

How Ineffable is the Ineffable?

An Evaluation of Ineffability and Mysticism

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“I am saying something about the ineffable. I am saying something about the ultimate mystery. You can understand it, yet you can never understand it totally. It is elusive, it escapes. It is within reach, but it is not within grasp. You are always coming closer and closer to it, but you never arrive.” Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who is an Indian spiritual leader, sums up the frustration and paradox with ineffability. Ineffability is strange because we often find ourselves describing or giving characteristics to ideas and concepts we classify as ‘ineffable’. But what is ineffability? Well, that is a question with a complicated answer, but with any piece of unfamiliar vocabulary, a basic definition is a healthy start. Dictionary.com defines the word ‘ineffable’ as (1) incapable of being expressed or described in words – inexpressible; or (2) not to be spoken because of its sacredness – unutterable. These are good definitions to start with, though they will be expanded bit-by-bit throughout the entirety of this paper. However, there is a trap that many individuals and philosophers fall into whenever they discuss the topic of ineffability, especially in the study of religion and philosophy. The trap that these individuals fall into is that they begin to defend or suggest the existence of ‘relative ineffability’; that meaning that there are things which, no matter how hard we attempt, can never be fully described; describable but not to its entirety. However, I argue the opposite to the reality of relative ineffability – and ineffability in general – to the extent that, though it can conceptually exist, it cannot exist within reality. Nothing is truly ineffable, even in religious mysticism. However, there is a purpose and role that ineffability holds – as a concept – which is integral to the function of language. In showing how this is the case, this paper will describe and dissect the nature and ‘existence’ of ineffability, but primarily ineffability in mysticism and religion. So in order to efficiently dissect the topic of ineffability, this paper will first describe ineffability and all that it encompasses; secondly, I shall then compare and contrast forms of ineffability in several different religions and mysticisms;

thirdly, I will explain what these similarities and differences mean in relation to ineffability; and lastly, the remainder of the paper will address the evaluation of ineffability, the theories surrounding ineffability and what its purpose is. Now, with that mouthful out of the way, I shall address the question posed earlier: what is ineffability?

Well as mentioned earlier, the definition of ineffability is that which cannot be described with words or that which cannot be uttered. From here, however, there are different reasons for why we experience ‘ineffability’ in our everyday lives and within the study of religion. Something that must be considered is that “we must think less of ineffability in the singular and more of ineffability’s of every kind” (Scharfstein, p. xviii). One of the first types of ineffability is that which is too sacred or holy to speak of; ineffable by choice. This type of ineffability is easy to understand because it means an idea, concept or practice is forbidden to be spoken of, and thus you cannot express it as a rule. Then you have the other form of ineffability – which can be broken into subcategories – that means something or some idea cannot be expressed at all. This could be for several reasons: (1) some entity or idea is beyond our comprehension as human beings and thus since we cannot comprehend this idea, we thus cannot speak about it; or (2) we cannot accurately portray or express an experience or idea because of the limited nature of language. There is also another argument which branches off of these ideas, which states that we cannot discuss ideas or concepts which lay outside our sphere or plane of existence. This argues that since it lay outside our plane’s laws of physics and reality, we thus cannot talk about or speak about concepts or beings which lay in a different plane of existence than ours since it would be wholly different and under different laws of reality (assuming it would have them).

But those are the basic and most common forms of ineffability that usually arise within the discussion of ineffability and mysticism. There are other forms of ‘ineffability’ which arise

