion to be certain that they are veridical. Rather, I have non-criterial certainty that such is the case. . . . Accordingly, every such experience provides me with *infallible justification* for believing that it constitutes a veridical awareness of God’s presence.”

Richard Swinburne

1) “the apparent perception was made under conditions or by a subject found in the past to be unreliable.”

2) “the perceptual claim was to have perceived an object of a certain kind in circumstances where similar perceptual claims have proved false.”

3) “on background evidence it is very very probable that x was not present.”

4) “S’s claim to have perceived x may be challenged on the grounds that, whether or not x was there, x was probably not a cause of the experience of its seeming to S that x was there.”

--Swinburne, The Existence of God, 311-314
A New Standard?

**Nonnegotiable:**

1) The doctrinal/intellectual element of the experience must conform to previously held beliefs or those of an established religious tradition to the degree that a subject could rationally accept its content.

2) The experience must be free from Swinburne’s four special considerations, with minor alteration.

3) There ought to be an engaging or arresting of all of the subject’s faculties.

4) The experience ought to be transformative, catalyzing effects in the subject that last beyond the experience itself.

**Ancillary:**

1) The subject is reasonably predisposed to a mystical experience.

2) The experience is accompanied by a sense of indubitability concerning the veridicality of the experience and the accuracy of its content.

3) The experience is consistent with those of others.
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