within our everyday lives that ordinary people experience. One example is the idea that shared experiences limits what one person may understand and express as opposed to another. “On the contrary, our use of language presupposes and reflects the physical structure of our bodies, our emotions and appetites, the way in which we perceive, the kinds of spaces in which we live, and the cultures we assimilate as we become human in their image and in ours” (Scharfstein, pp. 4-5). Not only does the idea of cultural differences between two individuals cause a loss of words to explain the practice within one’s culture, but even the different personalities, attitudes, emotions, tastes, different health conditions, along with other differences, cause our shared experiences to be different in their inherent nature. Similar to that idea, is also the struggle to explain oneself to another person and in the end leaving an “Ineffable Residue” (Scharfstein, 1993). Scharfstein goes on to say “our impenetrability is mutual, and it is as difficult for others to understand us to our satisfaction as for us to understand them to theirs.” So with this, not only does different experiences and cultural backgrounds make expressing certain ideas difficult, but now there is a taste of dissatisfaction in one’s words by throwing a residual taste of ‘ineffability’ since you can never reach full satisfaction of expression.

Have you ever experienced difficulty in explaining to your loved one(s) just how much you love them? What about expressing or describing a particular pain you’ve experienced? A broken bone; a burn; being stabbed or jabbed by a sharp object; there is a nearly endless list of forms of pain one can experience, all with unique and agonizing sensations. How about telling a friend, peer or stranger of a memory or experience you’ve had, whether it be skydiving or simply gazing upon the beautiful scenery of a mountainous valley? If one had all the time in the world to explain that memory or that moment to a stranger, could they fully describe the experience? There are also forms of ‘ineffability’ which arise in literature, poetry, music, etc. The way in

which we form sentences and prose, the word choices we use, the signifiers or the lack of signifier in our sentences, the context of what we are speaking about; all of these things contribute to the ineffability which arises in the spoken and written arts of humanity.

‘Ineffability’ is everywhere and we encounter it in our daily lives constantly; or do we? As mentioned within my thesis, ineffability cannot exist within reality; it can only exist in concept. I will touch more on this later in the evaluation section of the paper, considering that this first section is to simply describe what ‘ineffability’ has been discussed as within the construct of our everyday lives and in the study of religion and philosophy. There is far more to be evaluated than just what ‘ineffability’ is and means. Religions and mystics claim that mystical experiences, deities and/or concepts within their religious sect are at their core ‘ineffable’.

Here is where the topic becomes far more interesting and complicated: the discussion of mysticism and ‘ineffability’ in religion. Mysticism and signs of ‘ineffability’ within a religion are common in just about every faith practice one could possibly think of; however, this paper will only be examining three different religions – Judaism, Buddhism and Islam – with the addition of a theory proposed by Robert Forman who describes what he believes to be a true mystical experience – a Pure Consciousness Event.

So, let’s start off with the religion of Judaism and Jewish mysticism. Judaism and Jewish mysticism is an interesting faith to discuss whenever looking at ‘ineffability’ because there are instances of both ineffable and effable experiences and concepts within Judaism. However, Judaism has examples of ‘ineffability’ within its religion which echoes many of the types of ‘ineffability’ described within the first section of the paper. For example, Judaism often portrays God as “a transcendent Creator, without origins, gender, or form, a being utterly different from what has been created” (Fisher, p. 229). Judaism discusses the Abrahamic God in more than the

idea that God is omnipotent and omniscient, but that God is also formless, at least in comparison to what has been created in the world. Thus you cannot express what you cannot understand or comprehend since it is entirely different from what we know to exist. Judaism also houses one of the most common forms of ‘ineffability’ in religions, and that is something is too sacred or holy to even utter. “The word given in this biblical translation as “Lord” is considered too sacred to be pronounced. In the Hebrew scriptures it is rendered only in consonants as YHWH or YHVH; the pronunciation of the vowels is not known” (Fisher, p. 234). The difficulty here is that words cannot be uttered out of their religious sanctity, which is rather a matter of rules and practice, as opposed to not being able to express it at all – ‘ineffable’ by choice. From here, you begin to stumble upon some interesting forms of ineffability ranging from the metaphorical to the mystical experiences of Ezekiel. “The soles of his feet fill the entire universe; their height is 30 million parasangs. From the sole of his foot to his ankle is 10 million parasangs. From his ankle to his knees is 190 million parasangs” and so on and so forth (Matt, p. 74). Here, this description of God in measurements is to serve the practitioner the purpose of knowing that the “goal in trying to depict God is to fail – and thereby to realize the infinity of God” (Matt, p. 186). Within Daniel Matt’s book *The Essential Kabbalah* he goes on to provide more excerpts which describe the magnanimity and grandeur of God, which is beyond anything one could imagine due to the nature of God. In fact, in *The Essential Kabbalah* it says “every definition of God leads to heresy; definition is spiritual idolatry” (Matt, p. 32). God, in this sense, is ineffable because there is no possible way to describe God fully or accurately with language, since language is made of this world. One of the more mind-boggling ideas in Judaism and Jewish mysticism is Ein Sof – or Infinite. Ein Sof is difficult to describe, due to the fact that Ein Sof is Infinite. “Ein Sof is present in all things in actuality, while all things are present in it potentially. It is the

beginning and cause of everything” (Matt, p. 39). Ein Sof is one with everything, since everything is in Ein Sof and Ein Sof is in everything. How does one go about explaining such a concept easily? Jewish mystics have used and mentioned the ten sefirot which are one and united – the ten sefirot aren’t separate from Ein Sof, nor each other. *The Essential Kabbalah* uses the metaphor of water or light passing through different colored glass which makes the appearance and nature of the water or light seem different, but in all reality it is the same as before. These are the forms of ‘ineffability’ that one may come across within the practice of Judaism or Jewish mysticism.

There are generally some similarities between the forms and examples of ineffability within the religions that I am discussing in this paper. That is certainly true of Islam and Sufism which has parallels to Judaism and Jewish mysticism, due to the fact that they both have historical ties to one another. One similar example of ineffability in Islam which parallels with Judaism is the concept and nature of Allah (God). Allah is also seen as something which is both unified with this world, yet beyond the limits of human comprehension and thus cannot be given characteristics or descriptors. “Therefore there is no community [that is, an attribute common to both God and humans] in regard to this attribute. It is not allowable to associate anything with God either in essence, attribute, or name” (Denny, p. 254). Allah is beyond everything that is human and in existence, therefore we can’t truly describe Allah, or attribute a characteristic to Allah because Allah is beyond our comprehension due to the fact that we think in dualistic terms, and Allah is One. However, something which is different between Judaism and Islam is that most of the cases of ‘ineffability’ in Islam come from its mystical practices in Sufism. Sufis, in their approach to the Qur’an, are quite allegorical and metaphorical. “The exoteric-minded might find them blasphemous, and those who had not had such experiences would only interpret them

literally and thus mistakenly” (Fisher, p. 390). Sufis on their practice and understanding of the Qur’an seem to believe the idea that there is ‘ineffability’ in Islam. One Sufi, al-Bistami “so lost himself that he is said to have uttered pronouncements such as “Under my garment there is nothing but God”, and “Glory be to Me! How great is My Majesty!”” (Fisher, p. 389). However, to the mystic’s understanding this wasn’t a literal statement, but a rather a metaphorical one which represented one being completely “annihilated in God.” This is perhaps the most ‘ineffable’ example within Sufism and overall Islam; the idea of ‘fana’ – which means annihilation – in God. Fana has been referred to as both ‘purity’ and ‘annihilation’, however the end goal is the same. The words ‘purity’ and ‘annihilation’ are often used because they describe the human condition and the condition of self which is dirty and impure. The construct of self separates us from becoming one with Allah; annihilation and purity from one’s self and worldly things until “all that remains is God” (Denny, p. 257). The idea of separating one’s self from their own self is hard to imagine, let alone describe; it is argued that this kind of experience is ineffable in its nature because since there is no ‘you’ than how can one ‘you’ describe that experience? There is also the ineffable experience of loving and longing for Allah, however, this is somewhat similar to the experience of annihilation. After being annihilated into Allah and coming back from the experience, you feel a longing to return to Allah which is ‘indescribable’; almost like longing for a lover who is far away. These are the examples of ‘ineffability’ one may come across within Sufism and Islam, but now on to a religion which is different from both of the previously mentioned.

Buddhism is a unique and interesting religion in comparison to the Western and Middle-Eastern religions in the fact that there isn’t worship – or at least a central worship – of a deity or deities. Rather, “Buddhism is a religion of wisdom, enlightenment and compassion” (Fisher, p.

134). For Buddhism, there isn't a trouble of describing or expressing a deity, so we are at least saved from this dilemma. However, the concepts of Nirvana, zazen and satori are the concepts and experiences which could be deemed 'ineffable'. The concept of Nirvana is one which is rather harder to comprehend, let alone describe. The Buddha described Nirvana as "quietude of heart" and "where there is nothing, where naught is grasped, there is the Isle of No-Beyond" (Fisher, p. 141). Nirvana, as I understand it, is something that is beyond and separate from the wheel of life and death – and thus rebirth – but what is beyond life and death? In other major religions, an afterlife comes after death and individuals usually try to describe its splendor and joy or terror and suffering. However, Nirvana is a separate reality from life and death where there is no pain, no sorrow, no desire, and it's just nothing at all (kind of). Nirvana can be described as nothing insofar that it has also been described as "empty in the sense that it is a thought construct, even though it is not dependent on conditions" (Fisher, p. 153). The only way to know and express Nirvana, therefore, is to experience Nirvana. So here, we have some similarities in comparing it to the experience of fana with Allah, or trying to understand the infinite of God; all of these concepts are separate from our reality, yet at the same time part of it. Now, we begin to delve into Zen and Dogen Buddhism and their meditative practices. Zazen and satori are quite unique. Zazen is a sitting meditation used to experience unity. "To sit means to obtain absolute freedom and not to allow any thought to be caused by external objects. To meditate means to realize the imperturbability of one's original nature" (Fisher, p. 158). This is one form in reaching enlightenment, or satori. One reaches enlightenment once they see that everything in existence is in unity after the recognition that nothing is separate. "All aspects of life become at the same time utterly precious, and utterly empty, "nothing special". This paradox can be sensed only with the mystically expanded consciousness; it cannot be grasped

intellectually” (Fisher, p. 161). Enlightenment itself seems to be, in a sense, ‘ineffable’ and can only be truly experienced and understood once the consciousness and awareness of an individual is expanded. However, how one expands their consciousness and awareness is a little difficult considering that enlightenment requires one to let go of dualistic thought about one’s self and one’s mind and to unify one’s mind from all distractions and aversions. It also means being able to see “directly into ones own existence and the existence of others” and finally realizing the dynamic interdependence of everything “because the enlightenment experience goes beyond the dualities of conceptual thought, it cannot be completely described with words” (Koller, p.321). Enlightenment can be described to an extent to where another individual may grasp a vague idea of what enlightenment is, because the only way to know enlightenment is to experience enlightenment. So, the only reason as to why the experience of enlightenment is ‘ineffable’, is because the nature of enlightenment can only be understood through experience and not words. “Even if you can see that you have indeed expressed what you have realized, if you have not realized that not all things can be verbally expressed, then you will lack the look of the Buddhas and Ancestors” (Dogen, p. 511). So the types of ineffability in Buddhism are somewhat different than those compared to Islam and Judaism, however one can see the enlightenment to realizing unity to have a similar theme to fana in Sufism.

Now, this next one is a little odd, but it deserves an honorable mention. Robert C. Forman is a philosopher who wanted to put his two cents on what he holds to be a mystical experience. Forman, in response to the constructivist view about mysticism and experience, defines and creates an idea for ineffable mysticism. Forman’s argument is based around the Pure Consciousness Event (PCE) which can be defined as a wakeful though content less (unintentional) consciousness. Forman also places conditions under which an individual truly

experiences a PCE in the form of slowed mental activity, heartbeat and an overall slowed and relaxed level of body activity. He then goes on to argue that constructivists cannot explain the occurrence of PCEs, because PCEs are shapeless, content less, and essentially homogenous mystical experiences throughout varying cultures. So, in Forman's eyes, the only true mystical experience is his PCE. This is a stark contrast to everything I just previously described and compared, considering that Forman's PCE is 'empty' of content and unintentional, whereas most other forms of mystical experience in Judaism, Sufism and Buddhism is either intentional and has some form of content within the experience. However, that essentially sums up the forms and examples of both 'ineffability' and mysticism in various different practices.

But what does this all mean? Do the similarities in the practices and experiences of mysticism in religions – along with their 'ineffability' – mean anything substantive, or are all of these faiths and belief systems wholly different from one another? In the end, what does this mean about 'ineffability'? Within this third section of the paper, I will simply explain what all the examples of 'ineffability' in religions and mysticism entail. One possible explanation is provided by John Hick; Hick proposes that all the religions in the world are trying to experience and attain the same thing: the Real-in-itself. Hick is a bit of a pluralist and tries to explain the existence of the plurality of religions around the world. Why should only one religion be the right one; what if all of them are right? Essentially that is what Hick proposes and draws from the evidence of ineffability which arises in religions and mystical experiences. He argues that the Real-in-itself is the 'Ultimate Reality', a plane of existence completely separate and different from our plane of existence – the 'Conscious Reality'. We cannot experience the Real-in-itself, according to Forman; we can only experience the Real-as-experienced-and-thought. We try to understand the Real-in-itself within our given languages, cultures and civilizations. In Hick's

mind, mystical experiences themselves aren't ineffable because they are of this plane and thus we can give credit and description to what they are. However, he argues that the true ineffability lies in the 'Ultimate Reality'; that which we cannot comprehend and experience is thus inexpressible.

Hick proposes an interesting theory, which if correct, would solve the issue of plurality; though this isn't the only explanation to the various forms of 'ineffability' and mystical experiences that mystics and typical practitioners experience. The other take-away from the many different forms of mystical experiences and their encounters with 'ineffability' is one which draws on constructivist theories. Constructivists address the full diversity of religious and mystical traditions by viewing that "the [mystical] experience itself as well as the form in which it is reported is shaped by concepts which the mystic brings to, and which shape, his experience" (Forman, p. 10). All of the many different mystical experiences and practices do have similarities between one another; however, everything in existence is similar to each other in some form. You cannot have similarity without difference, the only thing that matters with similarity and difference is the degree of which it is true. So, though these mystical experiences are similar in some common thread, they are inherently different from one another. What a Buddhist mystic or monk is trying to achieve within their mystical experience is entirely different than what say, Ezekiel, experienced in his vision and mystical experience of God. The same could also be argued that though the concept of fana in Sufism and the concept of satori in Buddhism both have a similar theme of achieving unity, both experiences in their respective religions are still different. A Buddhist achieving satori and realizing the unity and interdependence of everything in life is, in the end, different from a Sufi becoming one with Allah, because there is apparently no 'self' in the experience of fana and in satori your consciousness and awareness isn't destroyed

but rather expanded – and humbled to a degree. The nature and view of constructivists is one which is quite appealing, because it simply just makes the most sense. So rather than thinking that mystical experiences are similar because of their ‘ineffability’, remember that it’s rather what can be described of these mystical experiences which set them apart from one another. The similarities within these religions are more a result of coincidence, than the idea that all religions are attempting to attain the same thing in life. By saying that all religions and their mystical experiences are similar to one another because they are ‘ineffable’ is rather lazy and doesn’t fully examine nor appreciate the complexities and nuances between these various experiences.

However, Hick’s theory of mysticism and ineffability falls apart simply because it is based on a faulty idea: ineffability. Hick’s theory makes sense, but just because it might make sense doesn’t mean it is true. For one, Hick argues that religions are trying to attain or explain the ‘Ultimate Reality’ in one of two ways: either (1) through a Personal Real-in-itself (i.e. God, Allah, Brahman) or (2) through an Absolute (i.e. the Dao). However, Buddhism puts a roadblock to this idea because Buddhism isn’t trying to explain an ‘Ultimate Reality’ rather Buddhism is trying to achieve enlightenment/Nirvana. However, Nirvana isn’t an ‘Ultimate Reality’ in the sense that Hick describes it; rather it has been described as a state, or a feeling or a sense of achievement with regards to enlightenment. Also, Buddhism isn’t the only religion which doesn’t try to explain or attain the Real-in-itself. The biggest issue with Hick’s theory, however, is that it is based on the existence of ineffability. Hick claims that we cannot express nor discuss the Real-in-itself because it is ‘ineffable’ and beyond our comprehension. I’d also like to state for the record that incomprehensibility doesn’t equal ineffability; knowing is different from expressing. Also, Knepper argues in his essay *Against Absolute Ineffability* that “if some ultimate reality or experience is absolutely ineffable, it also can’t repel philosophical-scientific scrutiny;

for that which is absolutely ineffable is absolutely nothing and therefore cannot serve as an object of authentication” (Knepper, p. 32). So though the Real-in-itself may be an ‘Ultimate Reality’, it isn’t ineffable because we can still talk about it, classify it and even discuss what it isn’t, thus giving it expression. If the Real-in-itself was actually ineffable, as Hick claims, then it wouldn’t be anything and thus couldn’t exist at all; if the Real-in-itself can’t exist, then Hick’s theory is utterly destroyed. Yet this still isn’t the only flaw to Hick’s theory. As Knepper points out in his response to Hick, “we can say that the Real-in-itself (a) transmits information to human, (b) authentically manifests itself as the Real-as-humane-ly-thought-and-experienced, and (c) analogically possesses the positive attributes of the Real-as-humane-ly-thought-and-experienced in some preeminent fashion” (Knepper, p. 29). If this is how the Real-in-itself manifests/communicates itself to humans, then it cannot be wholly ineffable and out of our comprehension; difficult to comprehend, perhaps, but so incomprehensible that it is ineffable, no.

A similar argument can also be applied to Forman’s PCEs. Think about it; Forman claims that PCEs are ineffable and cannot be discussed because there is no content or conscious thought which is active during the experience, thus language isn’t present during the ‘experience’. However, if there is no conscious thought which is occurring, and thus there is no ‘you’ than can a PCE actually be an experience since there is no one there to experience it? Also, what about unconscious thought? An individual cannot cease nor turn-off unconscious thought whenever they wish. So, technically, you can describe a PCE because unconscious thought would still be active during the experience, thus language would be relevant; but by this logic it would no longer be a PCE. Forman’s PCEs fall into an endless loop of paradox because that which he claims cannot be expressed or described, is given many different characteristics and expectations as to what one might experience – or not experience, actually. In borrowing another clever line

from Knepper's essay *Against Absolute Ineffability*, Kneppers describes the paradox argument against PCEs by saying "paradoxically, then, the only way to have an ineffable PCE is to take it as an ineffable PCE, thereby rendering it effable" (Knepper, p. 11). It doesn't get more complex, yet simple, as that.

However, that is the overall evaluation of ineffability: ineffability is a paradox and thus cannot exist in reality, only in concept. Ineffability, as defined earlier, is the inexpressible or unutterable. Nothing is truly ineffable – in the sense that nothing is inexpressible. However, there are those cases which things cannot be uttered because they are valued as too sacred. Though this is still ineffability, it is ineffability by choice rather than by character and thus doesn't conflict with my thesis. Within technicality, anyone can utter what cannot be uttered, though it would be breaking an established norm and holiness within that religion; but the point being, that it can be expressed if one so chose to. So everything can be expressed and everything can be uttered. Also, given the definition of ineffability, there can be no degrees or levels of ineffability. Something is either inexpressible or expressible; the level to which one achieves description and expression is of no consequence. Ineffability is only concerned with whether it can or cannot be described, which means that relative ineffability cannot exist within reality as well. Relative ineffability is contradictory of the term ineffability, and even if it could be allowed, it would still follow under the same scrutiny that everything can be described or expressed in some form, and to some degree. Nothing is truly ineffable, and the fact that this paper has discussed, described, explained and compared many forms of 'ineffability' just furthers the argument that ineffability isn't really ineffable. All of the 'ineffable' experiences that were discussed earlier in this paper are effable, in the fact that they have been given characteristics, possible expectations, sensations, definitions, etc.

However, there is still a function to ineffability within language that ought to be acknowledged. Though ineffability cannot exist in reality, it still exists as a concept. “These ineffability’s are the demons (and maybe angels) of incompleteness in incompleteness” (Scharfstein, p. 220). There is always something left unsaid that we cannot convey with language because of lack of shared experience, or perspective, or knowledge. Yet still, language is an incredible tool which conveys much that we don’t realize. But, the ineffabilities within our speech – this recurrent concept that we cannot escape – gives our language breadth and meaning to what we do and can speak of. Ineffability is a necessary and built in feature of speech; it’s not all that unusual that it is there within our vocabulary. I think it would even be stranger if ineffability itself didn’t exist as a concept. The fact that we have a word which means “that which cannot be expressed with words” is a funny example of how useful language is in the end. Language isn’t complete, and it can’t always describe what we want to its fullest extent, but it is this difficulty in fully achieving expression which gives birth to the concept of ineffability, and with it humbleness. We can’t express everything, but that’s okay. Ineffability gives eloquence to speech, music and poetry, and language gives a sort of beauty and respect to the concept of ineffability. Ineffability isn’t bad or good; it is only a concept. However, it is how ineffability can be used which can make it either a virtue or a harm. Ineffability can be a virtue in the sense that it makes humans humble and realize that, perhaps, we cannot express everything with our language, but we can sure try! It’s also a virtue in the idea that it might provide a useful tool for regular practitioners of religion, and brings us closer together by realizing that perhaps what we are trying to achieve is similar in the end. But it can still be a detriment to the topic of religion and philosophy by scholars who use ineffability as cop-out, an excuse, or ‘valid’ reason to not investigate the differences and intricacies between the many forms of mystical experiences.

Ineffability can be a weapon which destroys and harms, or it can be a tool which makes us humble and yearn for better expression.

As much as I would like to discuss how ineffability really isn't ineffable and is actually effable even further, we have reached the conclusion of this journey. I have gone through and dissected the concept and idea of ineffability within the study of religion and philosophy. I started this lovely journey by first describing and discussing what ineffability was; then I began to compare and contrast the many different forms of mysticism and how ineffability affected these experiences; next I explained what these various forms of mystical experiences meant in relation to ineffability; and lastly I evaluated the existence of ineffability and partial ineffability within reality and evaluated its function within language on a day-to-day basis. I can safely say, by the end of this paper, that language triumphs far more than it 'fails'. Language is a beautiful and incredible tool, whether or not one realizes it. It's a bridge to concepts and ideas which are so complex, intricate and at times incomprehensible. Language is this bridge which helps us to begin to understand ideas or beings which may be beyond our level of understanding. Language is our tool; our way of understanding the world around us and beyond. The beautiful thing about language is that it isn't restricted to words; it can be expressed non-verbally as well. From there, language has many forms in which it takes: poetry, dance, music, literature, Chinese, Japanese, English, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, Russian, etc. There are countless ways in which we find to express ourselves and the concepts which lay beyond ourselves. Ineffability is just another part of language; but it's a part of language which makes us humble in our discussions of complex issues, but not limited.

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